

# A New Career Takes Off

by BILL HALTOM



Over the years, people have frequently asked me, "Bill, why have you not pursued a career as a fashion model?" It's a very good question. I obviously have the potential to be a model model. Physically, I have the entire package. The devastating good looks, the strapping physique, the washboard abs. Well, okay. I don't have washboard abs. My stomach more closely resembles a washing machine than a washboard. I don't have a six pack. I have a one pack.

Even so, some people have told me that I remind them of one of the Chippendales. Unfortunately, they mean the chipmunks, not the male dancers.

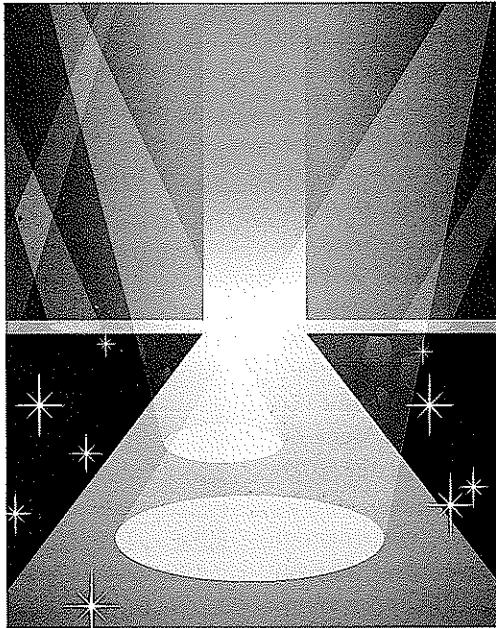
But for a lawyer pushing 60 (and pushing it quite hard, I might add), I am in pretty good shape. In fact, Judge Phyllis Gardner and I are going to be on the cover of the upcoming swimsuit edition of *Memphis Lawyer*. ("Bench and Bar Frolic at Destin.")

I also have the supermodel's attitude. My favorite facial expression is the petulant pout that reminds so many Memphians of Elvis. (The young Elvis in the gold lamé suit, not the old fat one who was made a federal drug agent by President Nixon.)

And, of course, I am a fashion plate. Very few people know this, but I am a wardrobe consultant for Mayor Wharton. If you see me in the Shelby County Courthouse from Memorial Day though Labor Day, I am always the personification of summertime seersucker sartorial splendor, with my cotton seersucker suit, white burton-down collar Oxford cloth shirt, and white bucks. And sometimes if I really want to make a fashion statement, I'll top it off with a straw boater in tribute to the late Judge James Tharp.

Frankly, not everyone appreciates my summer courtroom attire. So help me, a few years ago on a hot summer day, I was about to argue a motion in Division IX when Judge Butch Childers asked me to approach the bench. When I did so, Judge Butch glanced down at my white bucks, and then in a voice that sounded remarkably like Judge Herman Munster in *My Cousin Vinny*, asked, "What is this, Mr. Haltom, Pat Boone day?"

After Labor Day, I put the seersucker in the cedar closet and move to my fall and winter wardrobe which consists entirely of dark wool suits. The late Judge Wyeth Chandler



once commented on this by observing, "Bill, you and all your fellow lawyers at Thomason Hendrix always come to Court dressed like you work for the Memphis Funeral Home."

I took that as a compliment.

And so given my looks, my attitude, and my wardrobe, it does surprise a lot of folks that I have not pursued a career in modeling.

But that's all about to change. My new life as a fashion model took off on Thursday night, March 4<sup>th</sup>. And fittingly, it took off on a runway.

The runway was in the ballroom of the Memphis Racquet Club, and the occasion was the second annual fashion show of the Association for Women

Attorneys. Back in the winter I had been contacted by Shari Myers and asked if I would be one of the stars of this year's show. Other stars included such notable MBA sex symbols as Judge Lynn Cobb, Steve Farese, and Judge D'Army Bailey, who surprisingly agreed to participate in the show even though he is a very shy person who likes to avoid the limelight.

My wardrobe for the evening was provided by Tom Shelton Clothiers and consisted of a snazzy sports jacket, Italian wool trousers and a flashy silk tie. If I had had a cigarette, I would have been the spitting image of Paul Drake.

When I took to the runway, the crowd went absolutely wild. In a spurt of showmanship, I frankly got a little carried away. I removed my sports jacket and tossed it into the crowd. The cheers began to build, so I removed my tie and tossed it into the crowd as well. At this point, pandemonium reigned, and the Racquet Club seriously considered bringing in security. I started to unbutton my shirt, but then I realized I was getting perilously close to a table dance. When several AWA members tried to stuff dollar bills in the front of my Italian wool trousers, I realized it was time to draw the line. Like Elvis, I left the building.

As I drove out the Racquet Club parking lot, I was still being chased by several female judges (I won't name names.) I realize now that my life will never be the same. After 32 years as a trial lawyer, it's time for me to head to New York or Paris and devote the rest of my life to fashion.

I know you will miss me. However, you'll soon see me on billboards throughout the City of Memphis. It will be a provocative photograph featuring the caption, "Nothing comes between Bill Haltom and his Calvin Kleins." ♦