

## THREE MILLION DOLLAR WOMEN MARCHING TWO ABREAST

The bra.

My research into its history revealed more than I ever wanted to know. I wanted to stop when I read a related story about the "corset mecanique," a system of pulleys that allowed a woman to get into her underwear without having to "call upon servant or husband to help her cram flesh into small spaces."

I'm trying to imagine using a similar device for hiking up my shorts in the morning and I'm haunted by an image of a pair of spring-loaded and wall-mounted mechanical hands. I can't even think about torque adjustments.

I studied the evolution of the bra from its recorded origin by a group of Minoan housewives on the island of Crete in 2500 B.C., to the modern-day prototype invented in 1914 by a New York debutante. Finding it impossible to mix 'n match a whalebone corset with a sheer evening gown, she "fashioned two handkerchiefs, ribbon, and some cord and devised a simple backless brassiere." It was a big hit.

It also saved the whales from extinction.

But, my search took me through descriptions of contemporary bra constructions, shapes and functions that lifted and separated my preconceptions. I had no idea:

Seamless bras. Support bras. Shoulder bras, and bras that "minimize without flattening." Bras with "super wide, fiber-filled lined straps." Bras that are absorbing, cool, comfortable, supporting, padded, adjusting, underwired, shaping, lightly-lined and lace-firmed. Bras that push-up. Bras that train. Bras that conceal, reveal, enhance or prevent rolling.

The U.S. Patent Office has even received a design for a "Reusable Self-Supporting Bra." Ladies, I just can't figure the hubbub there. Men have been wearing the same pair of reusable self-supporting shorts for years.

The Sports Bra. The Strapless Bra. The Miracle Bra. The Wonder Bra. Even a

Victoria's Secret "strapless number with 99 diamonds trimming the upper edge and a 42-carat pear-shaped stone dangling in the middle," and a THREE MILLION DOLLAR asking price.

If you're amongst the discretionary elite, tit for tat would round out at fifteen hundred thousand per tat.

And, finally, my personal favorite, and the one where I take the most exception: The 18-Hour Bra. I have two reasons for this, and they're what draw the fine distinction between the sexes:

1. From a male's viewpoint, wearing the same underwear for 18 hours is not only credible, it's mandatory.

2. From a female's perspective, I don't believe that bras were ever meant to be worn at all, and I offer the following proof:

Whenever I've had a female housemate, the first thing she did upon returning home from work was remove her bra. This was almost always accomplished without first doffing her outer garments, and with an under-blouse sleight-of-hand that ended with said bra being pulled through a sleeve, tossed backward, and getting snagged on some household fixture like a wedding bouquet in the grip of a blinded bachelorette. A self-satisfied sigh and self-adjusting inventory then followed this bilateral disarmament.

I wouldn't lie about this.

Cross my three million dollar heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

