

Consumer corner

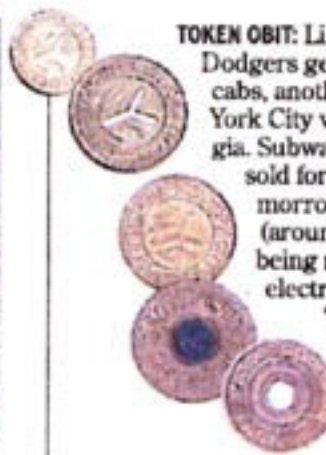
SAY UNCLE: No money to pay your taxes on Tuesday? No sweat, say some of the nearly 100,000 people polled online by Yahoo! Finance. Of those who owe Uncle Sam, 73 percent said they'll use savings; 8 percent will charge their taxes to a credit card; 6 percent plan to sell stocks/investments; and 5 percent said they'd get some type of loan. The rest are sweating.

instyle

CLOTHING, COSMETICS AND CONSUMER TRENDS



THEIR RACKET: Tennis superstars Serena (right) and Venus Williams chatted about their vices on Oprah Winfrey's television show recently. Venus, the elder sibling, said that she has a "major problem with beauty products. I can't stop buying them," and has drawers filled with stashed stuff. Sister Serena (pictured) said she's obsessed with having her nails done before every match.



TOKEN OBIT: Like Brooklyn Dodgers gear and Checker cabs, another piece of New York City will soon be nostalgic. Subway tokens will be sold for the last time tomorrow. The token (around for 50 years) is being replaced by the electronic MetroCard. "Tokens will become cuff links and buttons and watches," said Kenneth Jackson of the New York Historical Society. The token is survived by the turnstile.

—STAFF AND NEWS SERVICES

STRUTTING THEIR STUFF

The **Ebony Fashion Fair** is an annual rite of spring in San Diego; it's both a fashion show and a social event. Not only do you see lavish, colorful and sometimes outrageous couture; many patrons come year after year and greet each other like old friends. Algernon Phillips, 87, a founding member of the sponsoring Las Muñecas philanthropic organization, hasn't missed it for 43 consecutive years. "There are some people that if I haven't seen them in a year, I know I will see them here," she said. Many in the audience dress to the hilt, with outstanding hats always a big hit. Among those making a splash at Saturday's show:



Helen Martin Hicks said she decided to wear a yellow brocade Donna Vinci ensemble because "yellow is the symbol of hope." A member of Las Muñecas, she loves the Fashion Fair and clothes in general. "I love fashion, from casual to dressy," she said. "I especially love hats; I wear one to church every Sunday."



Wanda Kaufmann of San Diego was a spring vision in pink Escada with a matching chapeau by Fratelli Marzi, one of Italy's leading manufacturer's of women's hats. Both were purchased at Neiman Marcus in Fashion Valley. A former fashion model, Kaufmann said she loves to wear hats.



San Diego resident **Tony Tatum** wore head-to-toe lavender. He said he bought his outfit in the garment district of Los Angeles; he loves clothes and usually goes to L.A. "every three months" to add to his extensive wardrobe. His matching dyed alligator shoes had gold tips; Tatum said he has the same shoe in three other colors.

From UCLA to the runway, Tiesha Wimbish returns to San Diego

COMING HOME

By Susan Shroder
INSTYLE EDITOR

The audience at the annual Ebony Fashion Fair, always enthusiastic, puts on a show of its own. This year, there was even more to be raucous about as a San Diegan was among the 11 women and two well-muscled men who had earned the coveted national modeling positions. Cheers, hoots and hollers abounded Saturday as Tiesha Wimbish, 24, a Clairemont High School graduate, was introduced at the finale of the flashy two-hour event, which each year showcases dozens of spectacular fashions from top designers in Milan, Paris, London, New York City and Chicago.

For her final stiletto-studded runway stroll, Wimbish wore a stunning beaded Bob Mackie wedding dress, one of more than a dozen outfits she donned during the fund-raising show, which travels to more than 180 cities across the country during a nine-month span. In each city, the show raises money for local charities and non-profit organizations. In San Diego, the sponsor was Las Muñecas Auxiliary to the Friends of the Elementary Institute of Science.

This is the 45th year of the Ebony Fashion Fair, which is produced by Eunice W. Johnson, wife of John H. Johnson, Chicago-based publisher of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines.

No one could remember exactly when San Diego last had an Ebony Fashion Fair model, but Vira Williams, a longtime member of Las Muñecas, thought it had been at least 30 years. More than 1,000 hopefuls from around the country try out each year; many go on to acting or broadcasting careers.

For Wimbish, who graduated with honors from the University of California Los Angeles with a major in psychology, it was an unplanned turn. After graduation, she worked 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Los Angeles as a fraud investigator for a credit union. She became restless and responded to an ad seeking Fashion Fair models. She tried out in Chicago, and the rest is history.

Among those rooting for her in the audience at the Westin Horton Plaza were her father, a beaming William Wimbish, a 25-year employee of San Diego Transit, mother Pamela Richardson, a brother and two grandmothers.

The Fashion Fair begins its tour in September; other than a few days off in December for Christmas, the models are on the road in a chartered blue bus that is filled with touches from home — stuffed animals, a game of Taboo, a 2003 Doberman pinscher calendar.

It's kind of like a moving dormitory, with models pairing up in rooms for one-night hotel stays. "We're kind of like a family," Wimbish said.

Sometimes, they have to improvise. On Saturday, while the show's band warmed up inside the hotel ballroom, the models gathered in a nearby, cordoned-off hallway to do their hair and makeup (they do their own). With no dressing room, they sat cross-legged on the carpet in front of three mirrors that had been propped against a wall, dimly illuminated by only three overhead canister lights.



Ebony Fashion Fair models are quick-change artists, donning from 13 to 18 outfits during a show with the help of four wardrobe assistants. Here, Tiesha Wimbish wears an outfit by Italian designer Laura Biagiotti with hat by designer B. Michael. Among former Ebony models that have gone on to acting careers is Richard Roundtree of "Shaft" movie fame. Sandy Huffaker photos



Ebony Fashion Fair is held in different venues across the country, often in theaters with dressing rooms and makeup lights. At the Westin Horton Plaza, the models sat on a hallway floor outside the ballroom to put on makeup.