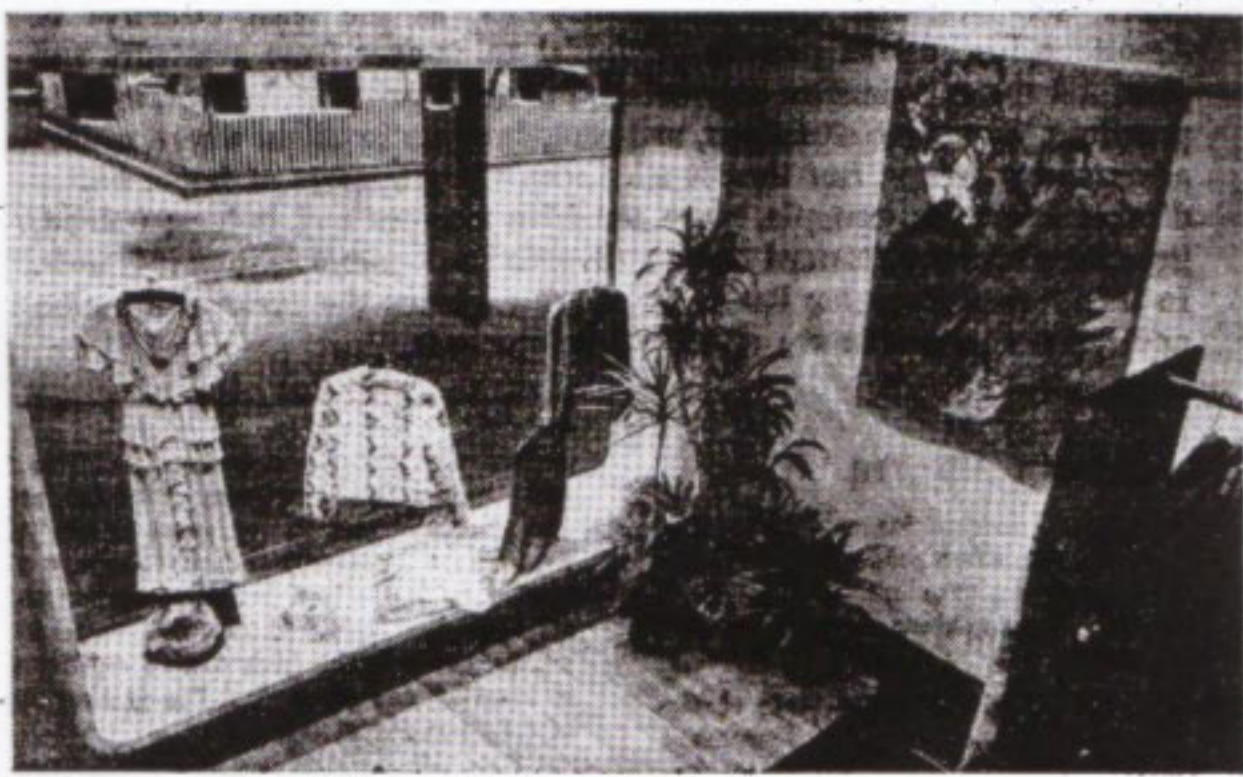




LEFT: Paul's Old Orchard boutique. Wooden clothes cases, shag carpeting, and oval, wooden clothes cases add to the modern atmosphere. The pink, tie-dyed, crushed velvet tapestry on the right wall was made especially for Paul by the Mayas, local husband and wife artist team. BELOW: In a corner of the shop hangs a Chagall tapestry, courtesy of Merrill Chase Galleries. The gallery owners change the wall hanging each month to suit the mood and decor of the shop.



# Paul B swings with fashion times

By Marilyn Stitz  
Fashion editor

PAUL MAGIT relaxes in his Old Orchard shop, wearing tan trousers, a red shirt, and a diamond-patterned sweater in shades of gray and red. Paul never wears a tie and likes easy, casual clothes.

CHICAGO TODAY photos by Bob Fila



FOR BOUTIQUE owner, fashion buyer, merchandiser Paul Magit, the phone is his most important material possession.

That's why his Jaguar is equipped with one of Ma Bell's finest. "I used to spend half my time in my car, traveling to my different shops, the other half on the phone," explained Paul, who owns a successful string of boutiques called Paul B. "That's why I had a phone installed—to save time. Since I've combined the two, I can now spend phone time on other important business matters."

From all outward appearances, Paul is a successful business man—penthouse apartment, sports car, four shops in the Chicago area (on Rush Street, in New Town, the Old Orchard shopping center, and Highland Park) plus a shop in the Playboy Club in New Jersey.

But he doesn't think so. "To the world, yes, I'm a success," Paul said. "To myself, I'm not—yet."

"YOU CAN'T measure all success by material things. You have to be at peace with yourself, and you must try out all new ideas and exhaust all possibilities. Also, you must have the ability to change, to constantly be aware of trends. I put most of my effort into merchandising. When I think I've reached the top, whatever that is, then I will be a success."

Paul has always been involved in merchandising. As a youngster, he helped his father, a furrier, after school and on Saturdays cleaning the shop, wrapping packages. He married at 18, then moved to Los Angeles and became involved, successfully, in the furniture business.

Like most true Chicagoans, Paul missed the Windy City and returned with his family, which now included two children.

Paul invested in his Rush Street store only as a side interest, with a few dollars borrowed, "trying every crazy thing and wild promotion I could think of. And, surprise, it worked! I soon eliminated all other business interests and concentrated all my efforts into the boutique."

HE MADE THE right decision seven years ago, by building up the original store and adding four more. In '78, Paul's shooting for a sales volume in the neighborhood of \$1½ million. He has no new stores in the "works" but he's not counting out the possibilities of cities like Houston, Atlanta, and

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Minneapolis as future sites for Paul B shops.

"These are moderately big cities with a fashion awareness. But the merchandise isn't there for the customer. I would like to change that."

Speaking of change, Paul has completely changed the image of his shops several times, to keep in step with his customers and fashion.

"In the beginning, I stocked all California merchandise; from there I went to New York designers and manufacturers; then to Copenhagen for new looks and fashions.

"THEN THERE was a period of two years where I was heavily into the jean scene and rock music. I had records blasting at the customers and you could buy records and tickets from Ticketron. I could psyche out customers' moods and clothes feelings by what records they bought."

Now, the mood in his shops is softness. The clothes feeling is not as crisp and tailored as it has been. Dresses are returning

but Paul has not discounted pants. "Nothing will ever replace pants. They will always be around."

Paul is also heavily into French ready to wear. "About 60 per cent of my stock is imports. Basically, most of these are French. Those Parisians have a finesse, a look, a feeling you don't find in the domestic market. Their fabrics and details are special."

PAUL ALSO carries American ready to wear, under such labels as Willie Smith, Scott Barrie, Jones of New York, and Carol Horn.

About prices: Paul doesn't have strict guidelines. He carries \$5 T-shirts, \$9 jeans, a \$600 fur coat or suede outfit. He stocks what his customers demand.

If you are thinking of going into the boutique business, take Paul's advice: "It's not an easy to be a merchandiser today. Several years ago, I bought an entire line from one manufacturer. This was true, season after season. Today, I buy feelings; whatever fits into this mood, I buy, whether it's from one manufacturer or 50."



PAUL STANDS in front of the tie-dyed tapestry in his Old Orchard store.