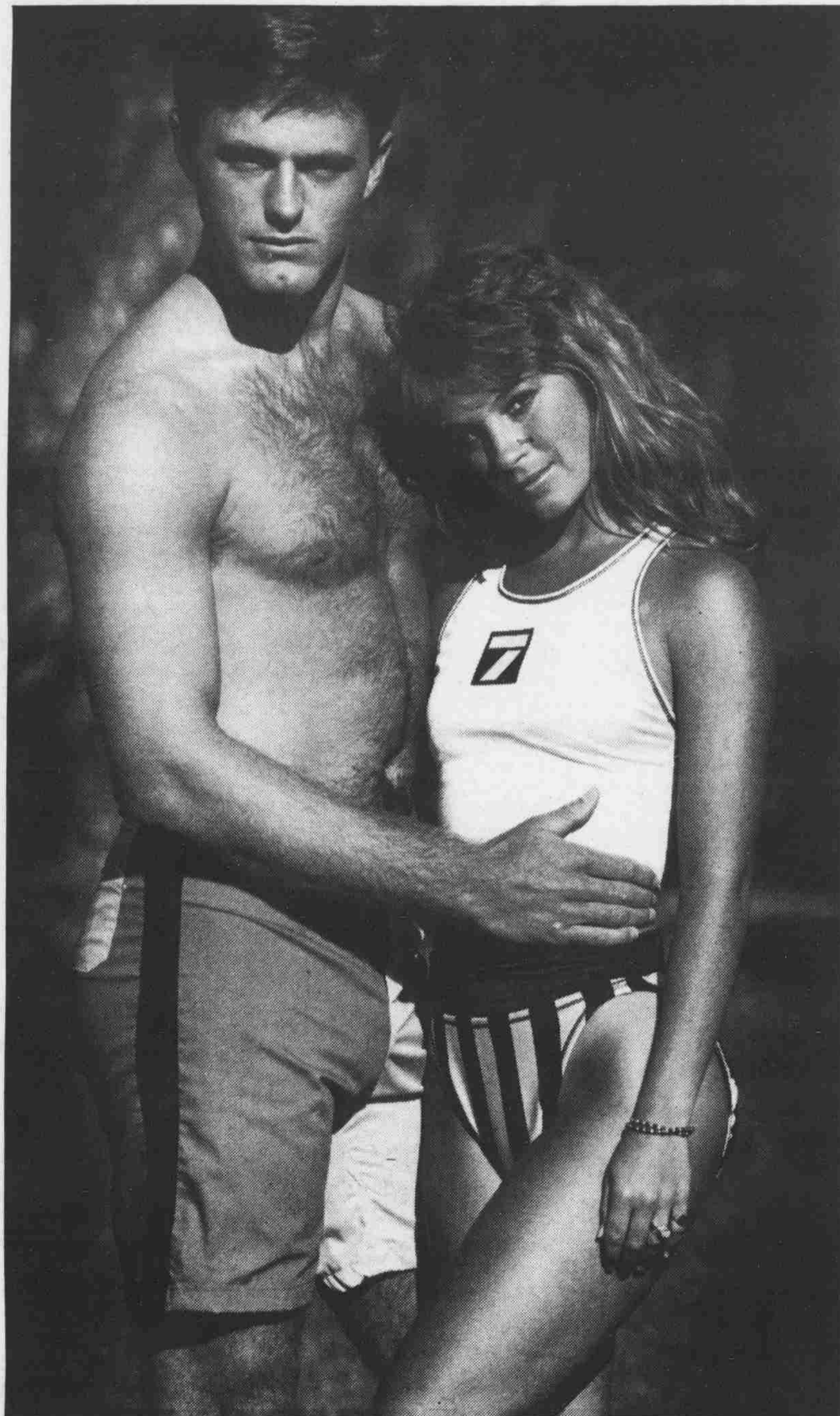


Up front

Cool spring fashions arrive . . .



Senior Leigh Jenkins and sophomore Blake Davenport achieve the diver's suit look in swimwear. Her suit is by Underwet (\$36), his by Norfleet (\$34)

. . . but traditional looks still prevail

By KAREN ENTRIKEN
Staff Writer

"Appearances are everything," according to Cosmopolitan magazine. If this statement is important to you, or a glance into your closet reveals only last year's dated look, check out the new fashions in spring casual wear hitting the Chapel Hill market.

Casual wear is an important part of the nights of spring. Students eagerly await the first 70-ish day when they can sport a pair of shorts without having goose bumps stand out all over their legs. And long live the balmy months when students skip classes to squeeze into bathing suits and flock to grassy areas to soak up some sun.

Of course, the discerning student will want to be dressed to a "T." And the tee is definitely where spring fashions are at. The T-shirt, that is.

According to Bob Simpson, owner of the Town and Campus clothing store on Franklin Street, T-shirts are the real mainstay of this year's wardrobe. The basic style can be varied in cut, color and size. Prices range widely from a \$12 basic solid-colored shirt to a thick, high-quality Generra brand for \$42.

The T-shirt mode brings with it a whole style of dressing — casual is the word to keep in mind.

"No more high button muffy galore," says Benetton manager Kim Cusic.

The two most popular looks for spring are evident in Benetton's current window display. One side features tight-fitting, colorful outfits in hot pink, yellow, red and chartreuse, while the other side counters the effect with loose-fitting, subdued, natural colors and fibers and leather coordinated for a safari look.

So, whether your preference is natural or bright, loose or tight, you can design your look either way or by mixing together a little of both.

Another dreaded fashion dilemma in question this spring is the length of skirts. The answer seems to be a toss-up. The hemline can be worn either to nearly bare the derriere or gently brush the ankles — or anywhere in between.

At Benetton, Cusic says long skirts and sweaters are out.

"Ultra-minis made of spandex in solid colors and floral prints are in fashion," says Paula Inerra, Benetton sales representative. The skirts are priced at \$34.

Another casual wear retailer on Franklin Street, The Lodge, supports the life of the miniskirt. Paired with a cropped top, it draws attention to the waist. Cosmopolitan agrees with the short skirt trend wholeheartedly. And, according to Cusic, this trend is destined to last at least through next winter.

However, Town and Campus owner Bob Simpson says, "Our store didn't go 100 percent on short skirts. We have a few token miniskirts."

His store, which carries a flowing, feminine French country look from Putamayo, has a variety of skirt lengths.

In the skirt situation, as with other styles, the option to go short or long is yours. In general, however, anything higher than mid-knee for business is risky, while any length goes for fun.

This spring will be the season for accessories. Their moderate prices and different forms allow any outfit to be altered creatively and inexpensively.

"You can't wear a T-shirt and jeans anymore, because everything is accessorized," Cusic says.

Accessory pieces at The Lodge are moderately priced and come in all forms — socks, bags, scarves, jewelry, hair accessories, watches, belts and glasses.

New dimensions on accessories include suspenders worn up on the shoulders, which add a fun touch to any outfit. But avoid wearing them hanging down, even though that style was popular a few years ago. Doubling two pairs of bright socks for color and hats will be popular also.

Other new items this spring include spandex bicycle shorts and bathing suits. Both are constructed of colorful bold panels of alternating blacks and bright colors.

The nautical look is making a comeback this season

after the decline in popularity of its replacement surf clothing.

Unconstructed sportcoats and modified slush-around but stylish jackets will promote the casual trend for men. The affordable blazers, priced from \$50 to \$75, can be worn with the sleeves pushed up and with T-shirts or conventional button-downs.

Men's shirts take on a new twist from the basic polo for spring — COLOR! Striped polos in rich spring colors such as mauve, aqua and yellow are must-haves, advised Milton Julian, owner of Milton's Clothing Cupboard.

The new women's pants are patterned and fun; the days of basic khaki, black and navy are long-gone. Pants for spring come in all lengths, fits and colors. They range from knee-length baggies to flowing and full-length slacks to pants that are tightly cropped at the ankle.

If all those new fashions scare your tastes as well as your wallet, never fear, there are always forever items and styles. The preppy look is still holding strong and always will because it is so practical — so don't throw those Duckhead shorts away just to replace them with spandex shorts. And black is still the strong color that can make any outfit look sophisticated.

Contrary to belief, dark suits are okay, too. "We still sell many dark suits in the summer because college students are buying their first suits," Julian said.

A charcoal grey or navy summer suit is fine for interviews — but be sure to buy it in a lightweight material.

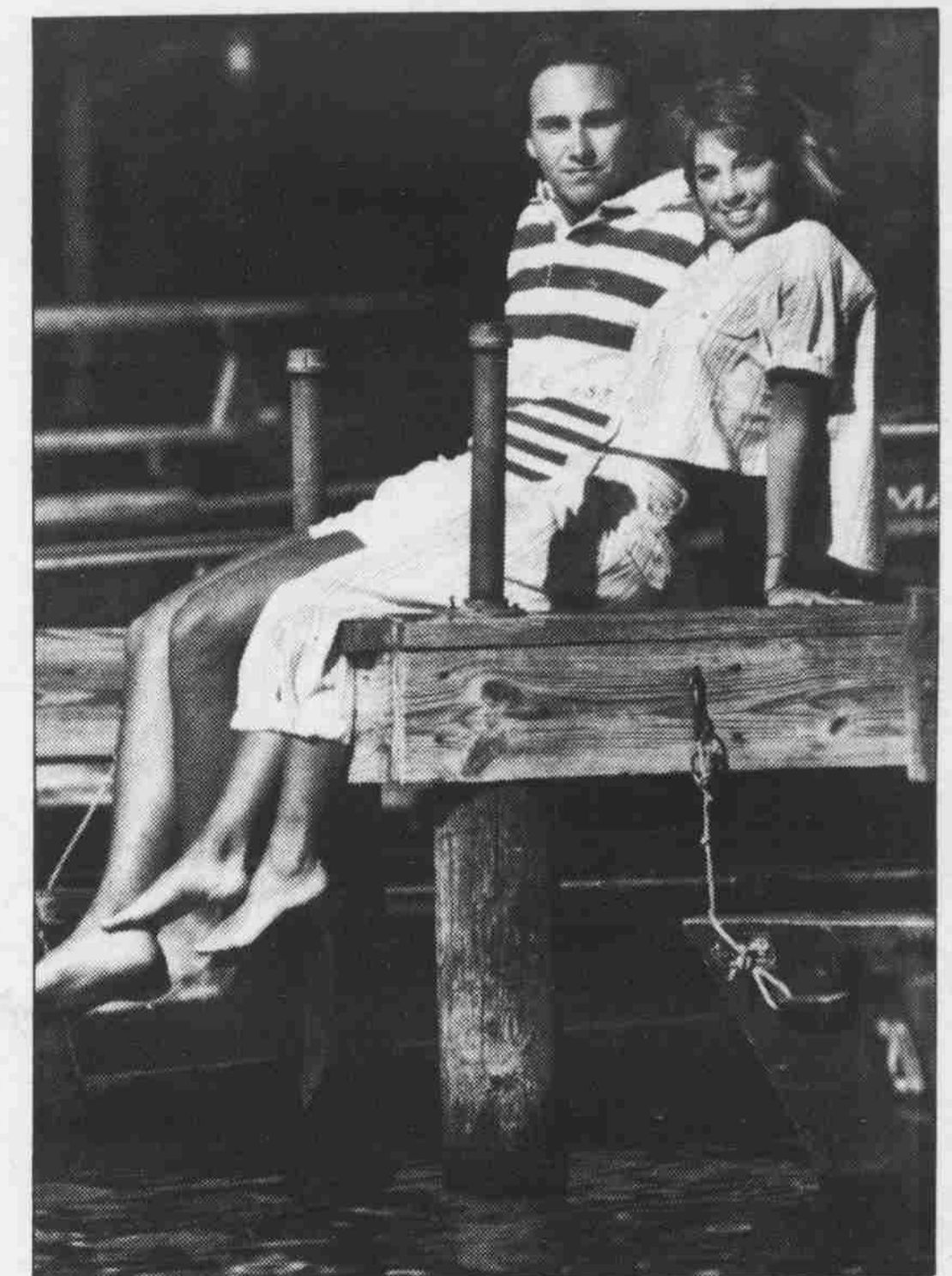
Still confused about what to wear this spring? Don't worry. The prevailing opinion among designers and retailers is that individual choice rules.

"The main thing is to draw attention to yourself," Cusic says. "It's great to look at a girl walking down the street and say, 'Wow, I really like those pants.'"

That's the objective. Now everyone, pull off those wool sweaters and corduroys. Spring is here!



Freshman Maribeth Sartin (left) and junior Robin Willet stroll through Carolina Inn. Willet's navy outfit (top \$64, skirt \$54) is by Erena. Sartin's linen suit (skirt \$70, blouse \$72, blazer \$144) is by Jones New York.



Junior Rich Wrenn and senior Leigh Jenkins sport the nautical look. Williams wears Lacoste shorts (\$37) and polo shirt (\$43). Jenkins wears pink striped separates (pants, \$52, top, \$48) by Liz Claiborne.

Photos by Matthew Plyler