



SHOES
ON
SALE

Setting the Stage

BY MARYANN LORUSSO

SHOES ON SALE PARTICIPANTS GEAR UP FOR GLITZ, GLAMOUR — AND A GOOD CAUSE.

It's still about six weeks before this year's "QVC Presents FFANY Shoes on Sale" is broadcast to millions of households across America, and the Fashion Footwear Association of New York's office is buzzing. FFANY President Dick Jacobson, his wife Carol and several other staffers are shuffling through invite lists and other paperwork related to the event, telephone receivers tucked under their chins. Letters pour out of the fax machine, and the phones are ringing off the hook.

"We don't let up," said Carol Jacobson. "This event takes more than year-long preparation; it's a continual thing. It has become a part of what we do. It's like getting up in the morning and brushing our teeth."

Their efforts should pay off on October 2, when the 5-year-old fund-raiser kicks off Breast Cancer Awareness Month by selling half-price shoes donated by FFANY's member companies. This is the fourth year the association is collaborating with elec-

tronic retailer QVC, whose involvement has helped turn Shoes on Sale into one of the most important events for both the shoe industry and the home-shopping giant. During a three-hour live broadcast from New York's Pierre hotel, and then on QVC's morning program throughout the month, more than 70,000 pairs of designer footwear will be sold to consumers across America and more than \$1 million in expected profits distributed to five of the nation's most prominent breast-cancer research and treatment facilities.

"It is so wonderful that the industry has gotten behind the event," Jacobson said. "Everyone is so proud of Shoes on Sale and feels so positive about it. Never before has the footwear industry been able to go directly to consumers in numbers of this magnitude — 68 million homes." Whatever their contribution, she added, industry members take pride in being associated with the event. "Every year, more and more people want to become involved."

That goes for the throngs of celebrities who have flocked to

SOAP BOX: Daytime-drama divas Susan Lucci and Linda Dano charm photographers during the 1997 Shoes on Sale opening-night gala. Celebrities like them have helped push the benefit into the spotlight.



SETTING THE STAGE



SITTING PRETTY: Cosmetics maven Tova Borgnine, a breast cancer survivor, makes Shoes on Sale a regular stop on her fall social calendar. Here, she models a pair of donated shoes at the 1996 gala.

◀ Shoes on Sale since its inception in a 12,000-square-foot tent outside Central Park in 1994 (see sidebar, opposite page). From models like Frederique to musical talents such as Patti LaBelle, the fund-raiser's opening gala has always attracted its fair share of stars.

"It's about darned time," Jacobson said. "The ready-to-wear market has always gotten these celebrities, but what about the footwear market? We deserve them, too. These women, like Susan Lucci and Linda Dano and Tova Borgnine, love shoes. They come because they're interested in the cause, but also because they enjoy mingling with shoe designers like Andrea Pfister, Ferragamo, Todd Oldham and Charles Jourdan. At the [opening party], the footwear people get into the food and the music and hugging everyone. The celebrities contribute to that environment."

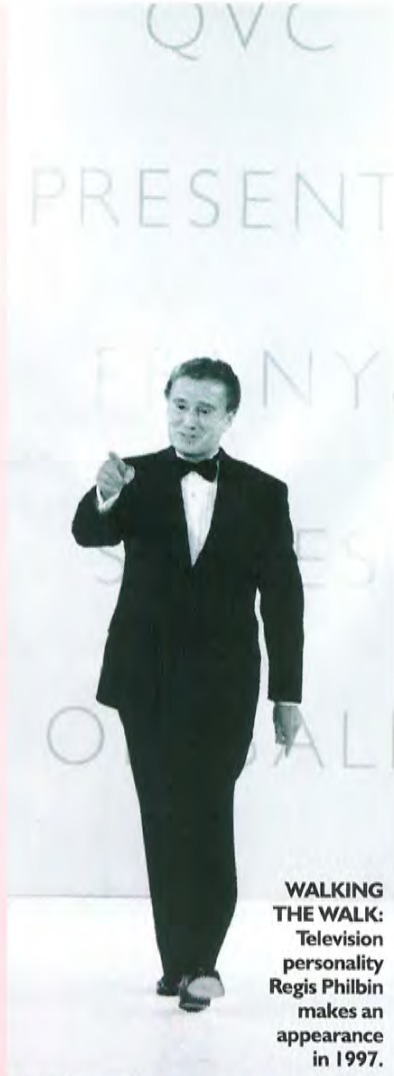
Of course, the festivities would not be possible without the generosity of FFANY members. Jacobson said product donations have increased steadily over the past four years, with an increasing number of companies signing on to participate. Although firms must supply a large enough number of shoes to earn broadcast time — otherwise the product would sell out too quickly, she explained — there are other ways to contribute, from becoming a featured vendor on QVC's morning program, to donating a shoe or accessory to the silent auction held during the opening party. "Every single thing helps," she said.

For companies that go on the air to sell their products, Shoes on Sale is an adventure. There is no dress rehearsal, and a person's time in front of the camera depends on how fast a brand sells out. "We knew how QVC worked, but we hadn't [witnessed] the behind-the-scenes stuff," Jacobson said of the premiere broadcast in 1995. "The lighting and cameras, everything has to be just right, and there's all this equipment... Once you're live, there is no turning back." (See QVC sidebar, page 14.)

All this is not as easy as it looks, Jacobson reiterated. Right up until the final company goes off the air at 1 a.m., organizers are putting final touches on everything from the flowers to the favors. The weeks before the gala are particularly daunting, as Jacobson and her staff deal with a myriad of challenges, from coaxing donors to ship their product on time to handling last-minute details at the party site.

But there's no stopping FFANY now. "We want to work harder to get even better," said Jacobson, who said she cried the first time First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in a videotaped speech thanked the industry for its efforts. "We would love to be acknowledged as a major [contributor] in the elimination of breast cancer. It's a particularly traumatic [disease], because it deals with a woman's femininity, her womanhood. But there have been so many medical advancements — we're almost there. That's the cause we've wrapped our heart around, so we are determined.

"All our guys are really stepping up to the plate," she added. "We're a little industry, so we're really reaching. It makes me proud to be part of it." ■



WALKING THE WALK: Television personality Regis Philbin makes an appearance in 1997.



WORKING IT: Model Cheryl Tiegs fields calls from QVC viewers in 1997.

"EVERYTHING HAS TO BE JUST RIGHT. ONCE YOU'RE LIVE, THERE IS NO TURNING BACK."

The Little Benefit That Could

FROM TENT SALE TO TELECAST, SHOES ON SALE GREW BEYOND EXPECTATIONS.

When Nine West Group's Jodi Fisher approached FFANY President Dick Jacobson in 1994 with the idea of starting a fund-raiser for breast cancer research, no one would have guessed the enormous impact the resulting Shoes on Sale would have.

"I marvel at how the event came from this single idea," said FFANY's Carol Jacobson. "Jodi said, 'Let's get these footwear guys involved in a good cause that shows they care. Let's get something big going here.'" FFANY agreed, and the rest is industry history.

Scheduled in conjunction with Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the first Shoes on Sale was held Oct. 6-8 under a 12,000-square-foot tent at the entrance to New York's Central Park. More than 6,000 consumers purchased \$10 tickets from Ticketmaster, and with help from more than 500 volunteers, the tent was set up and taken down in five days. Sheila Block, then the event's executive director, declared that FFANY had built "one of the largest shoe stores in America."

On Oct. 5, a cocktail reception was held at The Plaza to kick off the sale. Hosted by Jacobson and Nine West Chairman Jerome Fisher, the gala featured appearances by Paula Zahn, Ruth Buzzi and Tina Louise. In a videotaped speech, Honorary Chairman Bill Clinton, who lost his mother to breast cancer that year, thanked FFANY for its philanthropic efforts.

Over the three days, FFANY sold more than 46,000 pairs of shoes from 150 footwear companies at half price and raised about \$800,000 for The Virginia Clinton Kelley Fund at the Arkansas Cancer Research Cen-

ter, Strang-Cornell Breast Center, the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations and the American Cancer Society. The event, which Dick Jacobson called "a mind-boggling, enormous undertaking," was such a success that area retailers complained Shoes on Sale hurt weekly sales at their stores.

According to Carol Jacobson, the debut event was so much work that organizers didn't know if they had the energy and resources to pull it off again. "It was this stupendous snowball that became this avalanche — we were all swept away," she said. "But people just weren't going to let us drop it."

At an industry event a few months later, Dick Jacobson struck up a conversation with Linda Lisco, a consultant for electronic retailer QVC Inc., which became the key to growing Shoes on Sale. "We needed a strong organization to get us to the next level," said Carol Jacobson. Once QVC signed on to become FFANY's partner in the endeavor, the event was destined to make home-shopping history.

The first footwear telethon of sorts, "QVC Presents FFANY Shoes on Sale" kicked off Oct. 14, 1995, with a black-tie gala in The Plaza's Grand Ballroom and a three-hour telecast for which QVC donated the air time. Hosted by New York First Lady Donna Hanover Giuliani, the gala was also attended by celebrities such as Diane Von Furstenberg, Mary McFadden and Linda Gray.

While many firms sold shoes on the air, others were featured throughout October as the "Shoe of the Day"

on QVC's morning program. By the end of the month, Shoes on Sale had sold more than 52,000 pairs of shoes — now in much larger quantities — from 45 companies and raised more than \$1 million for the Virginia Clinton Kelley Fund and Strang-Cornell.

With the QVC connection now enabling the industry to reach some 67 million households across the nation, the next two fund-raisers were even bigger. Through the sale of 60,000 pairs of shoes donated by 70 firms, the 1996 event raised \$1.1 million for the same beneficiaries, plus three new ones: Joyce Eisenberg Keefer Breast Center at the

John Wayne Cancer Institute, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University. All five facilities agreed to share their research and progress with one another and with FFANY.

Broadcast during television's prime time, the Oct. 1 opening-night gala included a silent auction, for which 25 designers created one-of-a-kind product. Party attendees included Tova Borgnine, Nicole Miller, Candy Spelling, Linda Dano and Jill Goodacre Connick; Jennifer Holiday and Roberta Flack performed.

The momentum didn't let up in 1997. Moved to The Pierre hotel in New York, the Sept. 30 opening gala attracted more well-known names, including Tommy Tune, Susan Lucci and Regis Philbin; Barbara Cook, Patti LaBelle and Roberta Flack performed. First Lady Hillary Clinton sent a videotaped congratulations to Nine West Group's Jerome Fisher and Vincent Camuto, recipients of the first Virginia Clinton Kelley Humanitarian Award.

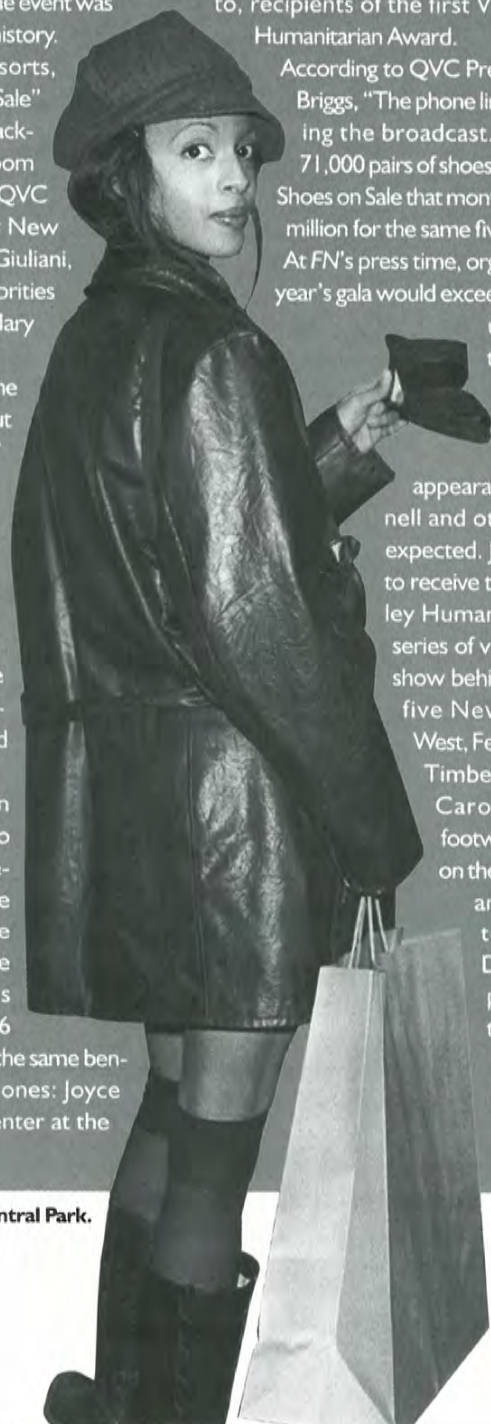
According to QVC President and CEO Doug Briggs, "The phone lines were jammed" during the broadcast. Through the sale of 71,000 pairs of shoes donated from 90 firms, Shoes on Sale that month generated some \$1.5 million for the same five beneficiaries.

At FN's press time, organizers anticipated this year's gala would exceed expectations. Scheduled to perform during the opening broadcast at The Pierre on Oct. 2 were the musical group Tap Dogs, and appearances by Rosie O'Donnell and other celebrities were expected. Joan & David were set to receive the Virginia Clinton Kelley Humanitarian Award, and a series of videos were planned to show behind-the-scenes looks at five New York stores: Nine West, Ferragamo, Joan & David, Timberland and Easy Spirit. Carol Jacobson said 43 footwear sponsors are going on the air during the gala, and another 47 will be featured as Shoes of the Day. With 20,000 more pairs of shoes donated this year, FFANY hopes to raise well over \$1 million for its cause.

— Maryann LoRusso



A LOGO TO BOOT: One year after Shoes on Sale was launched, organizers created this icon to symbolize the event. The boot was later replaced with a botanical shoe.



IN THE BAG: A consumer shops the first Shoes on Sale in 1994, held under a tent in Central Park.