

William Haines
designs

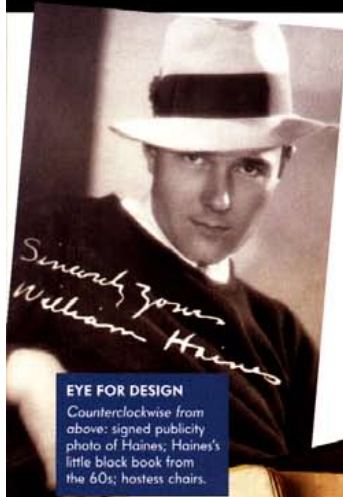


TREASURED BEAUTY

Haines and architect A. Quincy Jones collaborated on this 1950 home featured in *Class Act: William Haines, Legendary Hollywood Decorator*, by Peter Schifano and Jean Mathison (Pointedleaf Press), out this month.

Class Act

A NEW BOOK ON HOLLYWOOD DESIGNER BILLY HAINES INSPIRES BETSY BLOOMINGDALE'S MEMORIES OF HER DEAR FRIEND



EYE FOR DESIGN

Counterclockwise from above: signed publicity photo of Haines; Haines's little black book from the 60s; hostess chairs.

When I was a young girl I was invited to dinner at **Jack Warner's** house, which **William Haines** had designed. I thought longingly, If I can ever have a house that looks anything like this . . . Later, Alfred and I went to dinner at **Joan Crawford's**, and I loved her long, narrow dining room with no carpet. Also Haines's work.

Our first house needed a decorator, so William Haines was engaged, just to do the library. We went to his Cañon Drive office. I was fearful of the design, Alfred of the cost. "The walls are going to be red, the floor black, the ceiling pink . . ." I gasped. "Now, Miss Newling . . ." he said, invoking my maiden name. As it turned out, the library was divine.

When our family grew, we bought a larger, old Mediterranean villa. It was a style I'd grown up in and didn't want. Billy assured me I would have my California Palladian house. Calla Hill, our new home, was a great success. A rich lady with 10 children saw it and tried to hire Billy. He said, "Madam, you don't need a house, you need a kennel."

We adored him and went to his home for small dinners with interesting people. There was always his "friend," **Jimmie Shields**, and his pal "Cranberry," Billy's name for Joan Crawford. I wanted to give dinners the way he did and I'd get the recipes from him the next day.

Billy gave me books on furniture and entertaining, educating me. By the time he did our present house he had digressed from the wonderful antiques in Jack Warner's home and become famous for contemporary furniture. Billy designed a pair of coffee tables from an old lacquered chest—**Thomas Chippendale** would have approved.

In the early 60s it was difficult to invite two men who were living together for dinner, but Alfred adored Billy and Jimmie. "To hell with it. If anyone doesn't like it, they don't have to come," he would say.

When Billy and I hadn't seen each other we'd catch up by telephone. He loved to know the gossip. But then he stopped going out. He didn't see anyone. We knew he was dying of cancer. I called him every Sunday. "Well, little girl, what'd you do this week?" His voice grew fainter, and then, on one sad Sunday, he said, "Well, little girl, this is probably the last time we'll talk . . ."

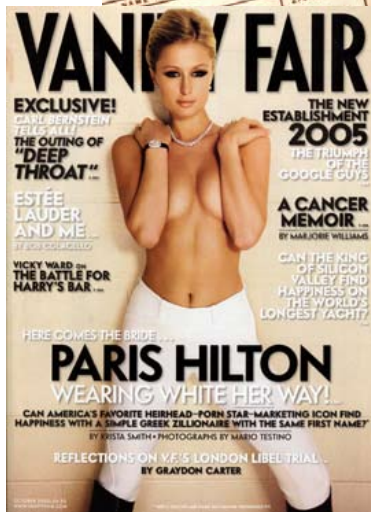
When the Warner house was sold to **David Geffen**, I bought four Billy Haines chairs at auction. Later, David said, "I'd have given them to you." In any case, now I have four chairs from my original dream house.

—BETSY BLOOMINGDALE WITH BURT BOYAR

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP BY JULIUS SHUIMAN; BOTTOM: BOTH BY JOHN BRANTLEY



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