

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with LaVetta Forbes

PERSON

Forbes, LaVetta, 1940-

**Alternative Names:** LaVetta Forbes;

**Life Dates:** November 9, 1940-

**Place of Birth:** New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

**Residence:** Los Angeles, CA

**Work:** Los Angeles, CA

**Occupations:** Fashion Designer

## Biographical Note

Fashion designer LaVetta Forbes was born on November 9, 1940 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Benjamin and Lillian Forbes. She began sewing at the age of six and in her teens worked for her aunt who was a dressmaker. In 1955, at the age of fifteen, Forbes moved to Los Angeles on her own and attended night school and found day work as a dress designer. Forbes then relocated to San Francisco and designed dresses for evening events. By the 1960s, Forbes was designing dresses for performers like Leslie Uggams, Lainie Kazan and the Supremes. Forbes entertained and hosted guests at the landmark Ambassador Hotel Coconut Grove and hosted luncheons to introduce and market her designs.

During the late 1970s, inspired by the use of scarf fabric, she created the LaVetta scarf dress. The collection of designs, made mostly from Oriental silk squares in flowered, geometric and paisley patterns, were 98% handmade with hems that were hand rolled, buttonholes hand bound and seams hand stitched. The scarves were used as dresses as well as tunics that were worn over pants. Elizabeth Taylor, Nancy Wilson, Alexis Smith and Helen Gurley Brown were among the La Vetta scarf dress collectors. With her business revitalized, the La Vetta clothing line became available at exclusive retailers including Giorgio's and Neiman-Marcus in Beverly Hills, Saks Fifth Avenue and Martha's in New York, Palm Beach and Bar Harbor. Her personal client list included; Lena Horne, Diana Ross, Nancy Walker, Beverly Sasso, Alexis Smith, Jayne Meadows, Marge Champion, Mrs. Clark Gable, Mrs. Robert Stack, Mrs. George Woods, and Eleanor Howard.

In 1990, Forbes began publishing Beverly Hills 90212 a glossy bi-monthly magazine.

Targeted to Beverly Hills, Bel-Air, and adjacent upscale neighborhoods with a readership of 60,000, the publication was delivered free to homes around Beverly Hills and sold at newsstands.

Forbes has been a member of the Los Angeles Museum Costume Council and the Blue Ribbon 400. She also served as a board member for The Southeast Symphony Association.

Forbes lives in Los Angeles and has one adult child, Tony.

LaVetta Forbes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 27, 2018.

## **Related Entries**

**Beverly Hills 90210** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1955 to ?]

**Owner and Publisher**