

Mixing together 'white' thoughts

The “Fashion Police” dare not arrest me. I’m wearing white right into the gorgeous Indian Summer of Western New York. You can count on it.

It’s up to you whether or not you will join me in controlling when you put away your favorite white outfits.

Back in etiquette guru Emily Post’s day — the nineteen 00s, 10s and 20s — the summer season was bracketed by Memorial Day and Labor Day. Society flocked in mass from town house to seaside cottage or mountain cabin to escape the heat. City clothes were left behind in exchange for lighter, whiter, summer costumes.

Come fall and the return to the city, summer clothes were stored and more formal city clothes donned once more. It was an age when there was a dress code for practically every occasion, and the signal to mark the change between summer resort clothes and clothing worn for the rest of the year was encapsulated in the dictum “No white after Labor Day.” And it stuck.

“White” is a topic I want to explore further.

An artist would agree that white isn’t a color, but technically the absence of color. Ask a scientist and you’ll get a different reply based on physics: Black is not a color, but white is a color. There are shades of gray to each answer.

You can't mix colors to create white. White is the color of fresh snow — sorry for the mental image — and milk, the color the human eye sees when it senses light, which contains all the wavelengths of the visible spectrum.

Close your eyes and picture being in the Bay of Alaska viewing the glaciers, and you will see blue tints out of bubbles of whiteness. The dense ice absorbs every other color of the spectrum except for white.

There are other ways to look at the color and be a cheerful optimist. After all, white signifies purity, innocence, wholeness and completeness. Each are such admirable qualities and virtues for all seasons.

Speaking of winter white, it is a gorgeous color for an outfit – a sweater, parka or slacks — if you can keep your pant legs from attracting slush, or your arms from not leaning in while scraping your windshield.

White symbolically often represents light in contrast with darkness. All the bad characters in a movie dress in dark fashion are as easy to spot such as in “The Big Bad Wolf”.

If you are of a certain age, you will remember the White Rain Shampoo jingle: “Use White Rain Shampoo tonight and tomorrow your hair will be sunshine bright.” Check out the lovely model in the commercial (YouTube) for a bit of nostalgia. Gillette first introduced White Rain in 1952, and it is still on the shelves.

Today’s American obsession with the process of teeth whitening to be perfect like everyone and his brother in Hollywood takes us for dental treatments, whitening products and toothpaste with brightening ingredients. A pearly white smile puts your best foot forward everywhere you go.

Ask your grandchild if he has heard of a telephone book, and it shouldn’t surprise you that his household uses the White Pages on the Internet instead of fumbling through the fine print.

It's back to school time, pumpkin spice coffee and cooler mornings all rolled into one glorious season. Put a little white into your wardrobe, too.