



Routine sight at Brooks: a show girl hurrying off to try on her next new costume.

## “costumes executed by BROOKS”

This familiar theater-program credit represents a \$2,000,000-a-year gross business, costuming everything from Broadway stars to circus elephants

THE 39-year-old Brooks Costume Company is the biggest in the business. It is responsible for the eye appeal of 80 per cent of Broadway's current musicals. It does a large part of New York's TV-costume business and will open a TV service branch in Hollywood shortly. Brooks' biggest regular customer is the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus, with its annual \$300,000 wardrobe. And for \$400,000, Brooks costumed Cecil B. de Mille's movie about that circus. Arena skating shows like *Hollywood Ice Revue*, Sonja Henie's *Ice Show*, *Holiday on Ice* run about \$200,000 for costumes — three times most Broadway show budgets.

The bulk of Brooks' business, however, does not come from its big customers like Roxy and Radio City shows, *Guys and Dolls* chorus lines, *The King and I* cos-

tumes. It comes from the 175-odd shows Brooks outfits weekly for universities, drama clubs, church societies, junior leagues, civic pageants, summer theaters and municipal operas all over the country. Brooks has 135,000 costumes for rent, from \$2000 ball gowns once owned by Mrs. Robert Ogden Goelet to Indian costumes from *Annie Get Your Gun*. For \$10 a night, the lead in a Northwestern University play goes on in a gown once worn by Maude Adams, Bea Lillie or Mary Martin.

This is possible because of suave, silver-haired James E. Stroock's policy of buying back the costumes he was originally paid a fat fee to make. "He's king of his own state," says producer John Murray Anderson. Famous for his nicknames, he calls Stroock, president of Brooks, "The Pope," "because he is so omnipotent."

Produced by PATRICIA COFFIN

CONTINUED

A wardrobe is born: designer Irene Sharaff with producers Ben Segal, Chandler Cowles in Stroock's office.



First, costumes are made in drab muslin, tried on for freedom of movement. Later, best materials are used.



Irene Sharaff discusses Paul Hartman's vice-presidential pants for *Of Thee I Sing*.

