

**Archive | NHPRC Katie Kelly, author of the book *The Wonderful World of Women's Wear Daily*
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CONNIE GOLDMAN: Katie Kelly autographed her new book *The Wonderful World of Women's Wear Daily*. Katie Kelly is a freelance writer who writes for *TIME Magazine* when she isn't off writing a book. Her new book is a gossipy irreverent look at the powerful trade journal *Women's Wear Daily*.

It's a survey of the complex and capricious fashion business, about the people that determine what we buy and what we wear. But it's also about the status seekers and the fashion elite. Katie Kelly spoke at a luncheon meeting of the Minnesota Press Club while in Minneapolis. She told the group about the world of *Women's Wear Daily*.

KATIE KELLY: What I'd like to talk to you today about, obviously, is my book *The Wonderful World of Women's Wear Daily*. And I thought I might give you just the briefest background about *Women's Wear* before we head into the real pizzazz of the day. *Women's Wear* is a trade paper to the garment industry, has a circulation of about 85,000, which when you consider any mass circulation magazine is absolutely nothing.

TIME Magazine hits about 28 million. A television special can command upwards of 40 million. So something like 85,000 puts it just slightly above the population of my hometown.

This is not to say that *Women's Wear* is not influential. And this is where the interest comes that even with a very small, very selective circulation, *Women's Wear Daily* is one incredibly powerful and influential newspaper. It is the only newspaper, daily newspaper, devoted entirely to the women's garment industry. And so, as such, it's a monopoly. 99% of the news in women's wear is so boring to the outside reader, it would put him to sleep over his morning cup of coffee.

This is hard industry news. This is zippers and buttons, and knitwear and nightgowns, and underwear. And, as I say in my book, the hottest piece would seem to be a piece on flammable nighties, or a new boutique that just opened in Chicago. It's that other 1% that causes all the furor and all the excitement.

And that's gossip and shishi, pizzazzy, frothy sorts of coverage of what beautiful lady wore what fashion designer's gown, to what dinner party and who ate lunch where, and so on. And it's this that has gotten *Women's Wear* all the publicity that it's gotten in the last few years.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: And then, Katie Kelly talked a little bit of the world of the gossipy, the alert, the bitchy, the autocratic, and the hip.

KATIE KELLY: Yeah. The ladies want publicity. This is the most publicity-hungry bunch of women in the world.

And this is not to put women down. I think we just have to realize that they do want publicity. And they will call *Women's Wear*. And they will make sure that a *Women's Wear* reporter and a photographer are there.

I remember covering-- when I was doing modern living at *TIME*, I covered a hotel opening in the Bahamas. And these are usually set up as junkets. And these people, rich, wealthy, influential, though they may be, if you give them a free ride, they'll go, right? They're just like all the rest of us. And that's where I have something called the IFs, which are the International Freeloaders.

These people wouldn't walk across the street to open up a hotel on 6th Avenue in New York. Give them a free trip to the Bahamas in the winter, and 1,000 of them went down. And there they were. And there was the *Women's Wear* reporter and photographer, plus *TIME*, and *LIFE*, and *Vogue*.

So it was a rather select little crowd. But it was a marvelous weekend. Terrific.

Can I tell you one anecdote from that weekend? They really do live different from at least them and me. I don't know about you. The rich people, that is.

We were in the lobby of this hotel in Paradise Island at the end of the whole three or four-day weekend. And Countess Crespi was there. Countess Crespi used to be Consuelo O'Connor from the east side of New York.

But there was the Countess. Valentino from head to toe. Valentino dress, bag, gloves, stockings, shoes, scuffed Valentino shoes, which-- that's reverse snobbism. And there was the Countess.

You're wooing to someone across the lobby saying, don't forget, darling. Dinner our place, tomorrow night. Rome.

**CONNIE
GOLDMAN:**

Katie Kelly. Author of *The Wonderful World of Women's Wear Daily*, as she spoke at the Minnesota Press Club in Minneapolis. This is Connie Goldman.