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WWD WEDNESDAY Sportswear

Graduate Dawn Mello: A Long Time Coming

BOSTON — Dawn Mello's long career took her to Bergdorf Goodman and Gucci, among other places, and on May 7 she returned to her hometown to button up one key detail.

In 1951, Mello broke her neck as she returned from a picnic to mark her graduation from Boston's School of Fashion Design. While her classmates were attending commencement, she was in traction.

More than a half-century later, Mello finally got to have the graduation experience. She joined nine young designer hopefuls who collected their diplomas during a graduation lunch and fashion show at the Copley Plaza hotel. The school also recognized Mello, the former president of Bergdorf Goodman and creative director at Gucci (where she recruited Tom Ford), who now runs her own consulting company, with a lifetime achievement award.

Mello recently helped re-launch the 16-floor Sogo department store flagship in Osaka, Japan.

Wearing a Gianfranco Ferré pantsuit, she recalled her school days as an era before fashion changed seismically.

"Jeans were worn only by workmen," she said. "Sportswear was a new idea, and most of us dressed just like our mothers. I remember wearing my hair in a French twist. At age 19, I looked 40."



Dawn Mello

— **Katherine Bowers**