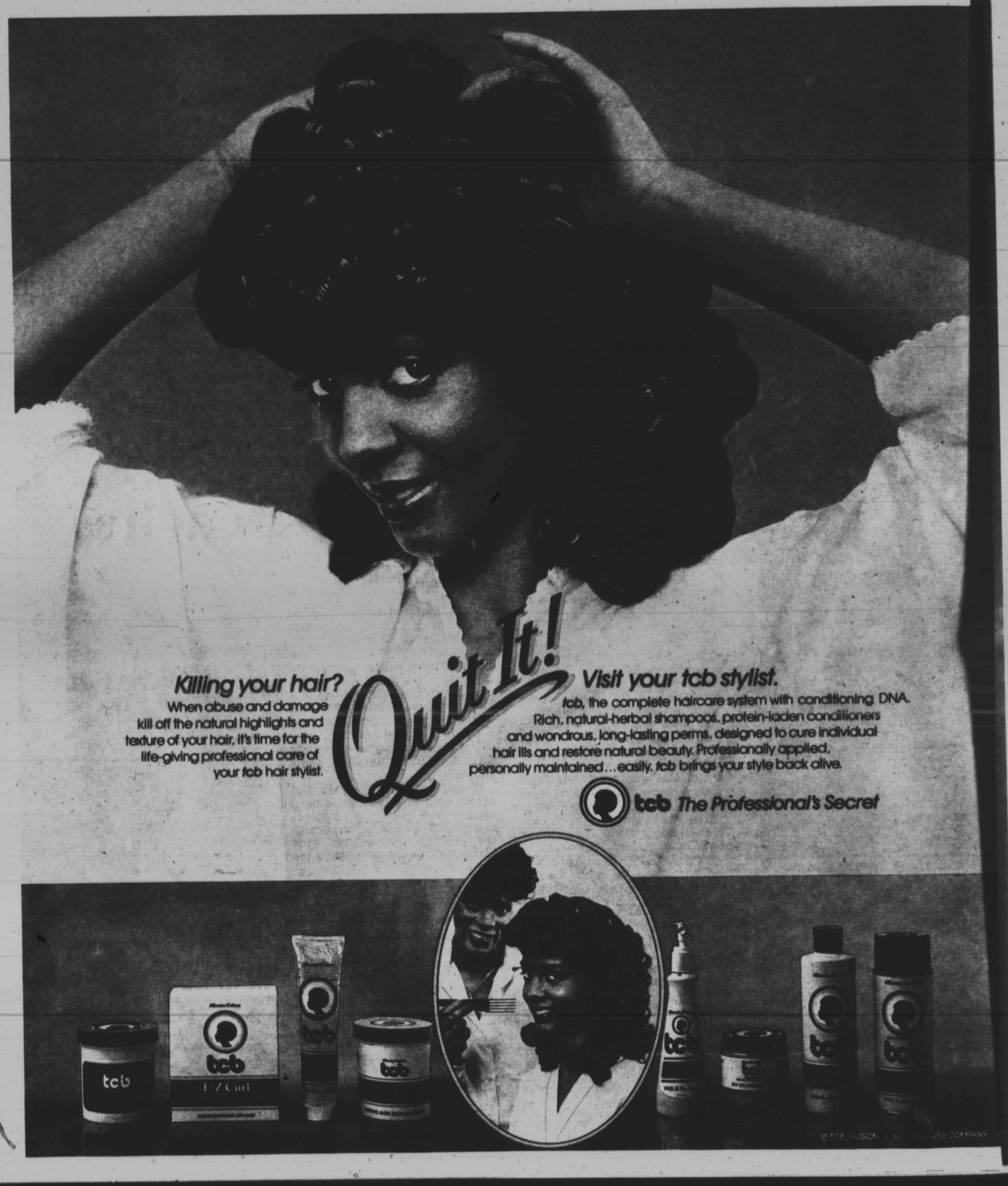


DAWN TRAVEL FEATURE:

Casual Elegance in Chile



In the marketplace, the city market is one of the places where merchants display their goods for the browsers to examine. There is very little haggling over prices, and usually there is no tipping.

Chile is a relatively undiscovered country for American blacks, for natural hairdos, combined with dark skin is a rarity in the country. It is, however, a very interesting place for honeymooning couples.

By Camay Murphy

If you were a June bride, chances are that Santiago, Chile would not be at the top of your list of places to spend a honeymoon. Primarily because people don't know very much about Chile.

When I announced to my friends that I was going to visit my stepdaughter in Chile the remarks were "Oh! is that where chili comes from? Bring me back a good recipe."

But even I was flabbergasted to learn that you leave Miami, FL and somehow end up on the other side of the world near the Pacific Ocean.

The first impression that I had on my arrival was that to visit Chile you had better know Spanish and you are a curiosity if you are black. There are few blacks in Chile. Nimble fingers leaping through a Spanish-English dictionary does not help because if the accent is wrong Chileans do not understand you.

The people do not appear amused at your attempts at using broken bits and pieces of the language. And nothing else suffices — not French, German or Portugese.

There is something almost formal about the city of Santiago. It is not a place where you run down to the corner in runover bedroom slippers and paint-spotted corduroy pants to pick up a newspaper.

If I lived in Santiago, I would have to stay up all night to get that look of elegant casualness that appears to prevade the female Chilean population.

Speaking from the American viewpoint I would say that the women are very "pulled together."

Perhaps the location of Santiago itself surrounded by beautiful snow-capped mountains and high hills generates that protected or pampered feeling which translated into a certain air of confidence and sophistication be it studied or otherwise.



Street scene in Santiago where leisurely strolling is the way to go. Black Americans are a novelty, and instantly attract attention.

Shortly after arrival, I jumped into something mis-matched but comfortable because we were just going to walk over to the open market, the el feria.

That outfit was mistak-o numero uno, because the Chilean ladies were strolling through the stalls in fitted-to-the-body designer pants, glovesoft short leather boots, French silk blouses buttoned low to display gobs of gold chains and little Gucci, envelope, leather bags tucked under their arms.

The older ladies wore tiny print silk dresses with cashmere sweaters around their shoulders, high heeled pumps and diamonds.

Everybody looked so California Girl American or Continental-European that I had to repeat to myself, "I am in Santiago, Chile, S.A."

People in Chile are not over-dressed but they are dressed, made-up and expensive looking.

One of the nicest things about Chile is that except for the

(Continued on Page 14)