SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular. I’m director of archives and special collections at the Ford Model Agency, and together along with Professor Karen Cannell who is director of archives and special collections at Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re very happy to be able to interview the model Jane Axell today. Today’s date is June 8th, 2010. We’re at the Ford Model Agency offices in New York City. Jane modeled with Eileen and Jerry Ford starting in 1968. She’s presently living in Sweden and Gambia which is in Africa and we’re about to start our interview. And thank you for joining us today.

AXELL: Thank you. [01:00]

SICULAR: We’re very (inaudible) to have you with us.

AXELL: Well, I’m very happy to be here.

SICULAR: That’s great.

AXELL: Thank you the same.

SICULAR: So you were born in what country? Sweden?


SICULAR: But you started model-- and you started modeling at age 17 in Sweden?

AXELL: Yes. Yes.

SICULAR: And how did that come to be? How did you start?
AXELL: Oh, I -- when (inaudible) at eight, when I was eight, I went to radio stations to see if I could act or sing on radio, so I always kind of acted. So my mother told me, “There’s an agency. If you look in the phone book, there’s a model agency.” I went there when I was 14, I think. So (inaudible). Have you heard of it?

SICULAR: In --

AXELL: It was a very -- they -- back, back. So I did some little jobs on, you know, fashion stuff, and I was even younger, around 14. So after school, then I started modeling, and just a few months after I started, it came a German movie company to Sweden. Looked for, for, for people for a movie, and they took me to Munich, Germany, and I made a test, [02:00] and I got the job. So I worked in -- moved to Germany and made some movies there. I had a three-year contract with them, and I stayed there for a while. Lived there for a while. And after that, they -- I got my first movie agent. And she said, “Germany is not really the best market. England would be good for you.” But then, I felt like modeling is very nice, too, so I want to go to Paris. So I went to Paris.

SICULAR: And who did you start with in Paris?

AXELL: Paris (inaudible), [Francois Lalot?].

SICULAR: Francois Lalot? Right.
AXELL: Exactly. So I lived there. First, I lived very exclusive, like upper east kind of -- that kind of feeling.

(inaudible)

SICULAR: And what kind of bookings did you do there?

AXELL: I did shot at the Mode. I did -- actually, I’m not very good at remembering these, you know, magazines. I was more so active around the --

SICULAR: What magazine? Do you remember magazines you were in there? Did you do Vogue or Harper’s Bazaar or L'Officiel, Elle? [03:00]

AXELL: I, I did some of it, but I cannot exactly remember which ones I did, honestly, and I’m sorry about that.

SICULAR: That’s OK. And then, so then how did you wind up coming to the United States and getting to work with Eileen and Jerry Ford?

AXELL: Yeah, because Eileen, she met me already before I went to Germany. She asked me to come to America, and that was too early for me.

SICULAR: How old were you?

AXELL: Then, I was like 17. (inaudible) at the start. And after I had been to Paris, I felt like I wanted to work in London. I often -- when I was in Paris, I worked too much in Germany, very much for the German magazine. It was good, good quick money all the time. So I felt like that
was becoming not so, not as exciting as it is in Paris and London. You know, more high fashion. So after that, I -- you know, because I used to travel every three days during two years, I was all flying, flying, flying to the other places in Europe, especially Germany, you know. So when I got a work permit for London, they only allowed six foreign models a year, [04:00] and I was one of them. And then I said, no, I’m going to work exclusive with the high fashion (inaudible), you know? So that’s what I did.

SICULAR: And what year was this?

AXELL: Must have been -- maybe it was ’65, ’66, something like that I suppose.

SICULAR: And do you remember the photographers you worked with in London?

AXELL: I remember one named Tony Kent who was very high, you know. He was very good. And I don’t remember names. Maybe it’s my age now, you know. I am getting older, so I don’t. And I was not the kind of person. I did have a book, you know, with my pictures, but somebody -- because it got lost, some of the pages on the way, and I wasn’t always into just the fashion stuff. I was, there were so many other things too, you know? So I don’t remember like that. That -- where was I now?
SICULAR: So you started in Sweden, you went to Germany, you went to Paris --

AXELL: Now I’m in London.

SICULAR: -- and now you’re in London.

AXELL: Now I’m in London, right. Exactly. So there I worked only very nice, high fashion stuff in London, and I was there for one year. [05:00] And then I met a man who was an actor. He was working with Marcello Mastroianni is his name. The Italian actor. In a very high movies, you know. So I was -- then he was going to make a movie in New York, and I also felt like I wanted to go, so I said to Eileen, “I cannot work in (inaudible),” and she said, “Oh good!” and she sent me a ticket. And off I went, and I came to New York.

SICULAR: And you started with Eileen and Jerry.

AXELL: Yes. That’s (inaudible).

SICULAR: And that was around 1968.

AXELL: Yeah.

SICULAR: And do you remember who your booker was then? Any of your bookers? [Monique?] or [Marian?] or?

AXELL: Sorry.

SICULAR: That’s OK. Do you remember what the process was like? Did they have to test you, get you tested, or was your book already --
AXELL: No, you did some testing and you went around to, to many interviews as a go-sees and stuff. (inaudible) also was -- it was kind of busy [06:00] also with my movie stuff, what I did when I came here, you know, because I was having this. I was living this luxury life with this, with this limousine service and chauffeur, and I was a bit spoiled, you know? So I wasn’t as on as I should have been, honestly, you know?

SICULAR: And when you joined Eileen and Jerry, did Eileen give you any advice when you first arrived?

AXELL: Yes, she always gives you advice. First of all, I was supposed to stay with the (inaudible) all the girls like you usually do. But, since I came with somebody who was really an actor, an established actor, it was OK for me to live like that, you know? And the advice like that, she say, used to say to me, “You always have to look like a million dollars. Like high heels and diamonds and fur coat. Always look like a million dollar.” That was a good advice from her, and yeah. What else? Oh, advice is always be on time. I was very sad today. I came, like, five minutes late. I was thinking, oh, that is not my style! But it was all, it was a long time ago, and to come [07:00] with a cab from Brooklyn, you know?
SICULAR: And did they change your hairstyle or your makeup at all? Did they give you any advice?

AXELL: Not much.

SICULAR: About your look.

AXELL: They never did that much with my hair. I always had it -- (inaudible) mostly have (inaudible) long like that, you know. But most of the time, I had this kind of hairstyle more or less all my life.

SICULAR: And did you like working in New York?

AXELL: Yes, I did. I did. I loved it. I love this industry. (inaudible) I want to model until I’m 100. It’s so nice, you know?

SICULAR: That’s nice.

AXELL: It is really nice.

SICULAR: What are some of the differences when you modeled, between modeling in Germany or Sweden, London, Paris, and New York? Was it the same or was it different, working? Like booking teams. Were they different? Getting information.

AXELL: Yes, it’s a little bit different everywhere. But it’s always the discipline and you know. Be on time and the discipline, and that’s how I see it, anyway. You know? I don’t [08:00] -- I can’t say exactly what I think the diff-
- except that the people are different in different countries.

SICULAR: Right.

AXELL: Germans are not so funny. But that’s the money, but you know. And like that, you know? So -- and then I went. You know, I was here only first time for just a few months because then we went to Los Angeles, and I bought -- started making stuff there, you know? I got a -- it was a movie company called Filmways, and same company who had the Sharon Tate, Roman Polanski’s wife who got killed, you know, by the Manson murder stuff. So he met me, and he wanted me to make movies, and I was also into that. I started with the side with both modeling and acting, you know? So I didn’t want to sign up for three years because then he would be the one who would tell me what to do, but I worked with them a lot and did this Beverly Hillbillies things, and that is like a cult stuff. And even when I was in Prague with my, with my daughter’s [09:00] husband less than one year ago. And they said, “Oh, you’re Ulla from Beverly Hillbillies!” I said, “What?” Do you know, because it’s like a cult thing. So I did that and a few other small stuff and different, you know, different series. And I did commercial, TV commercials. Eileen was
the one helping me out to get the Screen Actors Guild card so I could do that too, you know?

SICULAR: When you did TV commercials here, were you able to talk because of your accent or? (inaudible)

AXELL: Yes, I did one commercial called Swedish Tanning Secret, so then we should, should -- we should speak Swedish, and that was a funny incident because I was supposed to be able to ride a horse. So it was -- the company was from New York, but I was living in LA, so they said -- the ladies said, well make sure you don’t have to show that you can ride a horse because you can’t, right? I said, oh. So anyway, the (inaudible) said you have to show us, [10:00] so in Los Angeles, I was on a horse. And they took me around like this, very easy, and nothing happened. So then they send me to New York, and they put me at Plaza Hotel here, and I was saying what? You know. I was feeling like I don’t know the limits, but like it’s just crazy. Like it is, this stuff. So, anyway, I got the job, and we were three Swedish girls, and we were going to make two TV commercials. One was not going to get the job. So we came to Mexico, Baja California there. And they wanted me to ride a horse, and I was trying to train, and they gave me this small horse, and so we came by boat. Any they’re very wild. So when they put me on the horse, the
horse just took off. So I had to jump off. So they said, oh, we cannot have on that here -- her on that one. So I got to do another one, sitting on a cliff, just looking beautiful. And one of the other girls got the horse.

SICULAR: That’s good.

AXELL: That was quite an experience.

SICULAR: When you modeled, did you have to do your own hair and makeup, or did they have people for you?

AXELL: Yeah, when I started, it was always, you know, we did our own [11:00] hair or makeup, have the shoes, you know, your stylist. You were -- you’re everything. Yeah. It was like that in these days. Very heavy to carry around.

SICULAR: Right. I’m sure.

AXELL: But not, not when we came out of Sweden. That was just in Sweden.

SICULAR: No, here too, though.

AXELL: Yeah? Was it?

SICULAR: Yeah. I remember --

AXELL: Maybe hair and makeup, yeah. Yeah, maybe hair and makeup, but some -- yeah.

SICULAR: Did you have to change your look or did you always wear your hair the same way (inaudible)?

AXELL: No, it’s a -- at the start, in these days, you even had wigs.
SICULAR: Right.

AXELL: Sometimes I had black hair. It was short, curly.

SICULAR: Wow.

AXELL: Of course, I (inaudible).

SICULAR: So did your bookers tell you the night before the type of booking so you would know what to bring?

AXELL: Yes.

SICULAR: Like did they say summer or spring or type of shoes?

AXELL: Yes, yeah, they would tell you that. And then, of course, it must have been very different. The models (inaudible) bring this stuff (inaudible) know what to -- it was a (inaudible) business by itself.

SICULAR: Right.

AXELL: Really.

SICULAR: And you were almost, you were an art director or creative director (inaudible).

AXELL: Exactly. [12:00] Like that’s why -- that’s why I think I have got used to do all these things and get interesting. Because even when I worked as a fashion designer in Pakistan. It came from a modeling job, and I was showing the clothes, the guy said, “Oh, you’re better at this than I am. Why don’t you come with me to India and Pakistan and help me doing a collection?” So there was a Swedish ambassador, the wife of the Swedish ambassador --
she was into fashion, so I met her. And she says, “Yes, I think you are very good for this,” so it is a company called Seda. And they are, for the third world, helping -- trying to make them get into business. So I went with them. I stayed two months in Pakistan, Islamabad, a very crazy place. And I had my (inaudible) there, and I made a fashion collection.

SICULAR: When was this?

AXELL: This was in -- I can say -- I can only say by how old my children are, were because they were 1 and 2. My oldest ones. And they are now 31, 32, [13:00] so like 30 years ago. So we come back to ’70-something, right?

SICULAR: It seems that modeling has brought you to so many different avenues. I mean acting, designing, and --

AXELL: Yes, it’s like that. Because I say your (inaudible), and I do paint, and I do write, so I’m a creative person. So I get inspired everywhere. So that’s why -- well, now, I bought this house, very lovely house by the water. It’s called cottage, like 300-year-old, you know.

SICULAR: In Sweden or Gambia?

AXELL: In Sweden. In Sweden. I bought the place when I was only 21. I started investing my money when I -- from the start. Because I come from kind of poor circumstances. I
felt like, no, I’m going to try to keep some of this. Not every model did that, you know.

SICULAR: No.

AXELL: I like to (inaudible) the money I have. And that one I fixed up very beautiful mixed with the very old and the very new. So I rent it out, too, from everywhere in the world. Mostly America and Europe, you know, and they come and stay for a week or two. And especially in the summer. I can’t stay home anymore because people live there, [14:00] and I make money. But that is nice. And that is my plan for Africa, Gambia too. I have a big one. It looks like a palace. It looks like you are in Greece with these pillars and big swimming pool on the light. You know, turquoise with the lightning underneath and gardens with all the fruits and flowers. And it’s like, just short. Like 50 meters down to creek with a (inaudible), and all the oysters come up laying on the beach. You can just pick your oysters there. Have a lemon with your (inaudible). And they take a little boat, and it takes like five minutes and you’re out by the ocean, Atlantic Ocean. And the biggest fishing village in Gambia.

SICULAR: And you got both houses with your modeling money?

AXELL: Huh?
SICULAR: And you were able to purchase both homes with your modeling money? Money that you made from modeling?

AXELL: Yeah. The first one is from that, and then from the money I make of that one, I get the next one. I have four -- I have three more (inaudible) so if this works good, I’ll make another lodge.

SICULAR: In Gambia, or?

AXELL: In Gambia because that’s where I’m --

SICULAR: That’s great. [15:00] That’s great. So what were your favorite -- what are some of your favorite memories from modeling? What did you love most about it?

AXELL: Oh, I love that. I love it.

SICULAR: I see a big smile, so (inaudible).

AXELL: Yeah, I love it. You know. I love it, you know. I love the attention. I like very much when I worked in London especially because there, you had really the hairdresser, the makeup, and they did very -- like the hair and stuff and very, you know. And they only did that all the time. I mean, this guy, Tony Kent, he had this Bentley, you know, and we went to Gran Canaria to take pictures there, and it was very, it was very nice. Yes, that -- I love the modeling. And there was some, you know, it’s still, you know. I can try to show you some magazine in Sweden and Germany (inaudible).
SICULAR: Do you have some magazines with you? Some pictures (inaudible)?

AXELL: Yes, I brought you.

SICULAR: Oh, let’s see.

AXELL: So you can see a little bit.

SICULAR: See.

AXELL: There’s a composite.

SICULAR: Tony [16:00] Landberg.

AXELL: Oh, Tony Landberg is a Swedish photographer. There you can see.

SICULAR: Oh, is this your composite card?

AXELL: That’s my composite stuff.

SICULAR: Is this OK?

CREW: Yeah, just (inaudible) this way.

SICULAR: OK. Look how cute. This looks like a wig.

AXELL: Right, that’s a wig. You see, and that’s a wig.

SICULAR: And this looks like another composite.

AXELL: I (inaudible).

SICULAR: Beautiful. Very (inaudible).

AXELL: Nice, huh?

SICULAR: Yeah.

AXELL: They’re upside down.

SICULAR: Here you go. Another wig?
AXELL: Right. Yes, (inaudible). I guess not there. You know her, you remember her or no? She was also modeling (inaudible).

SICULAR: [Candice?]?

AXELL: [17:00] Yes, I have some with her (inaudible). That was taken in Greenwich Village.

SICULAR: Do you remember by who?

AXELL: I don’t. The other were upside down.

SICULAR: Here we go. Oh, look at that hair. Is this your hair?

AXELL: I don’t know. I like these ones. I think they are nice.

SICULAR: Yeah.

AXELL: Like this one.

SICULAR: I can see the harp.

AXELL: I always liked this costume stuff because (inaudible) composite is (inaudible).

SICULAR: These are beautiful pictures.

AXELL: That is a California photographer called Ron Joy. He did most actors and stuff. It’s very light (inaudible). Here’s America stuff more. This one I did in New York. I know (inaudible). These ones are New York. I think all of them. (inaudible) New Orleans, that one. I remember that one. [18:00] (inaudible).
SICULAR: Did you prefer shooting in studio or on location?

That’s beautiful.

AXELL: I guess, I guess in this one is also this.

SICULAR: That’s (inaudible)? OK.

AXELL: (inaudible). And that is also in Sweden. Remember this?

SICULAR: Yes.

AXELL: Like Twiggy (inaudible).

SICULAR: Yeah. The Sassoon hairdos. And are you inside also?

AXELL: Yes.

SICULAR: Why don’t you show us?

AXELL: OK.

SICULAR: That’s you?

AXELL: That’s me.

SICULAR: I want to put this here so we don’t -- OK. OK.

AXELL: That’s me.

CREW: On the left too or?

AXELL: No. That -- no, that’s right.

SICULAR: Yeah.

AXELL: This -- (inaudible). Ready?

CREW: Yeah.

AXELL: Me. Especially that one. [19:00] It’s nicer.

CREW: OK, got it.
AXELL: There. That’s (inaudible). That is not really interesting. This one is cute, too.

CREW: Got it.

AXELL: That was a nice one.

CREW: Got it.

SICULAR: Did you like to wear sporty clothing or high fashion?

AXELL: Yes, it’s not (inaudible) how I want to. The dates (inaudible).

CREW: Yeah, I got it all. You can --

AXELL: OK, finished?

CREW: Oh, you want to keep going?

SICULAR: Yeah. If you want to (inaudible).

CREW: Yeah.

SICULAR: OK. [20:00]

AXELL: Yeah. Here are some of the -- of them in Sweden lately, you know. (inaudible)

SICULAR: And this is Swedish?

AXELL: Yes, yes.

SICULAR: (inaudible).

AXELL: Swedish, right? Swedish, Norway.

CREW: (inaudible).

AXELL: Oh, you want to see?

CREW: Yeah.

AXELL: (inaudible) this stuff.
SICULAR: That’s OK.

AXELL: That’s OK? OK. Did you get it?

SICULAR: Because we’re going to scan them again anyway.

AXELL: You get it?

CREW: Yeah.

AXELL: Yeah?

SICULAR: So what (inaudible) where did you do runway shows?

Which countries?

AXELL: Mostly Paris and --

SICULAR: That’s great.

AXELL: -- Ted Lapidus found me on the street, and I said OK.

You know. And --

SICULAR: How do you think modeling has changed from when you started to now?

AXELL: First of all, we had so much to do ourselves. And nowadays, the girls are just waiting for people to do it for them. They just sit down. They can’t, you know.

SICULAR: Right.

AXELL: [21:00] Just very naked, you know, with no makeup and no prepared. Just let other people take care of them. And that was kind of hard for me at start because I felt I know best how my makeup should be done, and so you know? But then you just have to relax and say, OK, now it’s like this. So.
SICULAR: Do you have any favorite photographers that you’ve worked with along the way? Besides Mr. Kent?
AXELL: No. I don’t really. I know. I don’t really.
SICULAR: That’s OK.
AXELL: Well, and that’s Tony Kent. I have his family in London, you know. Because that was, yeah. That was something I remember special. But (inaudible) a lot, but I just don’t remember names.
SICULAR: And what, what do you think is the biggest surprise of your career?
AXELL: Biggest surprise?
SICULAR: Yes.
AXELL: Oh, in my career? All together?
SICULAR: Shut off?
CREW: Yeah.
SICULAR: And we’ll turn it back on, OK. Also, I have to get (inaudible) when do you leave? Your career. What’s the biggest surprise of your career.
AXELL: [22:00] In my life?
SICULAR: Your career. Modeling.
AXELL: My career. Modeling career. Biggest surprises is that I’m always -- it’s been so, so positive and (inaudible) welcome and people are being helpful, and you
know. That can be a surprise, you know? That is surprise for me.

SICULAR: Do you have any advice for young girls starting out today?


SICULAR: And did you take care of yourself that way when you were starting out?

AXELL: Yes, I was never into alcohol, also because I feel like I have to know, I have to be on top of my shit, as they say sometimes. You have to know what you’re doing, you know. So since I was 17 only when I started traveling, I always want to have control. You know, to know that I won’t be abused or something. And I never [23:00] had any problem in modeling. I would sometimes, some people could be like, oh, you know, taking the parties. Especially in Paris, some other agency. Never happened to me. I had very great people around me, supporting me, like Eileen. Like all agencies have been very good behind me.

SICULAR: That’s great.

AXELL: Yes.
SICULAR: And before you started modeling, who did you think some of the most beautiful women in the world were? Like movie stars or models? Who were some of your --

AXELL: Grace Kelly. I mean, Ingrid Bergman. There’s many. [Grace Jo?], many. Many people. I cannot say. (inaudible) all exciting people, of course. I met a lot of them in Hollywood, you know. I told you about Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis. I used to (inaudible) traveled with Sammy Davis. You know, this private jet to Las Vegas. And my girlfriend, because she was a dancer with him.

SICULAR: You look like his first wife.

AXELL: I know. Maybritt Wilkens. And I went to this Zsa Zsa Gabor’s house and Liza Minnelli’s house, and met some [24:00] -- these old, big movie stars that said, “You have star quality,” you know. So all that stuff. That -- oh everything has been so exciting. I just -- you can feel it maybe.

SICULAR: Sure. No, it’s great. You have such a great aura, and you look so happy, and life has been good to you.

AXELL: Yeah. Really. I try to take -- you know, I feel like life is short, you know? Try to make the best of it and enjoy yourself right at the moment. And make plans. That’s what I feel like. Make plans for your life, but
live in the moment, you know. Take care of yourself and be natural, too. Be yourself.

SICULAR: Do you have any last thoughts that you’d like to add before we close?

AXELL: I’m very happy that I’m here, Patty. That you invited me to come. I’m very -- this is one of my most exciting --

SICULAR: We’re so thrilled that you were able to join us.

AXELL: I’m so happy that I --

SICULAR: Thank you so much.

AXELL: -- could come and that you would let me come. So much.

SICULAR: Great. Well, we thank you for joining us.

AXELL: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE