SICULAR: [00:00] I have one other question -- almost one -- looking back over male models were your specialty, do you see many changes between the business between the '50s to '60s to when you took over in the '70s and '80s, and the models now? The business?

GONET: Well I don't know what the business was like in the '50s and '60s. The male models that I used to represent who were big in the early '70s said that their friends saw us as that there were so few models -- male models -- and so much work that all you did was run from one booking to the other changing like Superman, running into each other. And then as there were more models that changed. That -- I think the biggest difference that I saw in all the years was in the women. And I don't mean the looks so much. This is just a personal observation, is when I left -- when I closed my agency down and I was out of the men's division [01:00] business I went to work for another agency that should go nameless. And it was really the first time in about 20 years that I hadn't been exclusively around the women's business, because at that point I'd been in the women and dealt with those Elite models and Wilhelmina models and then the men for over 15 years -- 20 years. And
then went back into the women's business, and I was taken back how hard and vulgar the women had become. They were not like that when I first started. There was much more glamour to it. I found that the women were much less beautiful, much had very little class, were pretty vulgar.

I was --

SICULAR: The models or the bookers?

GONET: Everybody. I was really kind of taken back by that.

I just -- maybe it had always been like that at other agencies, [02:00] I don't know. Having worked at Willy and Elite and running my own, which like --

SICULAR: They're all top.

GONET: And the way you handled yourself was a certain way, but it wasn't like that when I went to a smaller, less prestigious agency.

SICULAR: And what's the biggest surprise of your career?

GONET: That I lasted 23 years. That it happened. I had no -- - I had never had dreams about that. That wasn't -- the modeling -- like I said earlier I knew more about brain surgery -- which I knew nothing about. The idea that I would come from Los Angeles 300 bucks in my pocket, fall into the business, and end up 23 years in it at this level, and experience what I experienced. You know, to experience Milan, and Rome, and Paris, and London, from the modeling
business point of view is completely different than you would experience as a tourist. You'd go to the -- in Paris -- you'd go to the great shows and [03:00] dinners, and meet interesting people. It wasn't a tourist thing. That's what I also -- I just loved the experience. The whole thing was a great, great joy. I miss it a lot. I really do miss it.

SICULAR: [04:00] Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with Professor Karen Trivette Canelle from Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, we're very happy to continue our series of interviews of fashion, beauty, photography, and modeling. We're at the vault in Culver City, California. Today's date is June 21st, 2011. And we're so happy to be interviewing Susan Berr, who era spanned approximately 1965 to 1975. Ready?

CREW: Yeah.

SICULAR: Hi, Susan, we're so happy that you're with us.

BERR: Oh, thrilled to be here.

SICULAR: First of all, what was your modeling name?

BERR: Susan Berr.

SICULAR: And where did you grow up?

BERR: I grew up -- well, I was born in the Bronx, and I grew up in Queens, just on the border of [05:00] Long Island, which explains (laughter) my accent.
SICULAR: And how did you get into modeling? Did you find your way, or did they find their way to you because you're so pretty?

BERR: No, it's something that I wanted to do, and my parents were always told, "Oh, she should be a model. Take her to be a model." And my father was in the garment business, so I was exposed to fashion and the showroom models, which is a very different thing, but nonetheless they were models, and finally -- I wanted to do it at 10, but at 15 my mother said we can go into the city, and see some agents, which we did.

SICULAR: Were you very tall then?

BERR: I was always -- yes, I was very tall.

SICULAR: And were you reading fashion magazines at that time?

BERR: Always.

SICULAR: What magazines did you read?

BERR: At my house we had everything. Vogue, Bazaar, and all the magazines.

SICULAR: And did you read the younger magazines?

BERR: No.

SICULAR: Stuff like Seventeen, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

BERR: Believe it or not I never had a Seventeen magazine. I was very interested in the high fashion end, which was not
[06:00] to be where I found up, but it's what encouraged me. What I admired.

SICULAR: So your mother, did she call the agencies to make appointments?

BERR: I guess she must have because we went and they saw us, so I have no idea how it all happened. When we went -- I forget. There was a child -- a children's agency, the [William Schuller?] Agency, and they were very young. I was 15, so I was between being an adult and being a child, and it was very, very commercial. Then there was another one, the [William Rice?] Agency. They would have taken me. I didn't want that, because I had these aspirations of being [Suzy Parker], I suppose, well she was a little before, but that was a big model. They didn't have as many supermodels, so you didn't really have as many names. I mean, I think she was really one of the first supermodels that you knew her name. Within the industry you knew many models that [07:00] were important, but it wasn't public, as it is today. It was different. So, we went to [Plaza Five], which was a very good agency.

SICULAR: It's a great agency.

BERR: It was a great agency. They liked -- I was a little young, but they had me tested. I took some test pictures.
I have one picture from the first photo shoot which was, let's see --

SICULAR: And did you might have discussed with them that they wanted you to do age appropriate bookings?

BERR: No, never came up. This was the first --

SICULAR: Oh, so cute.

BERR: -- from the first --

SICULAR: Was that a test? Or was that --

BERR: That was a test. I had very good hair. I mean, I think I still have pretty good hair.

SICULAR: That's a great picture.

BERR: So this was from the first test shoot.

SICULAR: Do you remember who photographed that?

BERR: I don't.

SICULAR: Well it's a beautiful picture.

BERR: I wish I did, but I don't.

SICULAR: Can you see that?

BERR: Sorry. OK. And I went back -- I don't know if I went back; I guess I went back. Anyway, they took me. I wish I had my headshot from [08:00] Plaza Five. It was real cute. I had my hair half up and down with a bow. I had a bow in it. I looked like I was 12. It was cute.

SICULAR: And this was 1965?

BERR: Yes.
SICULAR: OK.

BERR: And that one was earlier. This was 1963.

SICULAR: Nineteen-sixty-three.

BERR: This was earlier. Because I was still in high school. Yeah. It was earlier.

SICULAR: So were you able to model when you were in high school?

BERR: Well it was difficult because I had school, and I lived in Queens. So I -- What I had to do was take the train after school. We had triple sessions, so I got out at 1:30. Went to school, it was dark out. I mean, it was ridiculous. And I would go and take the train, then go to my interviews. I mean, when I first started I bought heels, and dresses, and I don't know what I was thinking. I mean, I had everything but a hat box, but that era was over, so I didn't have a hat box. And I walked and walked, I got lost, I couldn't find Park Avenue South, I knew Park Avenue, I had to go to Park Avenue South. How I survived is a miracle.

SICULAR: [09:00] And did you go alone on your appointments?

BERR: I went alone. And I have to say that no one ever bothered me, really. I mean, things were very safe, then. Or I was very lucky. I didn't give off the vibe, perhaps. I don't know. In any case, after the first day I had to go
back and buy shoes, like a stacked heel with the foam inside, and it was a lot of walking. Mostly because I got lost a lot. And let's see --

SICULAR: And what was your first shoot for, do you remember?
BERR: Yes. With [Joey Hunter?] who became the head of Men's.

SICULAR: Right. I worked with him.
BERR: Very nice.
SICULAR: I love him.
BERR: He came up later on in life, also. In any case, we did the cover of Concentration. The game, Concentration. And he was the boy, and I was the girl, even though Joey, he was older. But he -- because most people they play teenagers, but they're not teenagers. They're 21, 22. I was [10:00] really a teenager. Which is fine. And [Hugh Downs?], very nice man. He came up later in life, as well. In any case, we did that and it was fun. I think that when you did a cover of a game or a box or something, you made extra money at the time. It was something to do with that.

SICULAR: (inaudible).
BERR: I started out at 35 an hour. Which was a lot of money. I mean, it's chicken feed today, but it was a lot of money then. And it's all relative because --
SICULAR: And you were a child, and then you were on [inaudible].

BERR: Right. And my parents saved all my money. They put it in a bank account. They gave me an allowance. I would go into the city. I would take taxis. Taxi's relatively to what you earn was not that expensive, and I think I got tired of getting lost, actually. I ate every day at Chock Full O'Nuts which was -- I don't know. Very, very inexpensive, and very... because it was safe, and I knew to go there, and there were many all over, and I -- my parents were always worried I'd get poisoned. [11:00] I'd eat the wrong thing. I had a very overprotective mother and father.

SICULAR: Which is sweet.

BERR: Yeah, it was sweet, and it was good. It was very good. There were so many girls that came from far away in Texas, and California, other places that they didn't have families. A lot of them stay at the Barbizon. I remember that, too.

SICULAR: And what was with Eileen?

BERR: Well, the girls -- yes. Eileen from Scandinavia. She had a lot of Scandinavian girls.

SICULAR: So what was your first magazine looking for?

BERR: I did work for Seventeen, as it turned out.
SICULAR: And how did your high school friends treat you after they saw you and knew you were a model?

BERR: I was always very, very low-key. I -- my mother said you have the option. If you'd like to go to Professional Children's School, and there was another school, but I forget the name of it, that would be fine, because they would be willing to do that. And I didn't want to. I think I should have, looking back, but I didn't. I kind of wanted to just be regular.

SICULAR: But I'm sure your friends used to (inaudible) see you in the magazine. [12:00]

BERR: No, only when I did the Modern Romance covers, which I did 15. The point being, that they were more like test shooting, so if you went to the photographer, and he was very nice -- Robert Scott. He did all the -- him and Sandra Dee and Joey Heatherton. Lot of girls like that -- kind of fluffy looking pretty girls did that. And if he would sell the covers, I think, he would get paid, and then we got paid. It was something like that.

SICULAR: (inaudible) back on spec.

BERR: Right. It was -- I think it was. I don't know if I was on spec, but I know that he was, and I have some of the covers. And that's when -- I never told anyone except for my very best friend that I was doing this because I was
embarrassed. So they were covers like this. As you can see.

SICULAR: I think we used to read those at camp.

BERR: It wasn't as trashy [13:00] as it sounds as it is now. It really was. And it was very innocent, and I personally never read them, but the thing that came out -- things like this. So at school, when they did get wind of this, and some of these little quotes here that was -- I was teased about. It was one 10 cents of thrill locked in the cabin with five boys, something like that. That was very -- that was very -- I was embarrassed, but I never made a big thing about it, so it -- I was well liked. I was a nice girl, and I could have been a cheerleader, but I didn't go that route. I was busy doing this.

SICULAR: When did you feel like you made it professionally?

BERR: I really felt just being a model was a good enough, I really did. It had a tremendous status. Huge. It was then what I think being a reality star is today, to the kids. [14:00] It was -- just being --

SICULAR: This is a much smaller group, then, too.

BERR: I mean, even being a stewardess then was a big deal. Being a Playboy Bunny was a big deal. But being a model -- and then there were categories of being a model. A showroom model was not a photography model, and a runway
model was not what a runway model is today. Because if you did photography you really didn't do runway, unless if Seventeen had a big show, you would do their show, or Glamour, or I did the Wool Council. Cotton.

SICULAR: Did you enjoy doing runway?

BERR: Well, it was exciting, because we did it in very big venues, and it was exciting, but I was always a little nervous. I'm still a little nervous. (laughter)

SICULAR: Did people ever recognize you on the street? Or come up to you?

BERR: Yeah, I think they did after I did the Breck more so — well they knew I was a model. I looked like one for a long, long time.

SICULAR: You still do.

BERR: Well, thank you. But you go through stages. You should be a model, [15:00] you are a model, have you been a model, and then it's kind of a -- gets a little blurry after that.

SICULAR: And then you come back and model again.

BERR: And then you come back maybe, if you're lucky. But I think the best part is when you are.

SICULAR: Right. So, who were some of the favorite photographers that you got to work with?
BERR: Well, I did work with Scavullo, who is very nice. I mean, cause he's --

SICULAR: What did you shoot with him?

BERR: I did this album cover with him, but I did a couple of other beauty things, but I can't -- I don't remember exactly what they were, but working with him -- he's one of the photographers, they all have different styles. But his style is, "Beautiful, oh wonderful, oh that's great, fabulous." A few of them are like that, then there are a few of them that are telling you, "Relax, and smile, and a little looser," and that's not a good thing, because that only makes you more tense. But there were many different styles. But of course, one would respond better to [16:00] the guys telling you, oh that's beautiful, that's fabulous. And it makes you that much better. He's very good, very good. And everything was always on the floor with him. Lying on the floor. He had very good assistants. I liked Steve [Horn?]. I thought he was great; I had a crush on him, actually. He was tall, and kind of blonde, and he had this shaggy hair. He would look very contemporary today. I don't know what he looks like today, but his look was very today. And he had a huge white studio. Everything was white. It was very contemporary, which today it's how it is, but it was not so then. I think I did the [Maiden
Forum?] things with him, and some other stuff, because his studio was very close where I lived. Like, down the street.

SICULAR: Where did he live?

BERR: I think he was in the East 50s at the time, and that's where I lived.

SICULAR: Did you prefer doing fashion or beauty?

BERR: I think it's easier to do the beauty, but it's just [17:00] from this way up. Fashion -- well I love clothes, so I was always into fashion. I would have liked to have been a fashion designer or a manufacturer, something like that. So I loved clothing. I mean, I have a friend that I modeled with, some girl who said, "Oh, we went to do fashion shows, you'd always go in, and you'd pick the best thing, you'd say, 'oh I want to wear that.'" Which I would never do, nor would anyone want you to do that. You couldn't do that. As a matter of a fact, I think the better looking girls usually wore the least attractive clothing. Because the point being that you --

SICULAR: Could sell it.

BERR: -- make the clothes look better. Except, you would get to be a bride if you were really pretty, I think, at the end.

SICULAR: Did you get to be a bride?
BERR: I got to be a bride a few times. I did Macy's Bridal Shows. Which was very good. They have a huge -- I don't know if they still do -- but they had a huge show in New York, and then they would take the show on the road, so to speak, to their outlying stores. And a lot of big models did that. It was [18:00] very nice.

SICULAR: Did you parents ever get to watch you in fashion shows?

BERR: Oh yes. My mother would come.

SICULAR: They must have been so proud.

BERR: I did a big one at the Waldorf, at the Felt Forum, at the big hotels they have. A Rainbow Room -- there was a big show at the Rainbow Room. Yes, how she got in, I don't know. I don't even know how it all happened, you know? It just happened.

SICULAR: When you were doing it, did you realize how lucky you were? I mean, because you were at the top.

BERR: I guess --

SICULAR: With a great agency, and you worked with great photographers.

BERR: I think when I started getting paid more. When your rate goes up, 35, 60, 90, 100 and a quarter, 150, I think it goes kind of in those increments -- it did then. And 150 was pretty good. People got a little more than that,
maybe 200 at that time, I'm not sure. I did some lingerie which is not --

SICULAR: That's more money.

BERR: That was like doubled. I think it was double. Or if you did certain hair products, or like I said, the cover of boxes and stuff like that, you get [19:00] a bonus.

SICULAR: And that's because you can't work -- they're not just paying for your usage, but they're paying you that you can't work with the competition.

BERR: Yes, I missed a lot of other opportunities because I was tied up or signed to something else, and that's what it is. I also worked with... Sokolsky?

SICULAR: Melvin.

BERR: Melvin. And at that time, let's see. I did something with [Jennifer O'Neal?]. We did something together. Was up on the roof of his studio --

SICULAR: That's like 39th Street, I think.

BERR: Wherever it was, I know that it was down and it was up. And Ali McGraw was still his stylist at that time. I remember. I didn't know she was Ali McGraw. The Ali McGraw. (laughter) And then --

SICULAR: (inaudible) Diana Vreeland.

BERR: Oh. I worked for her, too.

SICULAR: I'm sure.
BERR: First I went in -- she would have girls come in to try on the clothes for the next issue. But I was too wholesome -- not wholesome, but young. [20:00] You know, very girl -- all-American. Not until I went to Paris to model did I get to do what I wanted to do, which was more fashion. The more high fashion.

SICULAR: When were you in Paris?

BERR: Nineteen -- the summer of '6--after high school.

Let's not commit. (laughter)

SICULAR: And what did you do there?

BERR: I worked with Paris Planning, and I did everything. I mean, I worked from the day I got there, morning, noon, and night. And they work at night. Late at night. I did hair. Tons of hair. We would go to the best salon, they would never charge a model. I mean, it was quite fabulous, except my hair fell out after I came home, but that's another story. I did a lot of hair. Alexandra did my hair for a shoot at midnight.

SICULAR: Was it fabulous?

BERR: I worked at midnight. I wasn't even afraid to go. I don't know how I had the courage. It was fabulous. It was very strange. That's why it was at midnight, I guess.

SICULAR: Do you have pictures?
BERR: I don't [21:00] have a -- I had a little, tiny picture and I don't have it -- of that hairdo. It was like the way Grace Kelly wore, with the thing in the back. It was -- and my eyes were very, very dark. It was very exciting. I enjoyed that.

SICULAR: Did you work with a lot of magazines in Paris?

BERR: I worked with some young magazines consistently. I mean, like three days a week, I had a booking with this Vingt-et-Un magazine, which I think you said some of the girls -- that was very good. I remember 100 Rue Saint-Dominique, because I was going there all the time. And they were very nice. It was so different, because it was a husband and wife. So when lunchtime came, they would stop, and there was food. Like, real food that she made. Salads and things. Everyone would sit, like for an hour, or an hour and a half. And they would eat, they'd have wine. It was --

SICULAR: Very different from (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

BERR: -- very different experience than in the States, where you don't get to do that.

SICULAR: So you were with Plaza Five for how long? [22:00]

BERR: Three years.

SICULAR: And then you moved on to where?
BERR: Well I met Eileen in Paris that summer. She --

[Dorian Lee?] had a big agency there, and every summer I believe they had a party, and Eileen would be in Europe to scout for models, from what I understood. And I met her, she wanted to meet me, and I don't think she realized until I spoke where I was from. People thought I was Scandinavian or German because my hair was very blonde. I had done the Breck prior to that, and they had made my hair very blonde. So, then she realized. She gave me her card, or told me to come call her when I got back to New York. Well when I got back to New York it was all very exciting, and I had come off of that, and I wound up getting married, and months went by, and I hadn't done these test shots. In the months [23:00] after -- I don't know if you can see that with the glare.

SICULAR: That's beautiful. You look like a baby.

BERR: I was. I was still a baby, but I was a married baby.

SICULAR: Are you still a teenager there?

BERR: Yeah.

SICULAR: You look like a teenager.

BERR: So I did that, and there were even more -- well, not revealing, but went down a little lower. I was never squeamish about changing in front of people, or anything
without because in fashion it's just different. It's not --

SICULAR: But you're not very -- when we spoke to other models who modeled in the '50s said that they used to bring half slips to the studio because the photographers would poke their heads in the back when the models were changing, so they said -- one of them said that they all wore half slips up here so when photographers came in they were covered up. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BERR: Oh, well no, that's true. If you weren't on the set, and you were in the dress room, what we did, or what I did -- take a scarf, and tie a scarf around, and tie it in the back. That I do remember, now that you mentioned it. But I was never [24:00] -- that didn't really -- it was work. And it -- I never felt taken advantage of, or propositioned, or --

SICULAR: And your agency was there to take care of you, also.

BERR: Always. And if anything was wrong, and you told them, they took care of it.

SICULAR: We spoke to a model yesterday, and she complained, and then we said, "Well why didn't you speak to your agent? That's what they're there for." When you were at a place like Ford, she said she never thought of it.

BERR: Like this. Here, this is for pantyhose.
SICULAR: That looks like it's the middle '60s, then on the right it looks like --

BERR: That's a wig.

SICULAR: Right. But the one on the right looks like the late '60s. Like 1968, or whatever. Like Woodstock.

BERR: Right. This is -- I don't remember the date. But this has a date. This is from Women's Wear Daily, February 14th, 1969.

SICULAR: Wow, I'm surprised. With the wig and the hair.

BERR: But it was pantyhose. But I never had a problem with that. I don't know why. I'm just --

SICULAR: Can you see OK? Do you remember who photographed these? I know I remember the picture --

BERR: [25:00] I do remember --

SICULAR: That looks so pretty on the right. So fresh --

BERR: -- [John Abbott?]. He was a German photographer. He's very, very good photographer, and he also had a very good style when he worked.

SICULAR: It's beautiful. Very clear and fresh.

BERR: This is a very nice picture. There's [Ronnie?]. We did a lot of work together. Let's see what we have here.

SICULAR: That looks so [Spineski?] on the left, a little bit.

BERR: Yeah, these clothes. This is from Paraphernalia.

SICULAR: I remember Paraphernalia.
BERR: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Paraphernalia when they first opened. But all the things were mostly my things. So this is from the same shoot as the first picture. This was Peter Lee.

SICULAR: I remember Peter Lee.

BERR: He was really, really nice. I went to school with his sister-in-law, and his wife -- she had graduated when I just came into school. And they were very pretty girls. But he did great pictures of me, and the clothing's all mine. And the styling was mine. I want credit.

(laughter)

SICULAR: You could bring a stylist, or a sittings editor at a magazine?

BERR: I would -- could've done that. Should've done that.

SICULAR: Because a lot of models -- [Iris Bianci?] became one, and so did [Gina Michata?].

BERR: Oh, she most successfully. And she had a daughter who modeled.

SICULAR: Did she?

BERR: I think so. Did she not?

SICULAR: I don't know.

BERR: I don't know. I think so.

SICULAR: So then you wound up joining Eileen and Jerry Ford.
BERR: So, about eight months later, I called them up, and I went to see Eileen. (laughter) I guess I was a little afraid to call her. I don't know if I was afraid or -- no, what happened was Plaza Five was closing, that's right.

SICULAR: Why would they close? They were so successful.

BERR: Because the head, Stuart -- Stuart something. It was --

SICULAR: Is that the same as Stuart Models?

BERR: Became -- It became Stuart Models.

SICULAR: Right. And he was the first person that ever had a model contest.

BERR: Right, that's right. When they had that.

SICULAR: Yeah, Cybill Shepherd won once.

BERR: Right. Oh yeah. [27:00] That's right. I remember that. [Barbara Thornburg?] became his partner. I don't know if you've --

SICULAR: I don't know.

BERR: -- heard that name from anyone --

SICULAR: I don't know.

BERR: Well, anyway, they had an agency. I was --

SICULAR: Quite famous, too.

BERR: Yes. They wanted me to go to that agency, and girls were going this way and that way because they were being acquired by other agencies. So, I thought this would be a
good time to call Eileen, and that's what I did. And so I went to see Eileen, and I don't know. She might have been not happy that so much time went by, and perhaps, I don't know, maybe she didn't even remember. I don't know which it is.

SICULAR: (inaudible).

BERR: Yeah, probably, I think so. (laughter) So she was slighted. In any case, we met and I showed her my pictures, and she's not -- she's a very formidable person, you know?

SICULAR: Very strong.

BERR: Very strong and scary, and before you see her, you hear her yelling at everybody else, more or less, mostly "Lose weight! You lose weight." Measuring people, weighing people, it's true. And as far as models being thin, they were very thin then. They've always been thin. They're not any thinner now than they were then. If you look at pictures of people from the '70s -- men as well -- people were very, very thin. So -- but they were born that way, more so, I think. Today people get creative, I think, then you were -- not born to be a model, but you had certain attributes. You had long legs, you had a small frame, you had certain things that they were just there.

SICULAR: Jerry Ford used to say, "I did not mix models."
BERR: Well I think he was right. I think -- but today it's not like that. You can take someone, and you can create someone, and also I think -- different types, it's more freeing, I think it's probably better, for the best. So I saw Eileen, and [29:00] she was less than thrilled with me because I brought up the whole incident about I was going to go to Stuart Models, and I didn't know, and then I heard that people were -- should I say this story? People were being paid to bring models over, which is something that happened later on with the model agencies, I think in the '80s and '90s that was going on. But I was very innocent and stupid, so I didn't know that I shouldn't say so much. I was always being very honest, and I don't know why I thought that would be endearing, but obviously it wasn't. She threw my portfolio on the floor, and she said, "I can't continue because what you said is ringing in my ears." And it was very traumatic, and I was devastated. So she left. And I went downstairs, I called home to tell them what a terrible thing I did, and I was crying, it was raining, it was very dramatic. She drove past me in her Rolls. They had -- that time Ford was on 59th Street, opposite the bridge.

SICULAR: Right. Between First and Second. [30:00]

BERR: I guess they had a garage in the building.
SICULAR: Right next door.

BERR: Yeah. I remember pretty well this -- the only thing missing from the scene was she could have splashed me with her tired, it would have been perfect. (laughter) But that didn't happen. So, I got up the nerve to call the next day. Why? I don't know. Because I said, "This is not going to happen." But I called, and yes, they took me. As if she never spoke to me, really. She didn't have a personal involvement. A little bit. I think that she -- not to sound conceited -- but she couldn't deny that I was pretty.

SICULAR: Of course. She didn't take you on as a charity case.

BERR: No, and I was her type, so to speak. She did have a very definite type. And I was there for a few years, and it was fine. She didn't handle me personally.

SICULAR: Did you have a booker there? Someone that you worked with?

BERR: I thought there was a man. Was there a man, Bill? Bill? No?

SICULAR: Well, Bill would have been too young, then their son.

BERR: I don't remember who was --

SICULAR: Rusty [31:00] was there, then Monique, Dobby --

BERR: Rusty sounds familiar.
SICULAR: Yeah, Rusty was fabulous. She was the senior vice president of the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

BERR: Well that sounds familiar. Yeah.

SICULAR: Rusty [Zagis?].

BERR: But I knew -- no, Joey didn't come to work there until much later.

SICULAR: And he worked with men.

BERR: And he worked with the men. But it's always good to know someone. Matter of fact, when I met my husband, Joey was there, coincidentally, in Acapulco, and we all hung out, and he was very nice. And he -- my son, my grown son, now, he worked as a model, as well.

SICULAR: With Ford?

BERR: No, he worked in Europe. He worked with Next? Yeah. In order to -- after school he went to a French school after -- during college. He learned French and he wanted to stay in Europe. We said, "Well, you could model." And he wanted to do that. And he stayed for a year and a half, and he traveled all over, and he worked, [32:00] and he wanted to really learn the business and the other side of the camera, and he did, and he does very well with it. He does creative consulting now, and art direction, all kinds of things. So, it's a wonderful thing. Plus you earn money.
SICULAR: And you are a designer now, are [Jack and Ray?] going into design?

BERR: Yes, and I started my own design business a few years ago. Susan Sager Interior Design, because Sager is my married name.

SICULAR: And how has modeling helped you in this career?

BERR: Well, I think there's an aesthetic that you have, and it helps mold it, and fine tune it, and you see art direction going on, that type of thing. It all adds in. It all enriches what you have. I also came here, and I was an actress, and I did commercials and other things, but I think that there wasn't as much work in Los Angeles -- at least not for me. They didn't do much fashion. From '76 [33:00] on -- later on, I think in the '80s, Los Angeles came more into play.

SICULAR: With [Nina Pilanchu?]?

BERR: Right. But at the time, Nina and Eileen were not together. You know, there was a competition of sorts, so it wasn't --

SICULAR: Do you think with your looks you could have been as successful in any era? Talking about the '50s or '40s?

BERR: I could have been a contender.

SICULAR: Every era?
BERR: Me and Marlon Brando. Yes, I think I could have done much more, much better. I think I held myself too dear. I --

SICULAR: What era do you think you would have done the best?

BERR: What era? I think the era I was in was a good era. I have no problem with the era, but what I do think -- having a secure family coming from New York, not getting off a bus from somewhere with -- and having to really fend for yourself is better. It's better in the sense that you have more -- not that I didn't have drive, because you tell me to be there, I'm there. I was always on time and did what I had to do, but you know that you have that warm home to go home to. It’s different than getting off the bus, and you're there because your parents aren't going to be sending you a check -- not that my parents did; I supported myself -- and I think that's -- same with acting. I think it's great when you have to be a waitress, and you have to struggle. That all adds to it. So, that factor held me back. Absolutely. It did. So --

SICULAR: And I have a question: who do you think are some of the most beautiful style icons? Men and women? All eras? Who did -- when the voice of modeling -- who did you look up to? Whether they were movie stars or actresses or --
BERR: Well I think Grace Kelly, I think is pretty fabulous. I think she was the most beautiful, and I like that style. I think that had [35:00] a big impression on me. For me, I think that would be number one.

SICULAR: And did you always dress up as a little -- like a model when you went into a studio, whether it was for a (inaudible) or booking?

BERR: Well I think yes. You always went more done. Though, later in the '60s it was more relaxed, especially in Paris. It was more like Audrey Hepburn. Girls were wearing trench coats, and little flats, and capris, and a scarf tied in the back like that. So you learn along the way, it all changes. The '60s and the early '70s changed a lot. It wasn't -- it was much looser. But there was never drinking or smoking or -- I mean, if a girl -- there were some girls, very few, that had some problems, even in the '60s, and I remember hearing bookers saying, "Oh, we can't get a hold of her." And, "Oh, she must have been drinking." And things like that. Girls that were successful, or about to be more successful, but because of that they [36:00] -- it didn't happen. I never heard about drugs, I never saw drugs, it just never happened.

SICULAR: What's the biggest surprise of your career?
BERR: You mean in job-wise? Well it was really great getting the Breck. I think that's something that sticks and --

SICULAR: that's a huge campaign. How old were (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) have it for?

BERR: That was very good. Pardon?

SICULAR: How long did you have to campaign for? That was a huge campaign.

BERR: Well, my campaign went on for at least a year or two. Because I did the commercial. And the commercial came after the print. And you have to sit for the photo session, and then they do a pastel, and it's a long, long process, and then we did the commercial, and we went on location, and it just -- there was a lot of promotion about it. It was really great. And I didn't really think I would get it when I went up for it. There were so many, many girls that went up for it. But the photographer [37:00] told me right away that I would have it. But you know, you're promised many things, you hear many things, you don't know what to believe, so -- but he was right, and I did. And it was good, because I'll always -- I'll always have Breck. (laughter)

SICULAR: They can never take that away.

BERR: They can never take that away.
SICULAR: Do you have any pictures of Breck in there?

BERR: I think I have the thing here. I think I have it. Let's see. In the (inaudible) times. I found someone else's Breck ad on the back of one of my magazine things. It was Veronica Hamel. I didn't even know she had been a Breck girl. Let's see. Oh, here it is.

SICULAR: That's beautiful. How long did --

BERR: See, the thing is, I think this was done in about '62, no '63. I was still in high school when it all began. And what they did was my hair was more like this color, or like you saw in the other pictures. [38:00] My hair wasn't that short. But they took liberties. They bleached it.

SICULAR: They bleached your hair.

BERR: They bleached my hair.

SICULAR: At such a young age.

BERR: At a young -- yeah, my parents were not happy. I mean, the first process was they really pre-bleached it. I came home looking like a chicken. A little baby chick with bright yellow hair. I had to wear a hat. Then they next day they toned it down, and it became this, but by the time I went to Paris I was very blonde. And then they kept giving me hair things, and doing hair things, and when I got back my hair fell out. I mean, I took out the roller, and the hair was in the roller. So I had a today's look.
My hair was long, but it was cut up. It was layered. They did not wear layers. It was very interesting, but I worked with it. Made it work. So that was good. But there were other things that were -- it's not the end all be all of life, it's -- it was hard to stop modeling. [39:00] I -- you don't want to lose the status of being a model, because it's very important.

SICULAR: Especially being with a great agency like Eileen and Jerry Ford's.

BERR: Yeah, to -- well, I had left Eileen after I went to Wilhelmina.

SICULAR: Which was a great agency.

BERR: Which was a very good agency.

SICULAR: Do you remember working with Wilhelmina one-on-one?

BERR: She was not an easy woman either. (laughter)

SICULAR: I'm so surprised, because you're the second person today -- because I was a client, and she was so nice, only had the nicest things to say. I was young, but I didn't deal with her a lot, but whenever I did she was very sweet.

BERR: No, she's very nice. Very nice. Now, her husband, unlike Jerry Ford, I think had a little eye for the girls, perhaps. And maybe that kind of ruffled her feathers -- I don't know if he had an eye for me, I never felt that. But I'm just saying that during those years -- and she had
gotten older, a bit, at the time. She was a very beautiful woman, but I don't even know how old she was then. I have no concept. [40:00] You know when you're whatever -- in your early 20s, anyone over 40, you think they're old.

SICULAR: She was probably in her 50s or 40s then.

BERR: I guess, I'm not sure.

TRIVETTE: And how was it different -- how was the system different from Plaza Five to Ford to Wilhelmina, was it basically the same?

BERR: Well, Plaza Five seemed more relaxed. I mean, there were two girls that ran it. Naomi and Rose. They were sisters, and they were bookers, and they were really very, very nice to me. And another girl, [Gerry?] -- I think she went over to one of the other agencies, though, I don't remember. They were very, very nice. Sometimes -- I guess when I came back from Europe, I had picked up some things there. I was wearing very light lipstick and dark eyes. You experiment at that age, and -- because I wanted to be more high fashion, and one of the girls -- ladies who ran it. She was over there at the Ford party, and she said, "Well, I know things have been really great [41:00] for you here, but don't expect it to be like that when you go back." Which I thought was kind of an awful thing.

SICULAR: Go back to -- when you got back where?
BERR: To New York. It should have been very good. Should have --

SICULAR: Because you were building up your book.

BERR: Absolutely. So I don't know. So I had a little sour grapes there. Wasn’t that good of an experience.

SICULAR: And how about at Wilhelmina?

BERR: It was OK. I mean, I worked. I always did a lot of catalogues, so I had work.

SICULAR: Did you back then, did you have your own booker that looked after you? At each agency?

BERR: I did, but I cannot remember who it was.

SICULAR: That's OK. But did you like having that one-on-one relationship? Did it make it easier for you, someone that you could count on?

BERR: See, another shortcoming -- I never really made friends in the business. Not -- I didn't hang out a lot. So, I had -- that was separate from life, and I don't think [42:00] that was good, either. Because I think it's better if it's all integrated, if you really want to get ahead you have to network, as we know today. But that's just the way I --

SICULAR: Were you able to tell your bookers what you wanted, and then have them try -- you wanted to do high fashion, so
did you ever let them know that, so that they can try and get you those --

BERR: No, because when I came back from Europe with the light lipstick, and the dark eyes, and all that, they would -- they used to call me "principessa." They thought that I was being too grown up for my age. I wasn't for my age, I didn't think, but I guess I was. Because I still played very young, and up quite a while into my 20s, very young.

SICULAR: And did you ever get to do really high fashion that you wanted to do?

BERR: No, I don't think I did. But in life I have.

SICULAR: Well, that's what counts.

BERR: That's what counts. Exactly. So it all worked out.

SICULAR: And you're married -- very happily married.

BERR: I'm very happily married for 40 years. I mean, I was divorced, initially. But I'm remarried, yes.

SICULAR: And [43:00] do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to -- no, another question. What are your beauty secrets, because you're so beautiful.

BERR: Thank you.

SICULAR: Would you like to share any with us?

BERR: I was going to quote Christie Brinkley because she said a good dermatologist, and if it's good enough for her, and she looks fantastic, I think she's the best of all.
Christie is really fabulous. You have to take care of yourself. I mean, you can't abuse anything. Luckily, weight wise, I've been very blessed with that genetically, and just live a good life, and exercise, and I don't drink, and I don't smoke. I mean, I'll have an occasional drink, but we're not drinkers, and we live a very structured, normal life. So I think that's the way to go.

SICULAR: Any last thoughts?

BERR: And I also have parents that look pretty good.

(laughter) Doesn't hurt. Any last thoughts? Well, they're not my last thoughts.

SICULAR: Or anything you'd like to add before... ?

BERR: I think it's just a wonderful profession; I have a gorgeous granddaughter who has all the attributes, she's only nine, but she certainly could be a model.

SICULAR: I saw her picture, she's beautiful.

BERR: She is. And she has the long limbs, and she's a great kid. So, if some day she wants to go that route, as well as go to college and became something, like a lawyer, or a doctor, well maybe not a doctor today, but something. It would be a good way to go. It helps with poise, it gives you confidence, you can earn good money, and that's nothing to sneeze at. So yes, I would encourage it if she wants it. Because now she says she doesn't, I said, "You have to
want it, because there's plenty of girls waiting, and they want it, so you have to really, really want it." And that's it.

SICULAR: Thank you so much --

BERR: Well thank you.

SICULAR: -- for taking part in this.

BERR: Thank you for asking, I appreciate it, thank you.

[44:54]

END OF AUDIO FILE