CREW: We’re ready. We’re rolling, and action.

PATTY SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with Professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology. We’re going forward interviewing different models, photographers, editors and other people in the fashion and beauty industry. Today is June 22, 2011. We’re at the beautiful Vault, which is located in Culver City, California, and we are interviewing Ronnie Carol, whose era was 1960 to 1977, and like me, she’s from New York City, also. We’re so happy that you’re with us.

RONNIE CAROL: Thank you. I’m so happy to be here, Patty.

Thank you.

SICULAR: So, now we established you’re from New York City, also.

CAROL: Yes. Brooklyn.

SICULAR: And how are you [01:00] -- did you grow up reading fashion magazines like Seventeen or Charm, or --

CAROL: Yes. I did. I had a mother who was very fashion oriented. My dad was in the clothing business, and living in Brooklyn was just so close to being in New York City, so we were into clothes and jewelry, and clothes and jewelry. It was all about how you looked.
SICULAR: And how many magazines did you read when you were young?

CAROL: Well, my mom used to read all the big magazines -- any of the fashion magazines that were around. I’d get them at the hairdresser. She’d go every Saturday, and every Saturday, I would go with her, and I’d get to sit and look at all the pictures of some of the great models.

SICULAR: And who were some of your icons then?

CAROL: Probably Suzy Parker was one of my most favorite and I’m missing another name, because there was someone else that I absolutely adored, and I don’t remember, now. One of the dark haired girls.

SICULAR: Dovima?

CAROL: Yes. Dovima. Yes.

SICULAR: She was a beautiful model.

CAROL: [02:00] Beautiful woman. I met her as -- when I got into the business through Wilhelmina, because I had known Wilhelmina, too, though social --

SICULAR: Modeling with Ford or with Wilhelmina?

CAROL: -- with Ford.

SICULAR: OK, with Eileen and Jerry.

CAROL: Yes. Right.

SICULAR: Were you discovered, or did you make a phone call and go up there?
CAROL: I went in when I was 16. I took the bus over the 59th Street Bridge. I used to see the townhome, because I knew exactly where it was. The townhouse that they had on 59th, and we used to pass by it, and I’d look at the steps, and I’d think one day, I’ll do this. My mother would be with me, and I would share that with her, and then one day, she took me into the city, on the bus, we got off at 59th Street, we walked over, I could barely catch my breath, and went upstairs -- and there was a man there named Bill Weinberg, and he was the head of new faces, and I could see Eileen saw me. There were a bunch of girls there, and she kind of looked over, looked away, and I thought, oh no, and Bill said, I really think you have what it takes. Eileen [03:00] a lot of times likes light eyed girls with dark hair. He said, do not worry, we will get through this, and about two weeks later, I called him, and he said, we’re going to start using you and testing you --

SICULAR: As a junior?

CAROL: -- as a new face. Yes.

SICULAR: And that’s 1960.

CAROL: Yeah, about.

SICULAR: And then, so you tested, and did you start working right away?

CAROL: I didn’t. I tested, and there was about 15 girls, and
we were asked to go on a trip around the country, and I think it was then Sears or Spiegel -- and they wanted all the new girls to do a fashion show. We weren't going to be photographed, and we were going to be doing fashion, and walking on a stage, and I became friends with a bunch of girls from Ohio, and from all over the country, actually, and then one or two Swedish girls that were living with Eileen at the time.

SICULAR: Do you remember the names of these models?

CAROL: Oh dear.

SICULAR: If not, don’t worry.

CAROL: I don't. I don't. I'm so sorry. You have a great memory.

SICULAR: [04:00] How long was the trip for?

CAROL: The trip was about two to three weeks. We were away.

SICULAR: Did your parents go with you, or a chaperone?

CAROL: No. I was already out of high school. I graduated a year and a half early, but nobody chaperoned me.

SICULAR: And when did you start doing print?

CAROL: It took me about nine months to get my book together, and then once it got together, and once I started going out there, in the next nine months, my career started to really take off.

SICULAR: And do you remember your first time you saw yourself
in print?

CAROL: Yes. I was thrilled.

SICULAR: What was it for?

CAROL: You know. I don’t remember that either?

Unfortunately. My memory’s not as sharp as some of the other women. Yeah. I don’t remember what it was that I was -- you know the first picture.

SICULAR: And who did you work for starting out?

CAROL: Starting out -- well, you know, I was doing things for Seventeen. I did something for Glamour, when the Faye Dunaway movie came out.

SICULAR: Bonnie and Clyde?

CAROL: Yes. [05:00] They had a huge spread, and I was the model for it with all the Bonnie and Clyde clothes, and then [Sheena Machada?], I remember had seen me at a party, and she brought me to see Hiro, and when I did that --

SICULAR: For Harper’s Bazaar?

CAROL: -- for Harper’s Bazaar, and I did a 10-page spread, and I used to work for Hiro, a lot.

SICULAR: Your mother must have been in seventh heaven.

CAROL: My mother was. So was my father at some point. He wasn’t thrilled at first, that I was becoming a model. He wanted me to be a doctor or a psychologist, or -- I was a very good student in school, but definitely being a model
was something I wanted to do from the time I was very young.

SICULAR: And who were some of your favorite photographers that you go to work with besides Hiro and --


SICULAR: Such a gentlemen.

CAROL: Such a gentlemen. He did the most beautiful, beautiful fashion shots, and also I worked sometimes with Avedon, and I liked him. I loved Scavullo. Going to his [06:00] townhome -- I think it was 63rd Street. I used to do a lot of work with him, too, and I remember once meeting Cybill Shepherd and she was one of the girls that I would say that I didn’t like. Most of the models I liked. Every so often there would be one or two girls that just came along that were not that nice, but on the whole most of the girls were spectacular, and I’m still friends with a lot of them, today, here in California.

SICULAR: And did Eileen ever give you any advice?

CAROL: She told me to buy a Kelly bag, when I was very young from Hermes. She said buy things that are good. She advised me against my first husband, but I didn’t listen -- and it’s ok -- it was still a good marriage, and I had a beautiful son from that -- and she didn’t -- wasn’t
interested in anyone acting. I had heard that say, exactly. She did not want you to go into acting. She really didn’t, and the man that ran the TV department, [07:00] [Gene?] Bachert. You know, we did a lot of commercials -- a lot of us, and I was going and studying and I was with Warren Robinson in acting school, and I think it was Jessica Lang, and Suzie Blakely -- there were a bunch of models, and we were all taking acting classes, and she again, would always say, not to be an actress. Modeling is really what you need to do, and again, I understood that, because when you did do acting, you left modeling, and you’d be gone for a while, and I did a soap for a year, As the World Turns.

SICULAR: Did you enjoy it?

CAROL: No. Not at all. Hated it. I thought it was so boring. So boring. And doing soaps, I mean, I’ve never been a soap person, so that was really not a good venue for me.

SICULAR: Did you get the travel a lot as a model.

CAROL: Yes. I’ve traveled all over the world.

SICULAR: Where?

CAROL: In Japan. I used to go to Paris and Milan for the collections, and then I would be lucky enough to go -- sometimes, Eileen would be in Rome, [08:00] and I would
switch over from some place, and then meet a lot of people that were at the same place. She always stayed at the Principe Hotel. I remember that.

SICULAR: The Paris Ritz.

CAROL: Exactly, right. Again, I learned, I really did learn from her. My parents didn’t travel, until they were much older, and so here was this woman, that was so elegant, entertained like no one else did that I knew, and I did look at a lot of things that I said, that’s what I want. I want those beautiful sheets on my bed. I want flowers in my house. I want those handbags. I want this. I want -- and I did gain a lot from her. Definitely.

SICULAR: Did she ever scold you for anything? Or did you behave, or did you toe the line?

CAROL: I usually behaved. I was a very good worker. I’m not saying I was a good girl, I mean, that wouldn’t be the truth, but I was a very good worker. I respected being a model. I knew that you had to be on time, and [09:00] I love the idea that she felt that I was one of the good girls, but even in my era, there was a lot going on.

SICULAR: In the ‘60s and ‘70s. Did you feel, being a Ford model, that you had arrived?

CAROL: Oh, definitely. Oh, no question. Once -- even today, if someone says, you know, were you a model ever? When I
say I had been a Ford model a long time ago, they went wow -- I mean it’s --

SICULAR: Even for agents, too. If you were a -- and I worked as an agent from the ’80s to 2010 at Ford and Elite -- it’s like if you worked for Ford or Elite, you have arrived.

CAROL: Exactly.

SICULAR: Did you have your own bookers, or did you work with the whole booking team?

CAROL: I worked usually -- Maryann was my main one, so was Monique, and once in a while Rusty, but that was when I left the new faces which was Bill’s department. Usually, Bill and a girl named Sue.

SICULAR: Sue [Charney]??

CAROL: Yes. Sue Charney. They would do all the booking, then at some point, they said OK, [10:00] you’re now on the big board, and waiting to get on that was just very exciting. I mean, amazing.

SICULAR: And do you remember, were you close with your booking team?

CAROL: Oh, very. Very.

SICULAR: You spoke to them every day, right?

CAROL: Every single day. They were part of my life. They were involved when I was having a baby. You know, just very, very involved, and I was the one that used to collect
money. I was very outgoing --

SICULAR: Christmas bonus?

CAROL: -- You got it. I’d call every single model, and say we’re waiting for your money, we suggest you give this much. Yes, I was definitely the one that did that.

SICULAR: That’s nice of you.

CAROL: I was not shy. I was very outspoken.

SICULAR: So, when you signed in 1960, and then you went to 1977, how did you think the industry changed in the time you started till the time you ended? Because those are two different eras.

CAROL: They are. I guess I would say that again. It was a little bit more lady like, when I started, as far as we got more dressed up. You didn’t wear jeans to work. Jeans and a t-shirt. I mean -- unheard of, [11:00] and then you didn’t -- you got a little bit wilder as the ‘70s came in -- it definitely did, but I still think the girls again, were more conservative. I think that when I came out here, and I was with --

SICULAR: In Los Angeles?

CAROL: -- in Los Angeles, when I moved out here in probably ’77, because I was getting a divorce. I thought this would be great to come out here, and I was with Nina. This became a whole nother world, too, because there was so much
more, it was just like, wow.

SICULAR: How was modeling different in Los Angeles than in New York?

CAROL: Well, I was, again, being a Ford model from New York, and my book, and the work I had done around the world, I was considered to be very special here, so the minute I arrived, I was working like crazy. California was never considered to be like the New York modeling scene, and I still think that it just -- there’s New York -- there’s LA. It’s just different, [12:00] and I think that -- I see a lot of beautiful girls around -- young girls carrying their books at time, and certainly some of these girls could be in New York, or in Europe. I think again though that, you know, you can’t say in California unless you want to be an actress. You have to be in New York.

SICULAR: And what has modeling given you that you’ve taken away that -- maybe gave you more of an inside -- just made you feel better about yourself, handling yourself -- what has modeling given you?

CAROL: I think modeling probably gave me more of my being so sure of myself. I wasn’t that sure when I started, but it just hit a side of me that awakened that made me realize that I did have great self-esteem from the time that maybe I signed with Eileen, before that I was very shy and
awkward in braces, and little Buster Brown haircut [13:00]. Nobody would know who Buster Brown is you have to be as old as I am, and again, just what it gave me -- so many incredible friends, and the comradery in the business, when you’re with a good agency, when you’ve got people watching your back, you don’t work for sleazy people, it’s kind of like being a car from a Rolls Royce dealership.

SICULAR: You know it’s funny because people that aren’t in the business don’t realize it -- that it’s a really, really small business granted all over the world that you know most of the agents know each other, and the models and the different model agencies, and most agents, from the different agencies, they get along, because they work together sooner or later, but it’s a very small business. And why do you think the public is so fascinated with models?

CAROL: I think that today the public is just fascinated by almost anything. I wish it was really more about models. I mean, again [14:00] I think that things have changed, so with all the reality shows and -- I think it’s a good thing about models, especially if they’re people to look up to, and I think the girls, today, a lot of them are very -- they’ve done some incredible things, and they donate their time and they give their money, and they make so much money
in the last 10 years, and I think there’s a lot of amazing women out there, and I just think people love beautiful people, whether it’s from the ’40s, the ’50s -- that’s what photo books, when you see even things from the olden days -- you know, the ’40s or the ’30s, they’re still so spectacular, because again, beauty or art or fashion -- I mean some of the most incredible fashion, today, is originally coming back from what used to be. So, I think they’ll always be a fascination. I’d rather it be in that part of the business, then what I have to watch on TV sometimes.

SICULAR: Did you ever watch -- did you prefer doing fashion or beauty? [15:00] Did you do a lot of beauty campaigns?

CAROL: I did. I did a lot of beauty campaigns. I sometimes like doing the beauty, because I didn’t have to worry about what was on the bottom, or what we had to do on the bottom, but I loved almost everything I did, you know, even when it was a boring job. I would think to myself, how lucky am I, as I fill out my voucher book, and see what I just made for a few hours. I also was one of the girls who was doing some very major lingerie, and we would get paid incredibly well for that, too.

SICULAR: (inaudible)

CAROL: Yes. Exactly. If it was a very good photographer,
something that was going to be very special.

SICULAR: Do you have one or two campaigns that you’re most proud of?

CAROL: I’d probably say my cover from a [Coles?] magazine, and about 80 pages in that -- that was so incredible for me, and that was -- there were about five girls up for that Kohl’s shoot, and it was done here in California, [16:00] and there was a girl named Carrie -- she’s a very big hairdresser, and she did all the hair, I remember, and it was kind of like doing a movie, so for me, it was really incredible. That was one of my very favorite things, and I think working with Hiro. He was just one of, I mean, I just adored him -- just loved working with him, and some of the things we did were really, so outrageous not just your regular shoot.

SICULAR: Did your friends from high school ever comment on your pictures? Did they treat you differently?

CAROL: No. I graduated early. I didn’t actually like a lot of the girls in high school, and still, when I run into them in New York, I’m not as warm. It’s just -- I didn’t like them then, and most of the girls I became friends with were in the business. I found the girls in the business were spectacular. They were always there for you. They cared for you. You told them you got something. You were
doing a job. They’d go, oh, that’s so great, and today, still [17:00] so many of these girls that I’m friends with are just the nicest and most incredible people.

SICULAR: That’s really nice.

CAROL: Yes. I’ve been very lucky.

SICULAR: If someone in the future -- you know, from future generations, and they’re looking at your interview, say 50 years from now, 100 years from now --

CAROL: Wow.

SICULAR: -- but that’s what this is (overlapping dialogue)

CAROL: I know. It’s mind boggling, when you say it, then when you really think about that.

SICULAR: That’s what this is.

CAROL: And I’ll be looking from up above.

SICULAR: And from 1960 to 1977, how would you categorize your era in modeling -- it’s almost two eras that you modeled.

CAROL: I would say, again, incredibly beautiful women, makeup, clothing, most of the women I knew, we all were married. Some of us had kids. We were very lucky. Some didn’t want children. I just think it was a very elegant, and then you kind of got into a little bit of a less -- you know the jeans came in, and I think we had Woodstock, and things started to [18:00] change, and I think drugs got more rampant, and you know, yet it was still the most
incredible era. I mean, I just feel so blessed. So blessed that I even had that time to do what I did.

SICULAR: And do you have any last thoughts that you’d like to add?

CAROL: Oh, that just maybe one day, my granddaughter who’s six years old, now, that maybe they’ll be a chance for her, if she ever wanted to do it, and she’s been asked a couple of times, and just again, having that background, and having you now in my life, and that as you said in 50 years, I’ll be looking down, saying, wow, look at that? That’s me speaking.

SICULAR: We’ll all be together in heaven.

CAROL: Absolutely. I’ll save a good table, if I’m ahead of you.

SICULAR: There you go.

CAROL: OK.

SICULAR: That was great.

CREW: Couple seconds, and action.

SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with Professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology. I’d like to welcome you in the [21:00] continuing series of conversations with models, photographers, editors, and other people in the fashion and beauty business. Today’s date is Wednesday, June 22, 2011.
We’re in Beverly Hills, and we have someone a little different, today. We have the beautiful Rio Morse, who started as a model in London, and went on to become the lead dancer at the Folies Bergeres in Paris. Welcome to the series, we’re so happy to have you with us, today.

RIO MORSE: Thank you.

SICULAR: So, you are from England. Where in England are you from?

MORSE: I was born and bred in London.

SICULAR: London. And when you were young did fashion influence you? Did you read fashion magazines?

MORSE: No. My mother -- from when I was a child always wanted me to be a model. My mother wanted me to be a model. She was really a stage mother. She gave me dancing classes, and then I got too tall to be a ballerina, and she just always told me I was going to be a model. I was [22:00] going to be discovered, and I was going to be a model, and by the time I was 12, I was about 5’8”.

SICULAR: And did your mother bring you to any of the modeling agencies in London?

MORSE: No. She put me with Norman Hartnell. She wanted me to start at the top, and I became [Ivanda’s] assistant, when I was 15. She took me out of school. I passed all my exams a year earlier, and I became Ivanda’s assistant, and
Norman Hartnell sort of fell in love with me. He used to call me Aphrodite, when I walked by, and he started me modeling -- he started a line of jewelry, and so he would call me to model the jewelry, and the agent that used to book the models at Norman Hartnell would come in occasionally and she told me I should leave and become a model. So, I signed up with her agency in Bond Street -- the Whittaker agency, and then I was sent out, you know, I had to get the photos done, and I was just sent out, and I was young, wore and sixteen -- barely sixteen -- and I was never [23:00] a top model. I never had covers or anything, but I used to do -- I had everything about me was great, but nothing was great as a whole. I had wonderful hands. I had great legs. I had great hair. I had great teeth.

SICULAR: Yeah, but you were beautiful. I’ve seen pictures of you.

MORSE: Yes, but I did not have that ambition.

SICULAR: And you have to have that. There’s a lot of competition. So, did you ever model in fashion shows?

MORSE: Yes.

SICULAR: Did you enjoy it?

MORSE: Yes, I did. I remember being so skinny I had to put on two skirts, sometimes. They put two skirts on me then, but in those days you wore girdles, too, but I did that for
six or nine months, and I was never taken with it -- that I wanted to go much -- I did it because I was living at home --

SICULAR: Did it bore you?

MORSE: -- no it didn’t bore me. It intimidated me, and it didn’t grab me. [24:00] There was a lot of standing around. There was a lot of standing around and waiting. Waiting for the shows to start, and waiting for all the lighting to be set up and everything, so I did it. I just had to work, and I gave my wages to my mother. I lived at home, and she would give me bus fare, and you know, this was the ‘50s in London.

SICULAR: And did she save everything for you? All the pictures? Did you have a scrapbook?

MORSE: Yes. Some of them, she did. Yeah. She’s in London, now. She has some older ones.

SICULAR: And some of the people when you were growing up, you didn’t read the fashion magazines, your mother did, but did you have any beauty icons going to the movies, or fashion models that you loved to look at?

MORSE: Well, I grew up with the beauties, you know, Suzy Parker, and then just a little -- in the early ‘60s, Jean Shrimpton, and Twiggy -- that was all going on -- and they were beautiful, and it was fun, then in London down the
King’s Road. By that time, I was living in Geneva in [25:00] the end of the ‘60s -- ’67 I got married, and I would fly back and forth, and I was still around. I was invited a lot to places. I still knew a lot of people, but I was no longer working (inaudible). I was married and living the aristocratic life in Switzerland and Paris.

SICULAR: What do you think fascinates the public so much about models? And the dancers like you were?

MORSE: Well, I think beauty has always fascinated people. I mean, I can remember really I was saying before being 12 years old, and walking down the street, and being stopped in the street by men, some of them were just sexual advances, but most of them wanted me to model or to be photographed, or to go to an interview or something they -- in London, and this is in the ‘50s, and then when I moved to Paris, and I was dancing in the Folies Bergeres, the same thing. People would just stop me in the street. When I was young, I was tall for my age. 5’8” was tall for anybody.

SICULAR: And it was a nice size for a model back then.

MORSE: Yeah. And, [26:00] you now, my younger girlfriends, they’re all six feet tall, 5’11” -- six feet.

SICULAR: All of them?

MORSE: Most of them. Yeah. They are. They’re younger, and
they’re taller. I’m a small one, now.

SICULAR: I’m pretty short, but that’s OK.

MORSE: Well, you’re a New Yorker. In California, they’re taller.

SICULAR: So, do you think if you were starting out, now, you would’ve pursued the modeling more?

MORSE: No.

SICULAR: Well, you took the right path that was right for you then.

MORSE: No. You know, I went after the Folies Bergeres by mistake, and just loved -- we were touring, I wasn’t in Paris, it was for a tour of the Folies Bergeres, but they had another show, and we’re touring, and there I found the excitement and the moving around, and the lights, and the costumes, and the music, and I loved all of that, but again, I wasn’t ambitious. I never wanted to be in anything, because [27:00] once my mother reconciled to the fact that I had gone to the Folies, which she hated in the beginning. Then she wanted me to be a star. You know. The star.

SICULAR: Right, and you were.

MORSE: I was not. No, no, no. I was just -- one of -- what I had the best amount of -- I still had that model’s figure, and so when they were making the costumes, they
were made in Paris, I was the one they called to try everything on, because I had the perfect proportioned figure, but I was one of the leads, and I was (inaudible) in front, and I had the big roles, and that, but I never wanted to be a star, and then I was pushed into being a start at Cabaret, so then I did that, and I went off on a tour of that, too.

SICULAR: Did -- when you were in Paris, did any of the model agencies come to you, and try get you to work as a model?

MORSE:  No. Photographers, again, would stop me in the street, and take photos of me, and I was in various newspapers and things. I’ve got --

SICULAR: Do you have some that you can show us?

MORSE:  Yes. There’s some in there.

SICULAR: Can you bring the camera. Do you want me to hold it up? [28:00]

CREW:  You can hold it up.

MORSE:  Well, you should look at it first.

SICULAR: These are great. Look how young you were. You were a baby here.

MORSE:  I was 14 there.

SICULAR: Do you want to come around, or do you want me to hold it up?

CREW:  Just turn.
SICULAR: She was 14 years old here.

CREW: Yeah. Just like that. That’s good.

SICULAR: OK. This is in Germany.

MORSE: Well, I had a penpal, when I was at school [Gay Malisine?] School for Girls, and I sent her that photo of me in the leotard. She sent it into a German publication. We were school girls. They were looking for the next new young star, and I was one of the winners, along with Romy Schneider, and so they flew us out to Berlin in 1956.

SICULAR: You were so young. Did your mother go with you?

MORSE: No, but it was all very chaperone-heavy. I did a screen test and everything.

SICULAR: [29:00] Wow. Rio’s 16, but she’s a riot.

CREW: A little higher.

SICULAR: How’s that? Did modeling help prepare you at all for dancing at the Folies Bergeres? Did you feel more confident and more poised? And you knew how to stand.

MORSE: Oh, yes. Because just to work across the stage. Yes, I knew how to walk across the stage. I had great poise, but I had learned also from dancing.

SICULAR: And did it give you something that you could carry all through life then? Boy these are --

MORSE: Yes, modeling does give you that confidence.

Definitely.
SICULAR: Can you see these?

MORSE: Oh, the baby.

SICULAR: [30:00] I don’t know if you want to talk about any of these pictures or not.

MORSE: Well, these are just -- these are when I was touring with the Folies. These are just various Folies ones, these are when we used to arrive in the cities, we were all dressed up and glam, and it was fun (inaudible).

SICULAR: Is this you?

MORSE: Yes.

SICULAR: I could tell.

MORSE: And these were old models, they -- when they did this Folies Bergeres tour, they didn’t want showgirls, they wanted models.

SICULAR: How come?

MORSE: I don’t know. We could probably cover this one again. This is one of the things where they just stop you in the street, and ask you to pose for them. This is when we went to London. This is backstage in Paris.

SICULAR: Do you want to talk about any of your beauty secrets, now, or do you want to wait? [31:00]

MORSE: My beauty secrets. You know, I went to the newest esthetician, recently, and she said, oh, you have wonderful skin. I said, thank you. She said, you know, what do you
do? Well, I don’t drink, I don’t smoke, you know, I use sunscreen. She said, have you always taken care of your skin, and I said, no, I used to -- see these are things I used to -- people would stop me in the street, and then just say would you just pose, and I’d end up the newspaper.

SICULAR: If you had an agent, you would’ve made money for it.

MORSE: (laughter) This is on tour with Cabaret in Italy. This is my girlfriend, [Ilyan?] that I go to see in Paris and Normandy. That’s [32:00] Slovenia. This is back in Paris.

SICULAR: Beautiful. So pretty.

MORSE: So, here was the star. They just pushed me into it, and I was a star, and I sang and danced, and the girls behind me --

SICULAR: Would you try to emulate the styles of the models of the era, or did you just have your own style?

MORSE: No, no. I copied. (laughter) Copied the hairdos -- oh, this is when I married. [33:00] Maybe, you’ll see there, was he there -- there’s my first husband. So, I went from dancing to living in the chateau, hunting the hounds.

SICULAR: So pretty.

MORSE: Yeah. Actually, a girlfriend of mine made me a Folies Bergeres album of some of the other photos, you know, the
black and white photos -- can I call Frank? Frank?

FRANK:   Yeah.

MORSE:   Could you bring me the album Lynn made for your birthday please? The Folies Bergeres one. But no, I posed the way they posed, which was always with the hair like that. I had the hair up in the chignon, the way they did.

SICULAR: [34:00] Are you taping this?

FRANK:   Yeah.

MORSE:   Do you have the Folies Bergeres album that Lynn made for you?

FRANK:   Yeah.

MORSE:   For your birthday?

SICULAR: So, on stage, you posed like the models that you saw.

MORSE:   Yeah.

SICULAR: And I wonder if they got their poses from you.

MORSE:   On stage. Yes. Yes, because I was always doing, you know -- with the foot forward, and the hip -- yes, and they did -- because show girls didn’t pose like that.

SICULAR: Right, but I’m wondering if the models got their poses from you.

MORSE:   Oh. No, no, no. I copied everybody. You know I was 15, and at Norman Hartnell, I saw how they walked, how they --

SICULAR: Did he ever give you any advice?
MORSE: No. He didn’t. I was like his little pet. I was only 15, and I was very young, and -- I used to have my hair up in a chignon, and he would -- they would call me Aphrodite, and no.

SICULAR: And how about your model agent in England did she ever give you any advice?

MORSE: No. They threw me to the wolves. [35:00] She was like get photos done, go to this photographer, get your resume and things. My girlfriend made this for Frank. Some of my black and white photos.

SICULAR: Where was this picture from? The first one?

MORSE: This one? This was just somebody else who wanted me to pose for them. This is in my flat in Paris.

SICULAR: Do you remember the photographer, and what he did with the pictures.

MORSE: No. I rarely got paid. (laughter) I rarely got paid, and I would end up in magazines and newspapers and things. They would stop me in the street, and say you should model, and you should do photographs, and this and that.

SICULAR: This is to (inaudible). Beautiful.

MORSE: Frank loved it. A girlfriend of mine made that for my husband for his birthday, and sent it to him, so he’s got me all in one piece.

SICULAR: So, you started as a model, and you became one of the
MORSE: I did it my way.

SICULAR: Do you have any last thoughts, before we end?

MORSE: No. Just I’m happy to see you, and thank you for interviewing me.

CREW: Rolling. And go.

SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with Professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology. We’re so happy to have you with us, today. [37:00] We’re interviewing Terri May. Terri May who modeled starting in 1974 in Texas, went on to Paris, and back to New York, modeling both with Elite and Ford model agencies. Today’s date is Thursday, June 23, 2011. We’re at the Vault’s beautiful gallery in Culver City, and we’re so happy to have you with us, today.

TERRI MAY: Thank you. It’s good to be here.

SICULAR: So, Terri, you started modeling in 1974 in Texas in Dallas. Is that correct?

MAY: Yes.

SICULAR: Who did you model with there?

MAY: I modeled with Kim Dawson.

SICULAR: Which is a top agency in Texas, and how were you discovered? Did you go there, or did they come to you?

MAY: Well, my mom had always wanted to be a model, when she was
young [38:00], so instead, she had me, and quite a few people, you know, your daughter should probably model, and so I just went there one day, and signed on.

SICULAR: How old were you?

MAY: I was fourteen.

SICULAR: So, you were in high school, then.

MAY: Yes.

SICULAR: And what kind of bookings did you do at that time?

MAY: Mostly, just after school I would do like Neiman Marcus, whatever kind of local newspaper ads, and things like that.

SICULAR: And did you model as a teen, or as an adult? Did they have you dressed as a woman or as a teen?

MAY: I always kind of looked older than I was, and so, it was mainly for missy type clothes.

SICULAR: And did your friends treat you any differently in high school, when they saw your pictures coming out?

MAY: Yeah. A little bit.

SICULAR: Was that hard for you, or were you OK with it?

MAY: I was OK with it. I kind of liked the attention.

SICULAR: And did it take away from any of your clubs or sports that you guys do in high school at the time?

MAY: Not so much.

SICULAR: And then you went from Texas [39:00] to -- how did you get to the big time?
MAY: Well, there was -- an illustrator named Antonio Lopez.

SICULAR: Who’s still famous.

MAY: He discovered Jerry Hall and Jessica Lane, and a few other people, and he came to the agency one day and picked my photo out from everybody, and actually, Tara Shannon that he picked out in that same day, and he set me up basically with an agent in Paris.

SICULAR: Which agency?

MAY: It was called Prestige.

SICULAR: And when did you model there? How old were you?

MAY: I left in ’78. So, I was 18.

SICULAR: Did you finish high school at that point?

MAY: Yeah.

SICULAR: And how long were you in Paris for?

MAY: For a year.

SICULAR: And did you make a big splash right away, or did you have to make the rounds?

MAY: I made a couple of days of rounds, and then I was working.

SICULAR: And who did you work for? What kind of clients?

MAY: Mostly editorial. I did a lot of French Vogue, Elle magazine, Marie Claire. Basically, I was just there to build my book, [40:00] and that’s what I did.

SICULAR: And were you thrilled, when you got to see yourself in such beautiful clothes and beautiful magazines.
MAY: I was.

SICULAR: Of course. It’s the best. It’s the best of the best.

And do you remember some of the models you met along the way at that time -- who were your contemporaries and photographers that you got to work with?

MAY: Well, Jerry Hall was one that I was really excited about meeting, because she was also from Texas, and she was a superstar at the time, so -- she kind of took me under her wing a little bit, and protected me.

SICULAR: Are you still friends with her?

MAY: Well, I haven’t spoken to her in a really long time, but I’m sure if we saw each other, we’d still be friends.

SICULAR: And which photographers did you work with?

MAY: Gosh. A lot of people.

SICULAR: I’m sure all Europeans, and then you came back to New York, and you came back to Elite, is that right?

MAY: Yes. I --

SICULAR: Which is a great agency. That was around 1984.

MAY: Actually, I came to New York in ’79, and I met Johnny Casablanca in Paris, and we had lunch [41:00] and I just decided that I would go with him, because he was on top of the game at that point.

SICULAR: I worked with him at his agency. He was a great agent, and great boss, one of my favorite bosses.
MAY: Yeah. He was very good.

SICULAR: And do you remember your bookers then? Who you worked with at Elite that you were close with?

MAY: Eleanor was my booker.

SICULAR: And were you close with her?

MAY: Yes, very close.

SICULAR: And are you still in touch with her? Just curious.

MAY: No.

SICULAR: Because a booker and a model they really build up quite a strong relationship. You’re on the phone every day for years.

MAY: Yeah. No. I don’t know what happened to her. Do you?

SICULAR: No, but I -- when this interview’s over, I can help her down, if you want. I’ve tracked down a lot of people.

MAY: I would love to know where she is.

SICULAR: So, did you enjoy -- how was the work different in New York than it was in Paris for you?

MAY: Well, when I got to New York, it was a little harder for me to break into the editorial side of it. I worked a lot catalogue and for different stores, and things like that and doing commercials, but I had a hard time [42:00] breaking into the editorial part of it, until I cut my hair, which happened in, I think, ’84, and as soon as I cut my hair, like, I started working immediately for Vogue and
Bazaar --

SICULAR: And who’s idea was it to cut your hair? A client or yours?

MAY: It was mine. Yeah. I was always changing my look.

SICULAR: And did you have to ask permission from the agency, because a lot of models, before they change any looks they ask their bookers, saying, can I change my hair?

MAY: I was never one to ask permission.

SICULAR: And then it was a big surprise, when you came in then with your short hair.

MAY: (laughter)

SICULAR: Then your booker has to call all the clients and let them know that.

MAY: I was a bad girl.

SICULAR: That’s OK.

MAY: It worked, though.

SICULAR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Who were some of the other greats that you met along the way?

MAY: As far as models, or?

SICULAR: How about photographers?

MAY: Well, some of my favorite photographers were Norman Parkinson. I loved to work with him. We worked a lot for Town & Country, and --

SICULAR: I heard he was a very nice man.
MAY: Yeah. He was great. Patrick Demarchelier. [43:00] I traveled a lot with him -- worked with him a lot. Guideon Lewin. I don’t know. There was a bunch of them that I love -- that I have a special for in my heart. Models, you know, all the famous ones --

SICULAR: Did you find yourself doing doubles with the same models over and over again -- that people saw you in pairs?

MAY: Yeah. I tended to get booked a lot with same girls a lot of the times. It was good, though, because we all kind of developed friendships, and --

SICULAR: And you were part of the model wars, then at that time, between Ford and Elite -- it was all fierce competition back and forth.

MAY: Was that when --

SICULAR: In the ’70s and ’80s.

MAY: Yeah. I don’t know. I don’t really remember being part of that.

SICULAR: You were if you went from Elite to Ford, or Ford to Elite.

MAY: Yeah. I guess. It was, you know, just one day, I decided to -- well, actually I was following Eleanor [44:00] to that agency.

SICULAR: You went to Prestige you said?

MAY: It was actually a little tiny agency called Fame, and I
didn’t realize at the time that Eileen had 50% ownership of that agency, until she shut it down.

SICULAR: Why did she shut it down? Do you know?

MAY: It was just so small. I think it just never really grew beyond Esme and I. We were really the only two people that were the names of it, and then everybody else was kind of well-known at all.

SICULAR: And then you both wound up at Ford with Eileen and Jerry. Did you socialize with them a lot? With Eileen and Jerry?

MAY: Yeah. We went out quite often, you know, just -- they would have different functions they would invite me to, it was always a good time with them, so.

SICULAR: Why do you think the public is so fascinated with models and the fashion business?

MAY: Well, I don’t know. I guess people love beauty, and beautiful clothes [45:00] and I don’t know. I think that’s basically it. I think that, you know --

SICULAR: You had -- you were lucky because you got to be photographed in the most beautiful clothing, the most beautiful hairdos, the most beautiful makeup, and when you were off camera, did you go around like that, or what would you wear when you were home?

MAY: (laughter) Well, basically, because you wear so much makeup
during the day, that once you get home, you just don’t want to wear makeup anymore, so basically, you just take it all off, and I learned very quickly that you can’t really party too much as a model, because you have to look good the next day. You have to feel good the next day, so once I got to New York, I mean, I had a really great time in Paris, but once I got to New York, I settled down quite a bit, and just really took care of my skin, and exercised all the time, because I just realized how much money, you know, that people were sinking into one day of booking us, so we had to be on our best behavior?

SICULAR: Did you prefer working editorial [46:00] or catalogues for the money, or for a big campaign? If your booker calls you and he tells you that you have a whatever kind of booking, and you go wow, I’m so excited, what would that be for you?

MAY: Well, editorial was always great, just because that brought in all the other clients, you know, all the big campaigns and stuff like that. So, it would either be editorial first, and then the campaigns second.

SICULAR: What are some of the campaigns that you got to appear in?

MAY: I did a lot of work for Revlon and Guerlain and different commercials like, you know, Woolite and different wines and
things like that.

SICULAR: And did you get to travel a lot as a model?

MAY: Yes.

SICULAR: Where are some of the places you got to go to?

MAY: All over the place. France, Italy, Greece, Egypt -- we were all over the place.

SICULAR: It’s an international business, because you really get to work with the top people [47:00], models or photographers, so on. Do you want to show us your book a little bit --

MAY: Oh sure.

SICULAR: -- and comment on some of your pictures?

MAY: These were some of my favorite photos that I just kind of put together over the years, just so I could look back on it, and go, oh, I like that one --

SICULAR: That looks like Gerrard Bazaar.

MAY: That is Gerrard Bazaar.

SICULAR: Do you remember who took that?

MAY: That was Rebecca -- Rebecca --

SICULAR: White.

MAY: Yeah. Rebecca White. She shot that. These were some of my first pictures that I had taken for French Vogue [Art d’omborg?].

SICULAR: He’s such a great photographer.
MAY: I thought I looked like Elvis in that one.

SICULAR: Did your mom ever comment about them?

MAY: She always asked why do they put so much makeup on you. They make you look so old. (laughter) This was for Bazaar. This was just a test shot that I did [48:00] with a friend of mine. This was fashion shows. I think that was Bill Blass.

SICULAR: Did you like doing fashion shows.

MAY: Loved doing fashion shows.

SICULAR: He was such a nice man. Bill Blass. Very classy.

MAY: He was great. He said to me that I was the only model that he ever knew that can make walking shorts look like an evening gown. I don’t know if that was a complement, though.

SICULAR: That is a compliment.

MAY: And this is with a brown wig on, which was kind of fun. This was for Town & Country Norman Parkinson. This was Revlon. This was also Tow-- no, this was not Town & Country, but it was something else with Norman. This was for a perfume campaign. I don’t remember which one, and I think this was Rebecca Blake, as well for a jewelry ad. This was Vogue, and it was Andrea [49:00] Blanch, and I think this was Bazaar, or I think this was Vogue, and I think this one was Bazaar. This was Andrea Blanch, and
this one -- does it say on here? Some French photographer, I’m sure. This was Town & Country.

SICULAR: I remember at Ford and both Elite, whenever models had covers, they reline the wall with all of their covers, and when you walked into the booking room of the latest covers. Everyone would be so proud to see who was hanging up. It was kind of fun.

MAY: This was Victor Screbneski for the jewelry that I was wearing.

SICULAR: He always had a very special style with the lights, and (inaudible)

MAY: Yeah. Definitely. Arthur Elgort. This was horsed. Victor Screbneski, again. [50:00]

SICULAR: So glamorous.

MAY: This was Marco [Giordano?] for Italian Vogue.

SICULAR: His daughter is I think photo editor there, now?

MAY: Oh, really?

SICULAR: Yeah. Vogue Italia.

MAY: Oh, cool. This was for Bob Mackie for a perfume ad. This was American Vogue.

SICULAR: Did you find that when you started modeling that you looked at other magazines to try study how models posed?

MAY: Yeah. All the time.

SICULAR: Were you a dancer?
MAY: No. When I first went to Paris, my first show as Chloe, and I was afraid because Pat Cleveland was the first one to go out, and she did this whole dance and with a top hat and everything, and twirling the cane, and I was like, oh my God, I am not going to have to do that, am I? Thank God that everybody else just started walking normally after her, so that was cool, but. [51:00] It was kind of scary.

SICULAR: Oh, you got a Cosmo cover. That’s top.

MAY: A recent shot, actually, which I set up the light. I set up the light myself --

SICULAR: How do you photograph?

MAY: -- and had my daughter take the picture. (laughter)

SICULAR: So, you modeled basically the ’70s and the ’80s, and if someone was looking at this video say 50 or 100 years from now in a museum, how would you like that era of modeling to be remembered? What do you think the most important thing -- like it wasn’t grunge, and it was kind of -- this is your answer, but -- what do you think?

MAY: Well, we were a bit over the top.

SICULAR: That was a year ago, when you were --

MAY: Yeah. There was lots of leather. You know. Claude Montana, and the big shoulders, and spikey hair -- it was like very much David Bowie era. So, yeah. We were pretty wild. I mean, I look at some of the photographs now, and I
think, you know, we were almost just as wild as then,
[52:00] as they are now. I mean --

SICULAR: I think more wild.

MAY: Yeah, I mean, some of the hair and makeup that we did, I mean, it was beautiful.

SICULAR: And was it fun?

MAY: Yeah.

SICULAR: And what are some of your beauty secrets. You look fabulous. Out of all the models from that era, I think you look the best.

MAY: Oh, thank you.

SICULAR: And I’m saying this on the record. So, what are some of your beauty secrets?

MAY: Well, I do the simplest thing possible. No special products or anything like that. I actually use Trader Joe’s moisturizer to take makeup off, and I use it to moisturize my face, as well, and Cetaphil just to wash my face. I used to make sure that I washed my face, every night and moisturize, and actually, a really good beauty tip that I learned from Diane Dewitt -- I have to give her credit here is --

SICULAR: Texas girls.

MAY: Is that -- she says that, when you put on moisturizer, like right after you wash your face, and your skin is a little
bit moist, is when you want to put your moisturizer on, because that seals in the moisture, and it actually works. I think it works. [53:00]

SICULAR: That’s great. Do you have any last thoughts you’d like to add.

MAY: Just thank you for including me in this. This has been fun.

SICULAR: It’s our pleasure. Such an honor. Thank you so much.

MAY: You’re welcome.

CREW: Back to set, and --

SICULAR: So, I wanted to go back and speak to you about your favorite booker. Who was your favorite booker at Ford?

MAY: My favorite booker was Rusty [Zeddis?]. She was most amazing.

SICULAR: And what was she like?

MAY: Just very even-keeled. Every day she called me up with my instructions for the following day, and you know, if I was upset or crazy or scattered, she always brought me back to reality that was, you know, you’re all right. She was just very down to earth and lovely.

SICULAR: And the amazing thing about this is like 25-30 years later, and you still have that love for your booker, Rusty.

MAY: I do.

SICULAR: Because people don’t understand when you -- a
relationship between a booker, which is an agent, the booking agent [54:00] and a model. You’re on the phone every day, and you go through everything that life has to offer -- good times, bad times, sad times, happy times, and the relationship I think will last forever, even if you don’t speak for a while.

MAY: She was the best booker on the planet (break in audio) [55:00]

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]