SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular I’m with the Ford Model Agency, and along with Professor Karen Trivette Cannell from Fashion Institute of Technology. We are archiving the history of Ford models, fashion and beauty. Today, we’re about to be interviewing Harry King, the hairdresser whose era starts 1958 in England, [00:01:00] and then came over to the United States, and we have the guest interviewer, Joy Bell, who’s one of our models. Turn around and say, hello.

BELL: Good day.

SICULAR: And now, we’re going to start our interview. Oh.

Today, is May 5, 2010. We’re in New York City in Gideon Lewin’s photo studio. Thank you.

KING: A little wrong.

BELL: The date was wrong.

KING: I really started doing photo work in ’68, but ’58 was when I started my apprenticeship.

SICULAR: OK.

KING: So, you got that.

SICULAR: Do we do that, again, or -- OK. Here we go. I know you started in 1958 as a hairdresser, and what brought you to the United States?
KING: I was 15 years old. Well, I was coming to America a lot, and I loved it here. I was coming on holiday all the time, and I had family here, and then I made great friends, and then where I was working in London, which was the top salon in London, a place called Michael John in Mayfair, and they were going to open up [00:02:00] in New York on the corner of 57th and Park, and they had the premises and everything, and they were going to put me in as manager, then they got nervous about opening in New York, and they nixed the idea, so England was on strike, all the time. The miners were on strike. The electricians were on strike, and we were like on a three-day working week, and I was very ambitious, and I was a workaholic, and I thought I’ve had enough of this, so I came over to New York, and I went into Kenneth -- hated it. It was so old fashioned and dowdy, and I was working in a kind of madam salon in London, and I wanted something very modern, so I went into Saint Andre, and I went over to the boss, Andre, and this was on 57th Street, between Park and Madison -- five floors, [00:03:00] over 100 hairdressers. I’m not exaggerating, and I went to Andre and said my name is David, I’m the creative director of Michael John in London and yours is the only salon I would consider working for in New York, and then he hired me.
SICULAR: What year was this?

KING: 1974, I came, and 1975, six months later, the first job I had done was published, and it was the cover of Glamour magazine with Charly.

SICULAR: Charly Stember.

KING: Yeah.

SICULAR: Who photographed it?

KING: Don’t remember.

BELL: What were you famous for? I mean, when someone speaks about your hair, I mean, what was your signature?

KING: Well, I’ve been kind of put into a category of big hair, but it was like all those Cosmo covers that I did. I mean, I did probably over a hundred worldwide, but I started in London, and I was [00:04:00] known for natural hair. I was getting the models would come into the studio, and I didn’t use rollers. I didn’t do anything. I had a pair of scissors, where I would like chip away, and then just do this to the hair, and it was done, because people look like that. Women wanted that. They didn’t want to keep setting their hair, and spraying their hair, so I was known for that, and then I came to America, and Saint Andre was doing a look, which was a bob, French, hammered, frizzed and I was doing my natural hair, and so I went into Vogue, and they hired me, and that’s a story, too, which
I’ll tell you. I had an appointment to go and see an editor called Polly Mellen, and I didn’t have a portfolio, because in London everyone knew who I was, [00:05:00] so when I arrived here, everyone said, where’s your book? Where’s your book? So, I’ve had that and the month before -- a lot of work published in London, and I got a friend of mine to send me over [tet?] sheets? So, I put a book together, and it was all girls with natural hair, and so Andre, my boss at the time, said well, you cannot take that up to Vogue, it’s not what we do. So, I said, well how can I go see an editor without a portfolio? He said, well, you’ll have to work it out. So, I go in, and I’m in the reception, and just over here is Christy Ann waiting to see an editor called Jay Dobson, and I’m here waiting to see Polly Mellen, so Vera Wang, Polly’s assistant comes and takes me into her office, and I’m sitting there, and then Polly strides in, very like this, and she’s got her very, tight, navy sweater, [00:06:00] big tits, grey flannel pants with a alligator belt -- funny the things you remember -- alligator flat shoes, books under her arms, plunks them down on the desk with her back to me -- Well, Henry, do you have a book, and I said, the name’s Harry -- All right, Harry, do you have a book? And I said, well, it’s coming from London. So, then she said, well have you
had any work published in this country? And I had done --
I had forgotten about the *Glamour* cover, because -- (inaudible) and I had done two disastrous jobs. One for
*Seventeen*, the prom issue, and the other one was how to
perm your own hair for *Glamour*. Bill Connors was the
photographer. Patty Hanson was the model. She hadn’t yet
made it to *Vogue*, and Rosie Vela, her first in New York,
and I thought my God, if we were in London, [00:07:00] I
could turn her into a star. So, anyway, that phrase about
being in the right place in the right time -- Michael John
in London had a big, beauty picture in American *Vogue* that
month, so Polly Mellen, after she said had you had any work
published, and I said, well, Polly, I’ve done these jobs,
they’re not very good, but do you know Michael John in
London? She said, well of course I do, and I said, well, I
was creative director there. She said, oh, did you ever
work with David Bailey, and I said, yeah, I did a lot of
work with him, would you like to know who else? So, she
said, yes. So, Bill King, Norman Parkinson, Clive Harris,
Smith Duffy. She walks me to the elevator, as the door
opened gave me a megawatt smile. [00:08:00] I get into the
elevator. I go back to the salon. She books me on a trip
with Deb Turbeville, and that was the beginning of my
career.
BELL: How did your British training serve you, and your background serve you in terms of your success in the states?

KING: I was always happy that my success started in London, and not in the United States.

BELL: Why is that?

KING: Because hairdressers were monsters here. If murder was legal, I would’ve been dead. I would’ve been -- it would’ve been like Julius Caesar, being stabbed in the salon. It was like when I first arrived, and I started working in the salon, half the hairdressers talked to me, and half of them didn’t. Soon as I started working, that half who were talking to me stopped, and the other half, talked to me, but it’s like I’m packing my bag to go away on my first trip for Vogue, and one of the hairdressers there said, [00:09:00] where are you going? And I said, I’m going on a trip for Vogue, isn’t that great? My first job. He said, why aren’t I going? And went out and spoke to the PR person, and that’s what I had to deal with, but the training in England was like fantastic, I mean, I was working at Michael John and Michael was my mentor. Michael was the editorial queen. I mean, he was one of the first hairdressers to work in the studio, and he was working with everybody, so when he couldn’t go, I was sent along. They
didn’t want me. They wanted Michael, but they got me, and
I took over for Michael. I invented haircuts. I invented
a haircut in London. It was called the lion’s mane, where
the layers that were short got longer, longer, longer,
longer -- it’s now here mall hair, and electric rock, but
in the beginning it was very cool [00:10:00], and nobody
had ever done that, so I started that in London, and took
over half of Michael’s clientele. I did every magazine
except Vogue. He wouldn’t let me go to Vogue. He said I
wasn’t ready. Well, it was his thing, and then he was
furious, when I came to New York and British Vogue started
flying me in. They never paid hairdressers in London. I
was getting paid -- not much -- editorial rate. I was
being put up into a hotel. I was having my flight paid
for, and he’d worked for Vogue, and never got a penny.

BELL: The power of the hairdressing in terms of the models
that you worked with -- did you ever spot stars yourself?
Were you ever responsible for creating these stars, and
were any of them Ford models? Do you remember?

KING: Well, Ford was a major, major model agency, and so
when I first came over, I mean, I really only worked with
three [00:11:00] model agencies, which the top one was
Ford, then there was Wilhelmina, and there was Zoe Lee, and
then a bit later on --
SICULAR: Elite.

KING: -- Elite came in, and then of course that big war, between Johnny Casablancas and the Fords, but Ford was the top one. I mean, the girls were classy, they had style, they were great. Ford had the best girls. It was as simple as that.

BELL: What was Ford known for in those days? And what time period of speaking of exactly?

KING: I would say '74, '75, '76, '77 --

SICULAR: And how would you explain the difference between the different model -- the look of the models from each agency -- the top four?

KING: Well, Zoe Lee was quirky. Wilhelmina was a bridge between quirky and cool, but Ford had the style, and had like [00:12:00] the girls who were so assured. I mean, if a girl got into Ford it was big time for her, you know.

SICULAR: And did you have a close relationship with Jerry and Eileen Ford?

KING: No. I only met them a couple of times, as an observer. I saw Eileen in the studio, once, and her energy and her style and the way people respected her was something. It was pretty cool.

SICULAR: When would you be preparing -- did you ever do hair for shows also, or was it just?
KING: Oh, yeah. I mean, in London, I did Dior. I did -- my first show was Valentino, then I came to New York, and I did the -- oh, I did other shows in London, I can’t remember who they were. I did the 1976 Calvin Klein show that put [00:13:00] him on the map. I designed the hair which was natural hair, which he still does, today, and Way Bandy did the makeup, and Calvin was the first designer to use editorial girls. It was all my girls that I worked with at Vogue like Beverly Johnson, Rosie Vela, Iman, Patti Hansen, Beverly Johnson, and Frances Stein who was an editor at Vogue styled it.

SICULAR: And what’s the process when you would do hair, whether it was for a major campaign or editorial? You don’t just go on the set, and do the hair. Do you have meetings before you look at the clothing?

KING: No. We never did then, but I’d look at the clothes, I mean --

SICULAR: I mean, it had to be a few days, before. It wasn’t just that day that you look at the clothes, and decide on the hair.

KING: Oh, yeah. I would go and it changed. I mean, first of all there was no breakfast. There was no lunch. You got a burger [00:14:00] from a deli. You just worked and worked and worked. I don’t think there was even overtime.
Yeah, there was a bit of overtime, but I would go into a studio, and look at the clothes, and look at the models, and if I did advertising, it was very, very difficult, because they wanted Harry King, but they didn’t want my product, because they hadn’t evolved yet. I opened the door for the next batch of hair people, but for me it was tough, because I would get a girl I was working with editorially all the time, and it was like natural, and it was like they wanted me to do that old fashioned for a campaign, and I would say, I’m not doing that, and there were so many arguments, and then I would say to everybody, look in the mirror -- to the account executive, to the creative director, all the women there, look in the mirror, look how you look -- this is what I created. Why can’t I do this on the model? Oh, no, no, America isn’t ready for that. I said, you’re not allowing America to be ready for that. So, it was an uphill battle. Editorial was a bit different, because my main magazine my only magazine was Vogue, so everybody follows Vogue, so if I -- there was one issue that I did with Patti Hansen and Iman, and it was all natural hair. Well, you couldn’t ask me to put rollers of the hair the next booking. It was like a big, big, big thing, you know, cutting Renee Russo’s hair all off in Peru, and just savage hair -- maybe a bit
blown out to control it a bit, but it was like I created this whole look, and then the world took it on. [00:16:00]

SICULAR: And how did you feel seeing something that you created for Vogue and for models trickle down to civilians walking on the street -- regular women?

KING: Oh, I was so proud. I was so proud for the fact that I had made a woman’s life easier.

BELL: You hit on something there, which I think is fascinating. The role of the hairdresser and the model in terms of hair, and how important it is and how significant it is to her career. Could you explain a little bit more on that? Because you were saying before about -- the natural styling -- but you said something about cutting Rosie Vela’s hair, after you went down to South America --

KING: No, no -- Renee Russo.

BELL: -- sorry, Renee Russo --

KING: Well, what happened was -- I get a phone call from Renee. I mean, the first time I met Renee was in Scavullo Studio, and I said to her, oh my God, I thought you were 28 years old with a big bottom lip, because Dick Avedon and Scavullo used to lie on the floor and chew up, so she had this big lip like this, [00:17:00] and they dressed her up -- she used to cry the way they made her look with rollers and the makeup and all -- she hated it, so here I see this
love child, this sexy, sexy girl, and so she and I really got along very, very well. So, one night I get a phone call, and she said, Harry, I’m going to Peru with Vogue, and I’ve requested for you to do my hair, and they want me to cut my hair, and I said, Renee, don’t be pressured by a magazine to cut your hair, thinking, oh my God, I hope that she lets me do it, but she said, no, no, they want me to cut it, blah, blah, blah, blah. So, we go to Peru, and I chop all her hair off and create a look that’s still around, today, which has changed a bit. I mean, Meg Ryan, the Sally Hersberger [00:18:00] cut -- it’s an extension of what I did.

BELL: Would you describe a little bit more the actual style?

KING: Short.

BELL: OK.

KING: Short -- not like measured out, not a Sassoon cut -- let’s say, well I think like the collar bone here is one of the sexiest points of a woman, actually, and like the nape of the neck -- the bone there. So, I followed the face. I use the hair the way it falls, so I cut her hair to here, chop it, and as I said, it’s still being done, today, and with Patti, the same kind of thing. Her hair was long, and I chopped her hair, and so it’s -- then eventually, I chop all her hair off, and you know, it’s the quintessential
Harry King haircut. When they brought me Farrah Fawcett to get rid of that look that she had, and I gave her my haircut which is in Scavullo’s book. It’s gorgeous.

BELL: I was going to ask you about Farrah Fawcett. So what’s the [00:19:00] you were most proud of --

KING: Too many. I’ve got too many. I mean, I worked with the most fantastic photographers, the most incredible models, the most wonderful makeup artists. It was such an inspiration. I think there is one of that kind of sticks in my mind, but that was for British Vogue with Grace Codington, and a young girl called Maria von Hartz, and it was her second job, and Barry Lategan was the photographer, and we were going to India, and we had all got shot up, and we weren’t allowed to go, because of visas, so we do it in the studio -- two days in August, so hot, and Grace comes over to me and says -- you know how she is -- I’m into big hair. That’s all. [00:20:00] So, I love -- my whole thing is I love the classics, but I love to funk the classics, and -- because it makes it younger -- you know, so I gave -- I banged out one hairdo, after another on Maria -- fantastic, and it won an award in England as the best editorial of the year, and I’m very proud of that. I’m very proud of a booking that I did with Polly and Scavullo at Petit [Sanviensin?] with Iman and Patti, where I did
totally natural hair, and I was nude doing hair. Can you believe? Wouldn’t do it now? (laughter)

BELL: Historically, you’re talking about Caucasian hair and African American hair --

KING: Well, Iman had never --

BELL: -- how has it evolved over the years?

KING: Well, now, I mean, the black woman does not embrace her hair. I mean, it’s tortured to death -- so many extensions, so blown out, so straightened out, so ironed out, so much product, and most of them look like they’re in a tired of video -- music video, and I’m not saying everyone should be natural, but I think it’s a bit stuck, now.

BELL: I mean more in relation to say in the ’70s and the ’80s in terms of fashion and styling in that.

KING: Well, in the beginning a black girl’s hair was pulled back. You know, you went into a studio, and you’d pull their hair back, because photographers didn’t -- and editors didn’t want hair on them. It was very difficult for a black girl to work in the United -- in America.

BELL: And how has that evolved?

KING: Oh, I think it’s really evolved.

BELL: During the time you were working it did? [00:22:00]

KING: I think so. I think there was a great freedom, when I
came in, you know, with everything. I mean, suddenly, there was a great freedom, sociologically. I’m all about that, too. It’s not just the hairdo. I mean, it’s like the designers, clubs, restaurants, lifestyle -- you know, people had a sexual ease, and they were doing tons of cocaine, you know, and I think it made things a lot easier for everybody.

SICULAR: Talking about different types of hair, I’m sure you’ve worked on young models who were in their teens, and now we have in models such as Carmen that are in their late ’70s, have you worked on women all different ages?

KING: Oh, yeah. I mean, I’ve worked with Carmen. I’ve worked with all ages. The worse was when Brooke Shields was 13, 14, and [00:23:00] then I was booked to do a catalogue of the babies for Bloomingdales, and they wanted this big hair that I was doing on these young models, and the girls were like 11 and 12 years old, and I mean, I hated it. I really hated it. Way Bandy did the makeup -- too much makeup, and I did this big hair, because that’s what they wanted, and my stomach was going over, because I think kids should be protected, quite honestly, and here I am making them look like sluts, and I said to the art director, because the art director loved what I was doing, and hated it at the same time, and I said, after this comes
out, you’re never going to work with me again, because of what I’m doing, right? He said, yeah. And it was a big scandal, when it came out, and I knew that’s what they wanted. They wanted the newspapers to write about -- look what I had done, you know. [24:00]

BELL: So, what I’m hearing is that the whole hair thing -- you know your work as a hairdresser, and as an artist is critical to the whole fashion -- trends --

KING: Oh, absolutely. I was lucky I was an innovator. I wasn’t a follower. I mean, you didn’t ask me to copy somebody else. I came in, and I did something brand new, and the photographers loved it, because they were so sick of seeing these young girls look old. I was making them look sexy and young, and so of course they’re different in front of the camera.

BELL: Tell us about some of the celebrities that you’ve worked with.

KING: Well, celebrities. I started off in London working with people like Diana Rigg -- had just done the James Bond movie.

BELL: My favorite.

KING: So, can I have a sip of water?

SICULAR: Sure, let me get that for you.

KING: No, I’ll use it from there. So, there was Diana Rigg,
who was the first model [00:25:00] or actress that I ever worked with who had to have champagne and fresh fruit in the dressing room.

BELL: The original diva.

KING: Then -- she was wonderful, and then there was Charlotte Rampling, who was so sexy and I loved her, because she could never remember my name, and then there was Anita Pallenberg, who was one of the most beautiful women that I ever met.

BELL: And who is she married to again?

KING: She wasn’t. She was ever Stone’s girlfriend. I think first of all, she was with --

SICULAR: And the scandal with the book.

KING: -- well, she was -- no that was [Maryann Faval?] laughter

SICULAR: No, no, no, no -- Pallenberg, also.

KING: Oh.

BELL: Moving on.

KING: So, she was gorgeous, and she was in performance and you know, Barbarella, and she was fabulous, and then I come to America, [00:26:00] and the first star that I actually worked with at Scavullo Studio -- Gladys Knight and the Pips, then I met -- oh, and Diane Carol -- didn’t do her very well, then I was at Chris von Wagenheim, and a cover
and a big spread inside, of Diana Ross, and that was so exciting, I was such a supreme fan.

BELL: What did you do with her hair?

KING: Well, this is really funny, I’m the only white boy the dressing room, and she had just finished making Lady Sings the Blues, so she was still channeling Billy Holiday, and we’re shooting a gold Stephen Burrows swimsuit, and she’s going to be wearing high heels, and she’s going to be held up horizontally by four guys -- black and white, great picture. So, she’s got a bob, like to here, and I’m thinking, hey, what’s this, so I said -- she said, [00:27:00] oh, I’m so natural, now, I don’t wear any hair pieces. I don’t wear any false eyelashes, so I said, well, do you have any hair pieces with me. She said, under there. I put two wigs on her, attached it to her hair here and here, and put a wind machine on it, and she’s being held up and she’s got this big hair blowing. It was a fantastic photo, so that was Diana -- oh, then the makeup artist, after I said, do you have any hair piece -- he said, do you got any eyelashes under there? So, then there was her, and then, you know, Sofia Loren, oh my god, working with her so many times was kind of fantastic.

BELL: Why?

KING: Why? Fucking Sofia Loren, man. I mean, she was
amazing. I mean, it’s when I was a [00:28:00] teenager, I used to skip school, and go to art cinemas and see Bridget Bordeaux movies, and Sofia Loren movies, and loved, loved, love, love, and when I met her at Albert Watson Studio, I’m doing her book cover, and it’s like, she walks, and hear drums, it’s like boom, boom, boom, boom, and so she says, oh, hello, I’m Sofia Loren, and I said, really? I would never have guessed it, and she sat down to have her makeup done, and with one hand, she’s holding my hand, and the other she’s stroking my face the whole time, and I just kept thinking, oh God, I wish my mum was a fly on the wall here, you know. That was fabulous. Then I had a wonderful couple of evenings with Liz Taylor, and then who else -- oh my God.

BELL:   (overlapping dialogue) Liz Taylor we want to hear about. What was it like doing her hair?

KING:   Well, she’s camp as a row of tents, I mean --

BELL:   [00:29:00] You want me to explain that?

KING:   -- I can’t. She’s a funny lady. I was working at Scavullo Studio and -- which was a townhouse on East 62nd Street, and he lived above the shop, and he was working on a book, so Liz was being interviewed upstairs, and I was working downstairs -- don’t remember who I was working with -- but we were introduced, early in the morning, before she
went upstairs, and I looked at her, and she was kind of clumpish, and short, and I didn’t take much notice of her, and I thought, oh my God, I see so many women that look like that at the mitzvahs and weddings, you know, and then that was that. So, I’m leaving the studio about 5 o’clock, and she’s coming down the stairs, we’re introduced again, and so she says, do you want to come back to the hotel, and do my hair? I said, you’re kidding, right? She said, no, no, I mean it. Now, at that time, a hair dresser called Maury Hopson [00:30:00] was doing her hair a lot, and he couldn’t do it, because of -- I think his dog was sick, or something, so I get in the limousine with her and we go back to the hotel, and we’re with her personal assistant, a woman called [Chen San?] who Richard Burton had met on location, when he was doing Night at the Iguana, and she kind of took care of him, and they were in Porto de [Vuato?], wherever that places is, so anyway, she was hired. So, Chen had very long hair, and so, Elizabeth said to me, I bet you’d like to cut her hair off. I said, you know what, my ego’s not that big that I have to cut everybody’s hair, so she said, do you want to cut mine? I said, of course, you know. So, we go back to the hotel, and I’ve cut her hair, and she said, let’s call Francesco [00:31:00], so she gets on the phone, and she said, I want
you -- she directed me, she said I want you to go over there, and scream. So, she calls up -- Chen calls Scavullo Studio, and says, Elizabeth Taylor would like to speak Francesco, so Francesco comes to the phone and Liz goes to me -- so I start screaming like, whatever, and she says Francesco who is this Harry King? He’s cut half of my hair, and you can hear him, and she’s giggling away. Francesco said his heart missed a beat. Anyway, that was my night with her, so then I cut her hair, and then she says to me, I haven’t had a haircut like this since a certain time. She said, it’s just like -- and I said, the artichoke. She said, yes, the artichoke [00:32:00] that Alexandre created on me. I said, yes, well, he did fantastic things on you, didn’t he? She said, oh yes, I said and The Taming of the Shrew, all those little braids. She said, oh, yes. I said, you know what, they’re still talking about that in [hattanme?] -- hattanme is like queens, you know, so we screamed, and she’s like kissing me, and she said, I found another Englishman, who with a sense of humor, then she holds me in her arms, and our noses are touching, and I go, oh my God, I hope my breath doesn’t smell, you know, she says, act one, scene one. She says what does it take to get you back here, tomorrow? I said, just ask me. So, that was that, and then I charged
her, and I never saw her, again. They don’t like to pay.

SICULAR: Did you ever work on the royal family in England?

KING: No, no, no, but my boss did. [00:33:00] We used to have like Princess Alexandra came in, Princess Anne came in -- Michael was always at the palace, met the queen many, many times.

SICULAR: And do you have any advice for new hairdressers starting out?

KING: Yes, just love it, do it, forget how you’ve been trained, and go for it, but use your training as a base.

SICULAR: And what’s your favorite part of the business?

KING: All of it. All of it. I love -- you know what -- I love real people. You know -- I ride the subway staring -- I’ll get arrested, or beaten up. I just stare at people, you know, just I love working in the studio. Love it. Not so much now, but I love it all.

SICULAR: Did you groom men also, or just women?

KING: Oh, yeah. I mean, I cut Mick Jagger’s hair, Sting, [00:34:00] -- yeah, I like doing men.

SICULAR: And did you work on television and movies, also, or --

KING: I did a girl’s hair called Joyce Dewitt, where I created her look. She was in a show called Three’s Company, and I won an award for their haircut, which was cool, and you know, she was OK.
SICULAR: And how do you think the business has changed from the time you started working with models in the United States.

KING: Well, I made no money, and all the hairdressers make money, now, and it’s easier for them, because all the fights that I had to make somebody look modern, and there was such a conflict with everybody, it -- you know, hairdressers don’t have that now, but getting back to celebrities, I worked with Madonna, she was wonderful. I did Monica Lewinsky’s book cover, that was wild. Oh, everybody.

BELL: How is it to be so close to celebrity? You know [00:35:00] to be working with -- what do you feel that you brought to the table to be able to deal with the Sophia Lorens, and --

KING: As I am now, that’s how I was with them. I treated them like real people, because they are real people. They’re only actors with great publicity, and great movies, or great plays, but they’re real people, and you know what, and work -- being natural with them, it was easy for them -- much easier.

BELL: And models would there be any difference?

KING: Well, some models could be a bit difficult, because like the first time I worked with Beverly Johnson we had a big fight. I was doing New York collections for Vogue, and
I think Dwayne Michaels was shooting it in Carnegie Hall Studio, you were there I think, and I am very good at -- if you’re in an outfit -- I’m there for the photograph, I’m not there just for my hair, [00:36:00] so if you are in an outfit, and the face has been painted, I will do the hair that suits the model, her personality, and what she’s wearing, and it’s all about proportion for me. So, Beverly’s in this coat, and I said, OK, I’m putting your hair up. She said, I never wear my hair up, and I said, well, you are with me. She said, I am not wearing my hair up, and I said, you are wearing your hair up.

SICULAR: So, what was the final outcome of that picture?
KING: She sent me a letter thanking me so much.
SICULAR: And was her hair up?
KING: Of course. (laughter) She didn’t argue with Harry King, and if you did, I wouldn’t work with you.

SICULAR: So, for people that aren’t in the business, when a model came on the set, were they dressed first, did they have their makeup done first, did they have their hair done first?
KING: Well, I like to do a kind of preparation, which in those days, I was the first one to use product in the hair, and what I did was -- and I never [00:37:00] showed up with bags and bags and bags of equipment. I have these hands,
and I have a great pair of scissors, and I had a great brush and a product that I found that altered the texture of the hair, so once I did that the hair was mine I could do anything. So, I’d spritz the girl’s hair, and that was it. Then she would have her makeup done, and then she would get dressed -- and basically, I did the hair on the set, and so fast, when a photographer would finish a roll of film, I’d go in and give him a whole new look, while they were changing film. I was so fast. Oh, another one I worked with was Rita Hayworth. It’s all coming back to me.

SICULAR: Wow. Rita Hayworth. What was that for?

KING: That was for I think McCall’s, and I never worked with McCall’s, but my agent -- or Good Housekeeping, [00:38:00] one or the other -- Scavullo and I had done Princess Yasmin for a portrait for his book, and she asked Francesco to shoot her mother, because her mother was very sick, and she thought it would be great to have a picture, so she came in and we did her, and it was so sad -- so, so, so sad -- it was -- she died six months later, but I worked with Rita Hayworth.

SICULAR: That’s nice.

KING: It was special. It was so special.

SICULAR: What’s the best piece of advice, though, someone gave you professionally about working -- about your career?
KING: No one did. No one gave me advice.

SICULAR: And did your parents get to see your success and enjoy it with you?

KING: Oh, yeah. My parents were separated when I was [00:39:00] a baby, and how I became a hairdresser was I was brought up in the schmutter business, which means clothing, and I was in my grandmother’s shop, and my home life was a wreck, because I won’t go into it -- but it’s interesting, but it’s a whole other -- nothing to do with this --

BELL: Another interview.

KING: -- yes, another interview -- and so I’m in my grandmother’s shop, my auntie’s there -- a fabulous woman, and she said, well, what are you going to do with your life? And I said, I don’t know, and she said, well, why don’t you be a hairdresser? You’ll make a lot of tips. I didn’t go to school the next day. I went out and got a job, and so it wasn’t like, all my life I wanted to be a lady’s hairdresser, in fact, six weeks before I committed myself I was out my girlfriend Julia, and [00:40:00] she said, why don’t you be a hairdresser, because in those days, it was a very like -- it was fashionable, it wasn’t like a big fag thing like over in America, it was like very fashionable to -- if you were going to leave school at 15, you worked in a boutique selling clothes, or you became a
hairdresser, that was it. So, I got a job at Eric of Baker Street 15 years old, and practice, practice, practice -- that’s what you have to do, when you’re starting out, you have to practice, and practice, and practice, and take all those knocks -- and one thing that I discovered was, when somebody says they don’t like what you’ve done, they’re not saying they don’t like you. So, you have to -- Polly Mellen gave me a wonderful piece of advice on my first booking with her, and she said, we are all -- there are no stars here, we are all stars -- [00:41:00] and you leave your ego at home, and where I teach every now and then, and I love teaching, and I say to people, leave your ego at home, and that I think pertains to every profession.

SICULAR: When you worked on a set, did you prefer working on a team that you were used to -- say the photographer, and makeup artist, and stylist? Or did you like it mixed up?

KING: I like it mixed up. I loved working with -- I would do jobs for no money at all. I mean I wasn’t making that much, but I love doing edgy magazines, young photographers, models, maybe, that I’d worked with here, and now I was here, and I could really take them and make them look cool, because, you know, one has boundaries, when you work for big magazines.

SICULAR: Right. And who were some of your other favorite
people along the way that you’ve met? Models, stylist, photographers --

KING: Well, I love Patti Hansen, and I love Renee Russo, and I love Janice Dickinson, and I love Rosie Vela, and Beverly Johnson, and Kim Alexis, and Yolanda Zhilow?, and Jerry Hall, who was the most glamorous model, Rachel Williams, I liked. She had such a great edge. I did fabulous pictures with her and David LaChapelle. Who else? You have it written down?

BELL: Shupa?, Lauren Hutton, she -- Lauren Hutton had caught herself in her own trap of thinking she was too fabulous and knew it all. A girl -- a model, which when I was training in London, a photographer said to a model, we are not curing brain cancer, we are shooting a girl in a frock, and that’s it -- it is. A model, really, a basic thing is and they’re clothes horses, but then they’ve become celebrities in their own right, and it’s fabulous, but really wearing clothes, and being shot to sell that dress -- then it became different. Models became personalities, and the power has changed over the years. When I first started, it was about the photographer, and maybe his relationship with the model. Like, you had David Bailey with Jean Shrimpton, and then you had Twiggy with Barry Lategan, and then you had maybe Grace Coddington with
Terence Donovan, and then in America you had Avedon who was the star, and then Penn who was the star, then it changed, and then it became the models took over, and everybody’s rate was cut, because the model’s rate tripled. I was doing advertising job where [44:00] my rate was cut in half, so that in their budget they were able to afford the girls, then it changed to -- from photographer, to model, to hair and makeup, to stylist to P.R. Now, I think it’s back a bit to photographers, or maybe everything in the pot.

SICULAR: Do you ever feel like going up to telling them their hair is all wrong?

KING: You know what, I’ve only done that maybe half a dozen times in my life. I think that people look the way they look, because they want to look that way, and it’s not my place to tell somebody they don’t look well. If somebody has a bad, dodgy haircut, and I’m on a booking or I’m at a party, or something, and I’ve had too much to drink, then I might say something. [00:45:00]

SICULAR: And what do you think of the trends for hair?

KING: Trends for hair --

SICULAR: In 2010.

KING: -- I haven’t a clue. (laughter) I think it’s like -- there’s a way to wear your hair, you know, it’s if you’re
high, high, high, high fashion then you have to look that way. You have to do what Vogue does, otherwise you’re out of fashion. If you live in the suburbs, you can’t, or you haven’t a busy life, you have to have something that’s easy, you have to have a great haircut, and you just have to have something that takes no time at all. I mean, do you want to go in the bathroom, and spend an hour and a half doing your hair? I don’t think so, right? A bit of a waste of time, isn’t it?

SICULAR: Any last thoughts? Anything you’d like to add? It was a great interview.

BELL: What’s the most you would pay for a pair of scissors?

KING: Well, I’m still using a pair of scissors [46:00] from 1972.

SICULAR: And do you have to have it resharpened, or is it --

KING: I’m scared, because they were ruined, when I came to America, and then all my other scissors throughout the years, they were OK, but they weren’t the right size, and then recently, about a year ago, I was doing a haircut, and my scissors were so blunt, and I thought oh, I’m going to try that old pair in the bottom of a big thing that I have -- container -- and I got them, and I did the most fantastic haircut, and I was so happy, because it’s an extension of my fingers.
BELL: Where were they manufactured? Where are they from?

KING: They were from Germany, but the Japanese make great scissors, and I would love, if I could, to rebuy a great pair -- I want a new two pair of scissors.

BELL: And what do you pay for them?

KING: I don’t know what they are, now. Maybe $600, $500. [00:47:00] I don’t remember what I paid for them. I mean, I can’t remember what I paid in 1972. What other celebrities did I work with? (laughter)

BELL: Oh, gosh.

KING: Here, give me the page, and I’ll read it off.

SICULAR: Here.

BELL: Margaret Hemingway.

KING: Oh, yeah. I did a movie --

BELL: I mean I love the thing with Paul Morrissey and --

KING: -- Oh, I did a movie with Margo Hemingway. So, let me see, oh, something that I did that was great was I did Lisa Taylor in the iconic ad with her roots in a Doberman pinscher’s mouth with Chris von Wagenheim, that was pretty cool.

BELL: That’s a very, very famous shot, and it really started a whole trend.

KING: And that’s still kind of going, and then -- all right, where’s celebrities? (laughter) Well, all right, I got her
in here, Rita Hayworth, Madonna, Helen Mirren [00:48:00] --

BELL: You should have two of you (overlapping dialogue)

KING: -- Julie Andrews, Juliette Binoche, Charlotte Rampling, Lynn Redgrave, Helen Mirren, Holly Hunter, Francis McDormand, Jacqueline Bisset, Raquel Welsh, Shirley McLaine, she was I think one of the most professional. She wasn’t easy, but I’ve never seen anybody go through a rack of clothes, as fast as her. It was like -- took out the right one, Bob Mackie.

SICULAR: Do you ever offer advice, or styling advice?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Makeup, I mean, I’ve worked with the best, best makeup artists, and sometimes, it’s very hard for me to keep my mouth shut, when I’m working with somebody.

SICULAR: Who were some of your favorite?

BELL: Well, I loved Heidi Morawetz. Heidi Morawetz was, I think she was French, and before she was a makeup artist, she did styling, I believe for [00:49:00] [Phileme?], and she came to New York, and she hated it. She hated it, because, you know, you couldn’t do what you did, and so I loved her. I loved Way, I liked Sandy Linter, Wendy Whitelaw, Alberto Fava, a few --

SICULAR: And did you ever trade secrets with other hairdressers?

KING: Well, hairdressers would never believe that I didn’t
set hair on shoots. They all thought that I took hours doing those Cosmo covers, or any cover really, and I used to say, no. I mean, what I do is I spritz the hair, every girl had my haircut, I mean at Scavullo Studio, a girl came in and didn’t have a haircut came in and didn’t have a haircut by me, we sent her home -- not every girl. I’m exaggerating. (laughter)

BELL: [00:50:00] Did you ever run into trouble with the agencies?

KING: Oh, yeah. I mean the first one, I think it might have been Ford, actually. I gave Barbara Minty a haircut, and it was like I was so strong with this haircut, and she loved it, but the agency hated it, and I chopped her hair, and years later, I worked with her, I did a fabulous Cosmo cover with her -- swimsuit, wet hair, and I spent most of my time upstairs chatting with Steve McQueen -- that was kind of cool.

BELL: You hit on something, too, which I thought was really strong in terms of the fashion that you had so much more freedom with the hair in editorial shoots in Europe, and that you’d arrived with a book of, you know, European editorial, and it would be very difficult to do it in New York, or the states. Why do you think that is?

KING: Well, Europe was so much more advanced. I mean, I
never really [00:51:00] understood the business aspect of the business, and you couldn’t have a wild girl, or a wild looking girl for a major campaign. Whereas in Europe, you could, because they were more creative, it’s as simple as that. The art director was edgier. Everyone was scared about losing their jobs here, and they still are.

SICULAR: So, was that frustrating for you that you couldn’t be as free as you would’ve been in Europe? Why didn’t you stay in Europe, if you could’ve been more free there?

KING: No, no. I wanted to leave. I love America. It was happening in America, and I had to be here, and I came here for my life, not for my career. I had to be here.

BELL: That’s interesting, because you’re saying creatively, it was happening more in Europe, but as a place to be, it was more happening here. That’s interesting.

KING: And then what I did -- I used the street, and I used what I started in London on my pages, and it hit, so it wasn’t difficult for me. I mean, I wasn’t [00:52:00] going to be booked on a job where they wanted old lady hair. I mean I used to fight all the time -- I love her dearly -- with Cheryl Tiegs. I love Cheryl Tiegs, and it was always a fight to push her a bit forward, and when I did, she was cool, you know, I love her. She was easier, then let’s say Lauren Hutton, who was like so controlling, and she thought
she was cool, and you either are cool, or you’re not.

SICULAR: But I think a lot of icons, they have a signature look, and they just want to keep it forever.

KING: Yes, but you have to alter it a little bit.

Otherwise, you’re old fashioned, so I’m doing all this natural hair, and I translated it to every magazines that I worked for, because if I wasn’t working -- if I was on the outs with Vogue, I worked for Bazaar, and I only did Cosmo covers, so that was my editorial -- Vogue, Bazaar, [00:53:00] Cosmo covers.

SICULAR: And how about campaigns?

KING: Campaigns -- everybody, Maybelline, Dior, Chanel -- I did everything.

SICULAR: And you always had to use their products in the ads’?

KING: No. It wasn’t like that then. I had to use what I was working with on the girl. I was never told you have to use this product. I mean L’Oréal, I did -- oh God, what’s her name?

SICULAR: Was it Deirdre McGuire? Because I know she had L’Oréal --

KING: -- Oh, no, I did for that, but that was my haircut, they got at that. British Vogue. No, oh, who’s the black singer married to Bobby Brown?

SICULAR: Whitney Houston.
BELL: Whitney Houston.

KING: I did Whitney for L’Oréal. Black L’Oréal or something L’Oréal. Albert Watson shot it.

SICULAR: And do you prefer working with models or with celebrities?

KING: Doesn’t matter. It’s the job. [00:54:00] You know, it really is, you know, I mean. You go in, and your booked for a certain job, you know what you have to do -- it’s like if you’re on location, you have to work with the elements, and if you’re in a studio, it’s a bit more controlling, but it’s still fabulous. It really depends on the situation, and how everybody got out of the bed that morning.

SICULAR: Have you ever done a job, or looked back, years later, and go, oh, what was I thinking with a certain hairstyle?

KING: Oh, half of my work. You know, because I was a very extravagant, or a really simple hairdresser, and maybe sometimes, I pushed it too far, but people wanted that, I mean, when I worked with Kate Moss for some European magazine, I totally did outrageous, outrageous, outrageous hair and the editor got fired after that, but the photographer loved what I was doing.

BELL: What exactly (inaudible) [00:55:00]?

KING: I didn’t -- destroyed her. I was well known for that
at that period. It was nothing. It was just ravaged hair.

BELL: You mean --

SICULAR: Was it teased, or?

KING: It was teased, then my fingers, and it was big, and it was all over the place, half on her face -- it was a mess, you would call it a mess, but it was fantastic, because people actually look like that.

BELL: So, it worked into the whole context of the image?

KING: Oh, yeah, but the editor didn’t want it at all, but the photographer kept saying, I love it, I want more, I want more, I want more, and then she went back to Paris and got fired. (laughter)

BELL: And what was the role of the wind machine in that?

KING: Oh, there was no wind -- I, when I first started to work with wind, I’d lie on the floor with a piece of cardboard, and do this -- and the girl’s hair would go up -- there was no wind machine -- those monster wind machines, we used in movies.

BELL: [00:56:00] Didn’t they -- wasn’t there a lot with Cosmopolitan covers?

KING: Oh, yeah, but back then, when I come to America, my first job with Scavullo, which was my third job in America was for Vogue, a cover with Renee Russo, and not bad, right? And we put the wind on her, and I’d never worked
with the wind machine, as I said, I’m used to lying on the floor, and her hair is blowing, and Polly is screaming, look at that hair, look how fabulous, because Polly took me and loved me, and she actually said, loud enough for me to hear, I haven’t worked with anyone like him since [Ara], and he takes half the time. So, I thought how smart she was for me to hear that, and it was a great, great, great complement, so here, she’s screaming I love the hair, Francesca’s saying I love the hair, and I thought what bullshit merchants, you know. I mean, the hair looks such a mess [00:57:00] will it look OK? And then it came out, and it was kind of cool, and I became a whiz with the wind machine. I’m really good with the wind machine, and sometimes, you know, you get an actress or a model and they look too stiff, and a wind machine gives energy. If it’s blown in the right way, it could be just -- I could take the wind machine over there just to blow one piece, and that’s the piece that makes the picture.

SICULAR: So, that’s it. I guess. We are being signed off. Any last thoughts?

KING: No.

SICULAR: Anything you’d like to add?

BELL: I think it’s been fantastic.

SICULAR: It’s been so wonderful. You’ve been one of our best
people that we got to interview.

KING: Oh, thank you.

SICULAR: So -- the stories are amazing. Amazing. Thank you so much.

KING: [00:58:00] My pleasure. Thank you. And she’d look at European magazines -- and she would just like rip things out, and put her in her folders like her inspirations like one was for makeup, one was for hair, and the biggest complement she ever paid me was -- she went to get the folder and she said, oh, you don’t need that, and she never showed me her folder. Isn’t that cool? I love that.

SICULAR: Because you were probably inspiration to these hairdressers.

KING: And she, I mean she was, she pushed me, pushed me, she wanted me to go further, further with my hair, and she really, really pushed me, and we tried things. I remember one shoot with [Clotiere?] with Irving Penn, and I had done my version of cornrow hair, because I used to love twisting the hair, so I did these big twisty things like this, and all of her face, and Way Bandy had done this incredible makeup, and Polly had got this jewelry, and [59:00] wrapped around her neck, and she looked extraordinary, and then we get a phone call from Alexander Lieberman, we are not an art magazine. Well, Polly cried, and we had to change
everything, but then there was Arthur Elgort, who told me
that he had a meeting with Alexander Liberman one day, and
Alexander Liberman said to him, he wanted Vogue to be the
best catalogue magazine.

SICULAR: Meaning? For the civilians.

KING: Well, show clothes, and show it maybe more in a real
way. You know, Grace Mirabella was very good like that
because she used women who worked. It was about the
working woman, when she was editor in chief of Vogue, and
when Anna came in -- Anna is really a fashionista, I mean,
she loves fashion, and she loves clothes, and she made
Vogue [01:00:00], and --

SICULAR: And what would you think the difference would be
between the editorships of Diana Vreeland, Grace Mirabella,
and --

KING: Diana Vreeland was an artist. You know, you couldn’t
send a girl to Africa, today, and have her paint her body,
and give her six pages swinging on a tree with no clothes.
You couldn’t do that, because you have to sell magazines,
and you have to get advertisers, but it was kind of special
looking at Veroushka who painted her body like a snake or a
leopard in a tree with a tiny piece of fabric that Giorgio
San Angelo gave her, and she wrapped herself and that was
six page -- six, double-page spreads. Couldn’t do that,
today. Then you have the working woman. Well, you know, I mean, girls striding across the street, and you know, things like that, and then you have, Anna and Grace. [01:01:00] I mean, Grace is a genius, stylist, and Anna, I think Anna is fantastic in her way, you know it makes money Vogue, now. Never did, and I wonder who will be next, because there has to be someone next.

BELL: It’s great. Thank you.

KING: My pleasure.

END OF AUDIO FILE