PASSERO: [1:36] Hi, my name is Daniel Passero. I’m here with Bonnie Lysohir-Pressman, and we’re here with Patty Sicular from Ford Models. She’s a producer. And another producer is also Professor Karen Cannell from FIT. She’s both director of special collections and archives. We’re here at New York City, New York, FIT, April 15th, 2010. [02:00] So let’s get started. All right.

(inaudible)

PASSERO: I’ll take them. I’m going to find out [what you’re about?]. So, Bonnie, how are you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Hi, how are you?

PASSERO: So you were a Ford model. First off I’d like to ask what do you like about the fashion industry? What is it that you personally like?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, I like fashion, first of all. I like clothing. Probably my biggest like is footwear. But I like that it changes, fashion changes constantly. There’s always some great trends going on. There’s trends that come around every 10, 20 years. [03:00] They revisit the same things. It’s a great creative expression, especially if you know how to wear your clothes and know how to put it
together, and you’re a part of it, it doesn’t wear you. So I enjoy it.

PASSERO: Now how did it all start? I know you’re from Queens originally.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yes, I grew up in Queens. My family vacationed out in the Hamptons every summer, before it was very chic, when I was growing up. When I was 15 I was a waitress in a soda shop out in South Hampton, and a model came in and ordered lunch, and we started talking. She asked me if I was a model or thought about being one, and I said well no, not really, but it sounds like a good idea. So that year [04:00] I was 15, and I went to another agency that I started with, and they said, “Listen, why don’t you wait a year until you’re 16 and then come back?” So I did, and I went back the following year. That was in July.

SICULAR: What year?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Sixty-nine. As my father said, it was the year of the Mets, landing on the moon, and me starting a career. So I started working. My first job was in August for Seventeen Magazine, and we shot coats out in the desert. It was 126 degrees, but it was a great experience. I had a lot of fun, and I got my first cover.

PASSERO: OK. Which one was that? Which cover.

SICULAR: Seventeen.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It was Seventeen Magazine, and it was October ’69. Then my following job -- and that was with Bruce Lawrence, who was a great photographer. [05:00] Then my second job was with Mademoiselle. Arthur Elgort was the photographer. And I got a cover from that job, and it just went, you know. It just started to happen.


LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: And I worked, you know, for many years with both Bruce and Arthur. Arthur I traveled to Europe, I traveled all over the place working with him. That was mainly editorial that I did with him.

PASSERO: How did that change you at that young age? How did that affect you? Was it positive, was it negative?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, it was totally positive.

PASSERO: Oh, OK.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I mean, I was very lucky, and I guess growing up in New York I had a certain street smart in me, so I kind of used that. But when I started modeling, [06:00] and I really met the best people, so creative, for me one of the best experiences was not only meeting all these people, but seeing the world. It just opened me up, and it just gave me so much education. It was an amazing experience.
PASSERO: Do you feel you grew up fast, in a way?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: In a certain way, yeah. I was probably --

PASSERO: Like wise beyond your years, sort of, than the rest of the girls your age?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, yeah. If I put myself next to my peers, I was already on the road to a career, where they were going into college and whatever whatever.

PASSERO: And you were happy with that? You were thrilled?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. I mean, I went to college a bit, because I wanted to, but because of my travel schedule it wasn’t very successful. But yeah, it was a very positive [07:00] experience. I think that’s how I was able to develop and go into my other careers afterwards, because of that base.

PASSERO: Oh. Now I’m going to backtrack a bit. Now how did you eventually get involved with Ford Models? Like when did that transition happen? Because they weren’t your first agency, right?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No, they weren’t, and probably because the model that introduced me to the industry was with this other agency. It was about a year and a half later, and I was in Europe. I had been with Paris Planning in Europe. Then Elite started to happen, come up, and so I switched to Elite. Then I had heard from people that Eileen and Jerry
were very interested in me coming on board, and so I called them and eventually went to Ford.

PASSERO: And how were they [08:00] different than this other agency? Like what about Ford stood out for you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It was more, even at that time, more global. It had a great TV department. Yeah, there was just a lot -- it was bigger than my other agency.

SICULAR: Do you remember --

PASSERO: Did they treat you differently? I’m sorry.

SICULAR: Do you remember who your bookers were?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: At Ford?

SICULAR: Yes.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, Marion Smith and Deidre [Pasano?]. So what was your question?

PASSERO: Well, how were they different than these other agencies? Like did they treat you differently? Was it a different -- was it more professional or more warm, more helpful, not just in your career, but in life?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, yeah. I mean, definitely Jerry and Eileen were very homey types and nurturing. But I also felt that because of their connections around the world, [09:00] they were the best. So why wouldn’t somebody go with them? Through that, there was one client that I got out of Ford, a Japanese client, that flew me over for 10
days at different times, and within those 10 days I shot a half a year’s worth of covers, and then I went back the second time and finished it. Eileen and Jerry were great about that. I think I was 18 or 19 at the time, and even though I traveled to Europe on my own, going to the Orient was something different. So the client was very nice and flew my mother with me one time and my brother with me another time. Eileen and Jerry were just great about managing things like that.

PASSERO: What was your best place to [10:00] travel to, of all your travels? Like where did you really feel --

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: You know, all of them have been great experiences. I love Asia, I love Thailand.

PASSERO: Why?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It’s just so different, the culture’s so different. I guess I’ve become a foodie, in my years, and I just love the food over there. But not to diminish Europe. Being in Paris was amazing, and London back in that time, when all the fashion and Biba was happening, and Mary Quant, you know, there was just so much going on. There was a different expression over there than here in the States. It was much more creative over there.

PASSERO: Like taking chances, so to speak?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, yeah, and just whatever clothes you wore, it was a statement, [11:00] it worked there. In America, Americans being much more professional in a kind of a corporate way, it was just different. But all of that traveling just really --

PASSERO: It just opened up your world, so to speak.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, totally.

PASSERO: Now while at Ford and doing these things, were there any notable photographers that you worked with or campaigns, things that you feel were sort of benchmarks in your career?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I would say I did a lot of editorial, so my exposure was really big. Mademoiselle was probably one of the biggest magazines that I worked with. Seventeen obviously. Then in Europe I worked for French Elle, French Marie Claire, French and English and Italian Vogue, and those were amazing experiences over there because of the quality of the photographers, the fashion again, and the paper stock. The printing was just incredible. So I did a lot of editorial. I did a lot of work for Kenzo when he was originally designing his own line and launching his line. I did his first runway show. I did ad campaigns for him and ultimately went back to Japan a couple of times with him and did more fashion shows. One of my first trips
to Paris I did a campaign for a cosmetic company that ran in all the [13:00] movie theaters. That’s how they did their advertising.

PASSERO: So that was kind of cool.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Very cool. Yeah. It was good. It was good.

PASSERO: And with these people that you worked with, was there anyone that impressed you in the sense that you really were like, OK, I understand why they’re there, and if you picked anything up from them that you took with you in your career later on or in life? Someone that maybe influenced you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, I think working with Arthur Elgort and Uli Rose and even Patrick Demarchelier, but probably more Arthur because I learned so much through him, and he taught me to be me and just to be natural. That’s what I gave, and that’s what everyone ultimately wanted from me. I remember I was doing a shoot with Bill King [14:00] in his studio, and it was for some advertising client. They wanted my hair very curly, and I walked into the studio and he looked at me and he said, “Can you go to the bathroom and wash your hair out, please?” Because people liked my naturalness, my wholesomeness, my all American. But I got to work with so many great photographers, Guy Bourdain, Bailey, Hiro, the gamut’s big.
PASSERO: Now when you were doing these shoots, and you were working on these big projects, I would assume a lot of models would have to create a mood in the shoot. Is there any sort of, any technique or anything you would do to sort of bring that out, or did you just go with the flow?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: [15:00] I pretty much went with the flow. If it was black and white photography and very stylized, it would be more of a quiet, toned down, somber kind of attitude. If it was colorful and whatever, especially with Seventeen Magazine, it was always like big smiles and jumping up and down.

PASSERO: Wow. So did you feel you had a -- when you were working with these photographers, did you feel it was more a collaboration, or how would it work?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, yeah, very much a collaboration.

PASSERO: So you felt a part of it?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Definitely. Definitely. Especially my favorite was always working on location, outdoors. They’d dress you up, and you’d kind of wander around and create your mood, and that’s actually what Arthur ended up shooting a lot of me, was during those moments. [16:00] So, yeah, there was a collaboration.

PASSERO: What is the hardest thing about being a model? Now is it, are you -- I know it changed your life for the better,
but also are you more aware of things that you have to do
or just things that are just hard about being a model, for
maybe those who are thinking of getting into it?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Being a model probably made me somewhat
judgmental of people (laughs) and maybe a little critical
if people aren’t taking care of themselves or just don’t
seem to have the self-motivation and whatever to make them
look good or present themselves or things like that.

PASSERO: Now is that still with you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. (laughs) Some people call it being a
snob, [17:00] but I’m really not a snob, but I just want
people to look good and carry themselves well.

PASSERO: So were you always, did you always feel you had to be
on?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No. No.

PASSERO: And you weren’t more aware of yourself? Were you more
aware of yourself then?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Definitely more aware of
myself.

PASSERO: Were you self-judgmental?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Totally.

PASSERO: So it’s equal opportunity judgment?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yes, totally. Totally. And being that
young, you know, probably very insecure when I started.
PASSERO: Now do you think that was a plus or a minus for you?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I think in some ways it was good. I think it kept me balanced. Maybe I would be too hard on myself. But I think it was probably not easy for me to really change my personality on a dime. I found going up for commercial auditions somewhat difficult, because it would be hard for me sometimes to capture that moment. The window was just very small. But then again, I ended up doing a TV show on NBC called One of the Boys with Andy Rooney, Nathan Lane, and Dana Carvey. It’s amazing how they’ve come.

PASSERO: Yeah, I wanted to talk about that. How did the acting come into play? When did that sort of enter?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It was towards the end of my career. I guess in the late ’70s I started acting lessons. Why?

PASSERO: Why?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Why?
PASSERO: Because modeling was sort of ending for you. You wanted to --
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I was just interested in it, and I had friends that were supporting me, saying, “You should really go this route,” and I had a lot of friends out in LA that were supporting me. You know, actually the acting lessons were very good, in a psychological way,
because you really get to learn about yourself. So it helped in many ways, even if the career didn’t happen. I definitely feel better about myself.

PASSERO: What do you think you learned? What did acting give you there?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, you kind of have to shed your exterior and really feel your emotions and get your emotions. It’s not easy to do. A lot of people don’t want to do it.

PASSERO: Or realize how hard it is.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. So I think once I really got into that, then my attitude about myself [20:00] got much better. I felt stronger. I felt like I had something to give.

PASSERO: OK. Whereas before you didn’t feel that way?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It was harder. I was younger.

PASSERO: What age were you about then? Were you sort of --

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: At this time?

PASSERO: Yeah.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I was 27 or so.

PASSERO: Twenty-seven, yeah. A lot of people find that there’s like another change in their life around that age.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Right. Right.
PASSERO: So what was it like working on a sitcom? Did you -- obviously Mickey Rooney was already, you know, well known, but Nathan Lane and Dana Carvey really weren’t.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No, they weren’t, they weren’t well known at all.

PASSERO: Now while working with them, did you think these guys were going anywhere, or were you like, well, I don’t know?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, no, absolutely. I knew they were going. I mean, Nathan, he was hysterical, [21:00] OK. He clearly had not come out yet, but you could see that it was there. But he has that shtick, and he still has it, you know. Dana, and he still does all those character things, and he was doing them then, and he was hysterical. We actually got friendly, and the three of us hung out a lot together for a while. And I got that through Ford’s. I was told I actually beat out Meg Ryan, and Brandon Tartikoff, who was at NBC then, really liked me, and I think if he still was around I would have continued maybe. But it was great, and it was 13 episodes. It was nice.

PASSERO: Which character? What kind of character did you play?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I played the [22:00] girl, Camille, one of their student colleagues, and Dana had a crush on me, and Nathan tried to sabotage it.

PASSERO: And this went on through the whole series?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. Yeah.

PASSERO: Now who wins out in the end, in the series?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, Dana.

PASSERO: Dana, OK. Now sitcoms are very -- it’s a kind of a grueling schedule, right?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Uh-huh.

PASSERO: It’s like you rehearse all week, and you also need comic timing, even if you’re playing the straight part. Where did that come from? Did you have it -- did you always have a knack for it?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: For comedy?

PASSERO: Yeah, or just the timing of comedy.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I don’t know. I have a very sarcastic sense of humor. It just worked, and I don’t know [23:00] the directors or whatever who did it. It worked, and it was smooth.

PASSERO: Do you ever still look at them from time to time?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yes, I’ve brought them out, and I’ve shown my kids.

PASSERO: What do they think?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: “Mom, is that really you?” So it’s funny.

PASSERO: That’s cool. So what immediately happened after that?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Then I was still studying. Talk about which road to take in your life. I was up for a series out in
LA, and I don’t remember the name of it, but it was very
New York street, which I would have loved to have played.
But then I had also met my future husband.

PASSERO: How did that happen? What was the meeting?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, my husband’s family owned Barneys at
the time and did for many years after that, and [24:00] I
was hired by Kezia Keeble and Paul Cavaco and John Duka to
model in this runway show that Barneys was hosting for the
Actors Fund. So I went to my first fitting, met my future
husband, had a --

PASSERO: How did that happen?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: -- had an argument right away.

PASSERO: Oh, really? With him?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, with him right away.

PASSERO: About what?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: That was history. We had both gone
separately to this concert, this No Nukes concert. He
loved it, and I didn’t. I thought it was boring, so
anyway, that was it.

SICULAR: I just want to ask a fashion question.

PASSERO: Sure.

SICULAR: When you were growing up, some of your favorite style
icons, whether they were models or actresses?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, yeah. Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton, Marisa Berenson.

SICULAR: Did you ever get to meet any of them or work with any of them?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Pam Barkentin. Yeah. Yeah.

SICULAR: Did you tell them?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, of course, yeah. Yeah.

SICULAR: And did people come up to, when you started modeling and you were seen in magazines, was it fun if people came up to you and said, “I watched you in a magazine”?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Oh, absolutely, and especially when I bought the first magazines that came out with my covers. The newsstand guy is like, “Oh, that’s you,” you know. In fact, I had a fan who put together this huge poster board collage of all of my photographs. The fan mail was amazing. It was adorable.

SICULAR: Did you answer them, letters?


PASSERO: Really?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASSERO: Wow. And it would have to be handwritten.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Back in those days, yeah.

PASSERO: Wow. How many would you do? Would you ever correspond or would you just send a standard?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Just, you know, thanking them for admiring me, you know.

PASSERO: [26:00] Wow. So then you met your future husband.

Now when you did that, did you just leave? Then you obviously got married. What happened with the fashion and the acting?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, I met him, and I was still taking acting lessons. I was still working. We dated like for two years, and then we got married. Then I actually repped a photographer for a year, Michael Halsband. Then over that time I started traveling a lot with my husband. The family was planning to open its first women’s store on 17th Street, so I joined the company in ’83 as one of the merchants and fashion directors to help merchandise the store and [27:00] find new product lines and everything. I just fell in love with the business. The family was very passionate about it, and because I had spent so much time with my husband, over dinners and traveling, I had a pretty good foundation. So it just started from there.

PASSERO: Do you feel your fashion history helped you in that?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Absolutely.

PASSERO: In what way?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I knew a lot of people, so if we wanted to get a line or whatever, I might know the designer, like
even with Kenzo, we had a very good business with them, and my relationship there kind of helped. Barneys was a one-store operation back then, but we bought a lot of clothes from Europe and Japan. From my modeling days in Europe, I still knew all the editors at the fashion shows, so that kind of helped create the excitement of Barneys also. So, yeah, it just kind of one thing to the next.

PASSERO: Took it, to you. I want to backtrack a bit, back to working with Ford. You know, you said that from being a model you had a certain sort of -- you were comfortable being yourself. I think in one of these things where you were doing a commercial or something where you wouldn’t do something, or a shoot, something. What -- tell us about that. I think that would be beneficial.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, OK. I was hired to do a soap opera, and we were on location out on the island. We were playing cheerleaders or something like that. You know, one of the producers just got a little nasty.

PASSERO: In what way?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Wanting more than just --

PASSERO: Oh, I see. Got it.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: -- an actress on the set.

PASSERO: Yes.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Like I said, I’m from New York. I wasn’t going there, and so they asked me to leave, so I left.

PASSERO: Well, that’s good. In this day and age, I think people want it so badly they lose their self-respect.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Right, and that’s what happened -- well, on another job doing a commercial, it was for a beverage company, and when I had auditioned they said, “Take a sip,” whatever. On the set, it was like, you know, “Can’t you hold the bottle up and just drink it down like you’re” -- and I was like, “No, I can’t.” They got furious, and I called [Jean Bereket?], [30:00] and I was crying, and I said, “I can’t do it.”

PASSERO: That’s a shame, because I’m sure --

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: And then they wanted to sue me, and it got into this whole big thing, and finally it was settled, but there’s just -- the language was bad, what they wanted was bad. You know, if they wanted that from the beginning, they should have let me know at the audition. But the whole language was bad.

PASSERO: But you could sleep at night, because you stood up for yourself.


PASSERO: I think that’s great. I think that’s a message that has to be put out there more, you know.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, I know. I have friends who are models that --

PASSERO: There’s a line.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: -- went the wrong way right off the bat. And in fact, she was with Ford, and they sent her to Europe. Like you can’t go down this road here, go to --

PASSERO: Because then you can’t come back?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, you don’t want to do it anyway. So go to Europe [31:00] and get your book going, and then come back. Well, this friend of mine that did it, she ended up living in Europe for 10 years, so, whatever. But people cross that line when you don’t really need to.

PASSERO: Wow. I think that’s important.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASSERO: Now you obviously carried that with you to Barneys.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Uh-huh.

PASSERO: Were there instances of that in there?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No. No.

PASSERO: No. OK. Well, that’s good. That’s good. Now how did you, in terms of fashion, I know right now that you’re a creative fashion consultant, right?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Uh-huh.

PASSERO: What exactly is that? For those of us who don’t know.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: OK. Well, having been in this industry all these years, and since modeling I’ve been in the fashion industry for 20 something years, I’ve met a lot of people. I have a lot of connections. [32:00] After Barneys I was with Polo for six years, and then I was with another company, Theory, for three years, heading up their accessories divisions. I just felt, right now, I wanted to try and do something on my own, be my own boss in a way, and try and help people within the industry that need help.

PASSERO: So these would be companies or individuals?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It’s both. It’s both. I’m actually working on two web upstarts now, website upstarts.

PASSERO: What is that?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: You know, online websites.

PASSERO: Oh, OK. That sell clothing?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It’s more -- they’re more information driven. One has something to do with clothing, and then the other one is more geared towards teenage girls. I’m working as a consultant [33:00] with a cashmere company. They need to broaden their base, their line, so I’m coming on to help them do that.

PASSERO: And how do you do that? Like what type of advice do you give, for example?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, I’ll work with them in the showroom, go through the first round of samples, merchandise what should be kept in, what should be taken out.

PASSERO: And do you go by instinct with this? Sort of, do you feel like what’s working?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, and I do a lot of homework. I’m online all the time. I look at all the fashion shows on Style.com. I read a lot, I see what’s going on. So yeah, in a way it’s intuitive, but then also seeing what’s out there, you can get a sense and capture that and develop how it best fits [34:00] what you’re working on.

PASSERO: Oh, OK. How does that work with an individual, same way?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. Yeah.

PASSERO: Has it ever been drastic, like, I don’t know if I can help you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: A couple of times, yeah. Yeah. But the whole web thing is just really amazing right now, what’s going on. We have the potential of doing something that hasn’t been done before, so I’m very excited about it.

PASSERO: Who are some of the people you admire in the fashion industry?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, I admire Ralph Lauren for what he’s done.
PASSERO: What has he done?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, he’s a brilliant merchant, has really grown his company from ties to what it is today.
PASSERO: And you like his style?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, I do. I think it’s very American.
[35:00] He does it best. One of my other favorite designers is Dries Van Noten out of Belgium. We actually founded him, when I was at Barneys. He was doing men’s shirts.
PASSERO: So you kind of discovered him in a way?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. So we bought the men’s shirts for women’s, and little by little he started doing more women’s clothing, and he’s probably still one of the top designers in Barneys right now. Vera Wang has done an incredible job. A lot of these people just have worked so diligently to build their brand and have fought their own battles to make it happen.
PASSERO: What do you think are the key ingredients to success as a [36:00] designer?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I think you need to know who you are, what you want to say.
PASSERO: So self-aware?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Or what that brand, what you’re trying to do means, who you want to -- who your customer is, where you want the strategy to go.

PASSERO: I see. Who are some new like up-and-coming fashion that you want to discover, that you feel you’ve discovered? Are there any sort of names out there that are creating new things?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I have, yeah, I have a few people that have worked for me in the past. A shoe designer, a jeweler, a couple of jewelers. They have great expectations.

PASSERO: So you’re not just only in the clothing?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No.

PASSERO: It’s in shoes, [37:00] jewelry, anything that’s --

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Cosmetics.

PASSERO: -- cosmetics.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Anything. Because that was really my background at Barneys. Even though I started as fashion director, I moved up into merchandising, and so I started in footwear, and then I moved to accessories, then I moved to cosmetics, and then I moved into the ready-to-wear area.

PASSERO: Now in these things, is this only for women, or was it for men as well?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No, women’s.

PASSERO: Just women’s.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Just women’s, but we shared a lot of resources where we could. You know, when you look at brands like Jil Sander or Prada, they do both men’s and women’s, so as a company we could go in and speak to them about how we’re supporting them and expanding them.

PASSERO: Do you feel you have an eye for men’s fashion as well?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I’m pretty good.

PASSERO: [38:00] Yeah.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASSERO: And I know you said one of your areas of expertise is shoes.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Uh-huh.

PASSERO: Now why did you go in there?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Why? Well, one of the reasons was I was needed. But then once I learned about the business and everything from factories, building the shoes, how it’s done, to --

PASSERO: You developed the respect for it.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. It’s an amazing product. It’s expensive to develop, but it’s very creative, because you could do anything you want.

PASSERO: Now what is it that you personally like about shoes? Like what is it about the shoes? What can it do for a
woman, in creating a look, a feel? What is it about that?

[39:00] More so than something else?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, the first thing I look for is quality.

PASSERO: What is quality? What does that mean?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: The leather you use, the materials you use,
leather bottoms as opposed to plastic.

PASSERO: OK. So plastic is out.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, you know. I mean, they’re good at
Forever 21 for 10 bucks, but. I like modern, but with a
sense of classicness in footwear. I’m definitely liking
where things are going now.

PASSERO: Where are they going?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, let’s say in the last couple of
seasons everything has been about platforms and as high as
you can go and embellishment embellishment. It’s just not
practical. It’s OK if you have a car and driver. [40:00]
But you still need product out there that’s wearable, and I
think it’s starting to come back to that, where you’ve got
some great oxfords, loafers. Boots have been amazing for
the last few years.

PASSERO: Like your boots look very nice.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASSERO: So what are these brands that are out now that people
out there are thinking, well, what are these brands that
are like, they have a sense of history, but they’re also extremely cutting edge on the fashion?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: It could be YSL, it could be Prada, it could be Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin.

PASSERO: Are there some lesser known ones that are coming up?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah, there’s some out of England that are coming up. I’m waiting for my last shoe designer to make her line, [41:00] which is going to happen. Yeah, it will happen soon.

PASSERO: So are you eventually going to start producing your own shoes, or is that something in the pipeline?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No. I may work with these people. I’ve had some great people work for me, and they’re very creative and they’re very up and coming. They’re probably half my age. But my thing I guess in my career has been about establishing relationships, and I’ve nurtured a lot of designers that have worked with me, so there’s always a continuation of the relationship, even if we’re not working in the same environment.

PASSERO: Well, that’s something you keep bringing up is the relationships you have with people and the connections. Now to keep those connections with people over a period of time, there’s something you’re doing right. What is that?
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, sometimes [42:00] I haven’t. I mean, like one of the web ventures I’m working on is with an art director I worked with 20 years ago. I hadn’t seen him in like a good 10 years, and then all of a sudden we had dinner a few months ago, and this whole business thing sort of happened. So, you know, it’s about timing also.

PASERRO: But also you have many others, where you were at Barneys and you were able to sort of open these doors because you had worked with them. You must have made an impression to be able to have the confidence to be like, well, I can call so and so.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASERRO: What was that? Do you feel you’re a naturally sociable person or was it something --

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: No, I’m not. I’m very shy and timid. But you do business with people for so long that you end up having a lot of [43:00] closer relationships with them. I’ve been to a lot of designers’ houses for dinner, on a Sunday night with the family, as well as they’ve been to mine.

PASERRO: So that would be sort of one of the bigger reasons, where you sort of branched past the working relationship into an actual friendship?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. Yeah.
PASSERO: So what is the longest friendship that you’ve had? What is that strong, that you’ve had the longest? Are there too many to name?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. I mean, there’s a few. I’m still very close with Arthur. When designers are here and doing trunk shows, I’ll go and say hi to them.

PASSERO: So what’s next for you?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I don’t know. Let’s see.

PASSERO: So right now you’re the consultant, and you have two children, [44:00] right?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah.

PASSERO: You have a son and a daughter. How are they doing?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: They’re good. I have a 21-year-old son in his second year of college, and I have a 17-year-old daughter still in high school.

PASSERO: So your experiences, especially, I don’t know, for a daughter, are you able to help her be a woman, like give that motherly advice that you know, because you’ve had such a rich life?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, you know, she’s 17. She’s not really with open ears yet, and we don’t always agree on the fashion thing. I tend to embarrass her a lot, so she says. But on the other hand, she vacillates back and forth what she’s going to do when she grows up, and at times she’ll
say, “You know, I’ll go into the fashion business, and I
don’t have to go to school, because I just need you and dad
to teach me.” I’ll say, “No, we’re not going there.” But
who knows?
PASSEPO: But sometimes [45:00] that’s just, jumping into it is
sometimes the best strategy to learn.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Yeah. She knows a lot. She knows a lot,
and she’s smart, and she’s quick. She has -- they both
have good taste, in their own way.
PASSEPO: But even other than in the fashion advice, like human
advice about life, you’re able to like -- because I’m sure
there are a lot of parents out there who maybe didn’t have
such an open life and all these travels and all these
experiences.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Right.
PASSEPO: They probably don’t always give the best advice.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Right.
PASSEPO: I would assume you would have, you know.
LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I try. I did take them to Europe a few
times with me, towards the end at Barneys. They were quite
young, but it was interesting. But I think, yeah. Listen,
she’s going to be 18 in a couple months. [46:00] She’s
like, “Well, maybe I’ll get my own apartment,” and it’s
like, “Well, how are you going to support yourself?” “Yes,
but, Mom, you moved out when you were 18.” I said, “Yeah, but I was working.” OK. So anyway.

PASSERO: Well, is there anything that we didn’t touch over or something -- what do you feel you gave to the fashion world, and what do you hope to keep giving?

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: Well, I hope to keep giving feedback, help where it’s needed, try to be resourceful and help people out. Yeah. I gave myself, you know, basically, and it’s been a lot [47:00] of fun. It’s been a lot of fun.

PASSERO: Well, thank you, Bonnie. This was an absolute pleasure. I learned a lot, and I’m sure everybody who’s going to watch this will learn a lot as well.

LYSOHIR-PRESSMAN: I hope so.

PASSERO: Thank you.

SICULAR: Thanks.

PASSERO: All right.

END OF AUDIO FILE