SICULAR: [00:05] Hi. My name is Patty Sicular. I’m director of archiving for the Ford Model Agency in New York. And together with Professor Karen Trivette Cannell from Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re archiving the history of fashion, beauty, photography, and Ford models. We’re at the Celebrity Vault in Beverly Hills. We’re so happy to be interviewing Barbara Minty McQueen, whose modeling name was Barbara Minty. And today’s date is July 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2010. Hi Barbara! We’re so happy to have you with us.

MINTY: Hi. Thank you for having me.

SICULAR: And it’s so funny, because your career started -- stopped -- right when I started, so we really didn’t get to work together. But tell me, where are you from, and how did you break into modeling?

MINTY: I’m originally from a beautiful dairy farm in Corvallis, Oregon. And I was on vacation in Hawaii, and a photographer saw me on the beach in a bikini, and there’s not one girl, I don’t think, that doesn’t look good in a bikini at, you know, 16, 17 years old. So I was on the cover of a funny little Japanese magazine. So I thought I had, you know, a career going. And then I worked for a few -- just, like, a ski company. And they said I
was too young to take to New York. So I went to a few
different towns with them. And so I bought -- I took the
money and bought a ticket to New York.

SICULAR: How old were you?

MINTY: Seventeen.

SICULAR: Oh my goodness, that’s so young. And did you come
alone?

MINTY: Yes. I can’t believe my parents let me do it.

SICULAR: And where did you live? Where did you...

MINTY: (laughs) I lived in LeFrak City. I thought I was
going to Beverly -- I mean -- excuse me. I am in Beverly
Hills. I thought I was going to a penthouse suite in
Manhattan.

SICULAR: You end up in Queens.

MINTY: And I ended up in Queens, taking the subway. And --
but I soon moved to the city, so...

SICULAR: And what was your first agency in New York?

MINTY: It was Ford’s.

SICULAR: And how did you find them or they find you?

MINTY: They were go-sees on the model days to go see the
agents. And...

SICULAR: You were a walk-in?

MINTY: Pardon me?

SICULAR: You were a walk-in, off the street?
MINTY: I was a walk-in, yes.

SICULAR: Wow.

MINTY: And [02:00] you know how they sit the girls on the couch and then they...

SICULAR: Right.

MINTY: Well, it’s not very nice. I mean, they just point to who they want to go in the back. And I got to go in the back, and then they pulled me aside and they started talking to me a little bit. And this woman came in and started -- not screeching, but just a rough talking to me. And I’m looking at her, and I’m just quivering, I’m so scared. And she walks away, and I start to get ready to walk out. And the girls go, “What are you doing?” I said, “Well, I’m done. You know, that’s the one that makes the choices.” And they said, “Well, she chose you.” So...

SICULAR: Do you remember who it was?

MINTY: It was Eileen!

SICULAR: Oh! (laughter)

MINTY: Oh my God. I mean, she was -- I was like, “Woo.” No, she was wonderful.

SICULAR: All right. Did you live with her ever?

MINTY: I lived with her for a couple months.

SICULAR: Uh-huh. On 78th Street, in the townhouse.
MINTY: Yup, in the townhouse. I learned to come home at nine o’clock at night --
SICULAR: And then sneak out.
MINTY: -- and not sneak out.
SICULAR: Oh, most --
MINTY: No, I didn’t sneak out.
SICULAR: -- a lot of girls snuck out.
MINTY: Nope. Nope.
SICULAR: And who were some of the other models you lived with there? At the time -- do you remember? [03:00]
MINTY: I don’t remember. It was always kind of a revolving door. But a great experience.
SICULAR: Do you remember her giving you any advice?
MINTY: No.
SICULAR: No? How about Jerry? Do you remember what he was like?
MINTY: I just remember Jerry as just a wonderful, kind of a quiet person, that when he needed to step up to the plate he was always there. And if there was a problem, Jerry was always there.
SICULAR: So you started when you were 17 years old, and I guess -- did you start as a junior model? Like an ingénue type?
MINTY: Not really. No, I --
SICULAR: -- did you model as a woman right away?

MINTY: -- never did any Seventeen. I did, obviously, a lot of swimsuits and lingerie. Lots of Glamour magazines. A little bit of catalogue, not too much. And runway I did twice.

SICULAR: For who?

MINTY: Once for a little -- once for a designer. And once on a Vogue thing, when they had all the girls that had been in Vogue, they had to do a fashion show. I will never, ever, ever do another fashion show again in my life. Never have, never will.

SICULAR: How come?

MINTY: I’m a klutz. (laughter) And [04:00] I can’t do it, and they just embarrass me.

SICULAR: So tell me some -- who were some of your favorite photographers along the way?

MINTY: Oh. I loved Scavullo, because he made a woman look beautiful. And then, you know, my friends and the folks that we shot with Glamour, like Mike Reinhardt, Jacques Malignon --

SICULAR: Bill Connors?

MINTY: -- Bill Connors. John Stember. It’s been so long ago. I can’t remember all of them. But there were some wonderful photographers.
SICULAR: And nice trips, too?

MINTY: Great trips. I mean, some of the best -- the best trips because you’re young; you don’t realize the trouble you’re in. So that’s -- I consider those good trips.

SICULAR: Where did you get to travel to?

MINTY: I went to Guatemala, to...well, obviously, Europe; Morocco, which was awesome...Just, you know, the islands and things like that. I worked about six months a year, and would take off and go back to Idaho.

SICULAR: And when you -- working when you were young -- did you have something that you were striving for, like a cover of Harper’s Bazaar or Vogue, or were you striving for anything special?

MINTY: I was striving for a very, very beautiful farm in Idaho. Because I was strictly in it for the money. And of course, you know, it was really cool to be on covers of magazines and be in magazines. But I really just -- I wanted the end result.

SICULAR: And what was it like when you (inaudible) your first major magazine cover? Was it a thrill or did you just think of that farm?

MINTY: Well, it was really cool, because I was on the cover of Glamour and Cosmo at the same time. I wasn’t even 20
yet. And I couldn’t even get into Studio 54. (laughter)

So -- I was such a dork. I mean, they wouldn’t let me in.

SICULAR: Ever?

MINTY: No. No.

SICULAR: I find that really hard to believe. But...

MINTY: I don’t. And it was -- but -- it’s really cool.

SICULAR: What’s the biggest surprise of your career?

MINTY: I don’t know.

SICULAR: No? Do you remember best part, whether it’s people or the photographers or the trips?

MINTY: Just the trips and the experience on the trips.

Because [06:00] the photography was wonderful, the magazines were wonderful, but we were, like, one of the last planes out of Guatemala. And they had the military surrounding our planes. And we sat on the plane for two hours, waiting to see if we were going to get out.

SICULAR: Were you scared?

MINTY: I was too young; I didn’t know. And we went to Haiti, when Haiti was -- I mean, still was Haiti, but -- we stayed in this great hotel. Which would -- will never exist again. And just different weird places that we’ve gone that just don’t happen anymore. They don’t exist.
SICULAR: Right. That’s a shame. Do you think -- how do you think modeling has changed from the time you did it to -- on the present time? Your era to the present era?

MINTY: I think it’s gotten much more professional. The girls are making more money. They take it more as a business. I mean, not that we didn’t take it as a business, but now I think it’s much more of a high-paying business.

SICULAR: Do you wish that -- looking back -- that you were in this era? Because of the money and the professionalism? Or were you happy with the time?

MINTY: I was happy at the [7:00] time. You know, that was then, this is now. I’m happy now. So -- and I had a great run at it.

SICULAR: You had a fabulous run. You did -- tell us about some of the -- you know, some of your campaigns. I’ve seen your pictures, but...

MINTY: [Cola?] California was one. I did a little Revlon.

SICULAR: There’s no such thing as a little Revlon. You did Revlon.

MINTY: I did Revlon. (laughter) Oh, God, I was a Sweet’N Low girl for a while.

SICULAR: But I’ve seen covers of you from around the world. And, you know, just such beautiful pictures.

MINTY: It was -- it was a wonderful career. It was...
SICULAR: When you were growing up, before you started modeling, did you read any of the fashion magazines as a young girl?

MINTY: Not really.

SICULAR: Really? And did you have any style icons, any models or movie stars?

MINTY: Oh, Twiggy was just, like -- you know, of course all of us girls tried to be Twiggy. And Shrimpton, and -- we all had our experimentations with --

SICULAR: And did you get to meet any of these people --

MINTY: -- makeup and clothes.

SICULAR: -- along the way? No?

MINTY: No.

SICULAR: To tell them? (inaudible)

MINTY: It’s on my bucket list.

SICULAR: Yeah? We’ll have to see what we can do about that, then. [08:00]

MINTY: Good! I’ll take you up on that.

SICULAR: So do you have a favorite part of modeling? Besides the trips?

MINTY: The traveling, the money that would --

SICULAR: Enable you...

MINTY: -- allow me to -- to do what I really wanted to do in life. And just met a lot of wonderful people.
SICULAR: Do you th-- did your friends and family treat you differently after you became so successful?

MINTY: Oh, of course my mother did. She thought I was just the coolest thing in the world. My father thought I should stay home on the farm and learn to milk a cow. So -- (laughs) not really. It was just -- people just wanted to -- my good friends, true friends -- they just were curious about what it was all about.

SICULAR: And could you tell them so they could understand?

MINTY: Yeah. I could. It was an interesting time of life, and I’m still in touch with most of those friends.

SICULAR: And I know you were here last night at the -- we had a reunion. And did you run into a lot of people that you knew or worked with?

MINTY: There was quite a few people I knew and remembered. It was really nice to see everybody, and how beautiful everybody’s [09:00] grown older, it’s awesome. It’s just -- it’s great.

SICULAR: Now, it’s -- you know, when you started, most models were between age 17 and 24, and then it was basically over. And most people had the same type of figures. And now modeling, they ha-- it embraces people from all over the world, and older models, and plus-size models, and -- how do you feel about that?
MINTY: I think it’s awesome. Women are not built the same. We don’t look the same. And we should just -- you know, all of our bodies are beautiful, no matter what. So it’s a good thing.

SICULAR: Well, that’s good.

MINTY: It’s a good thing.

SICULAR: That’s good. When you were modeling, did a lot of people come up to you off -- from the streets and recognize you? Especially when you had your covers?

MINTY: Some people did. Some people did. But, you know, you’re 17, 18 -- well, my real covers didn’t start till about 20. But you have so much makeup on, and, you know, your hair’s done, and you have to have an attitude and all that. And I’m just a hick-y farm girl, without all that stuff on, even still. And I had the ponytail, no makeup. So you’re not the same person that they see on a magazine, and what they [10:00] see in the street are two different folks.

SICULAR: When you were on the set, did you ever offer any advice? Were you able to give any creative advice to the phot--

MINTY: Nope! (laughs)

SICULAR: No? You never did?

MINTY: No.
SICULAR: And did you ever have to go on a set and do something you didn’t want to do and have to call the agency? Would -- did you feel protected by the agency?

MINTY: I never had to do anything I didn’t want to do, because I’m just no-- I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t do it; that was just it. I mean, they knew I would walk if something was not right. And I had no really bad experiences.

SICULAR: Did you have one booker when you were at Ford?

MINTY: Sue Charney.

SICULAR: Sue Charney?

MINTY: Yup.

SICULAR: [That was?] New Faces, back then.

MINTY: Yup. She -- we’re still friends.

SICULAR: That’s nice. And did you feel like she really took care of you, and...

MINTY: Oh, in more ways than one. She -- and even when I stopped modeling, she was always there for me. And it’s too bad she’s not here right now, because...

SICULAR: No, she’s on Long Island.

MINTY: I know. I know.

SICULAR: But she asked about you.

MINTY: Good.
SICULAR: So, you know, working with an agency like Ford Models, did you feel really protected and taken care of, and that it was like a -- [11:00] almost like a place to go home away from home?

MINTY: I was a little du-- I was a little gosling in the goose nest, you know? All of us girls were kind of coddled and taken care of, and there’s a few that flew a little before the other ones did. And -- but I always felt secure.

SICULAR: When you started your career, did they send you to Paris or Italy to build up a port--

MINTY: No, I stayed in the States.

SICULAR: You stayed here?

MINTY: Yeah.

SICULAR: I know you did do some work in Europe, though.

MINTY: I did. I loved Europe. It was really nice.

SICULAR: Where did you like to live? Where did...

MINTY: I never lived there. Paris, Milan, was about it, I guess. And Germany.

SICULAR: And Germany? Would -- do you think that there was a definite difference between the American way of working and the European way of working?

MINTY: Excuse me. You couldn’t understand them.
SICULAR: Well, were you ever on a set where you didn’t understand anybody?

MINTY: No. No.

SICULAR: Were you ever on a set where people spoke about you as if you weren’t there?

MINTY: Yes.

SICULAR: And did you ever feel like saying, “I’m here!”?

MINTY: Well, you -- I just ignored it. It’s -- I guess it’s part [12:00] of it. Because sometimes you’re an object. And you’re getting paid well to be an object. And if they don’t abuse their -- you know, overstep their boundaries, I guess that’s fine.

SICULAR: Did you prefer doing fashion or beauty?

MINTY: Fashion.

SICULAR: How come?

MINTY: Because you’re outside most of the time, and you were moving. You weren’t sitting.

SICULAR: And it’s fu--

MINTY: You didn’t have to hold still.

SICULAR: -- and the funny thing is, the next question I ask the models, like, being into -- like working in a studio where it’s very controlled or outdoors? And we get different answers.

MINTY: Outdoors.
SICULAR: Outdoors for you. Because some people prefer indoors where, you know, everything is so controlled.

MINTY: No. Out-- I mean -- I heard somebody else say this too. It’s the middle of winter, it’s cold, you go to the beach, they put you in a swimsuit, they put you in shorts, and you’re supposed to be happy, and warm. And it’s like [shudders], it’s freezing. Or it’s the middle of summer, and it’s hot and humid, and you’re in, you know, fur coats and woolens and things like that, so...

SICULAR: You have to be -- you know, it’s almost like being an actress. You have to be so expressive in your pictures. Not just standing as a beautiful woman. And do you think [13:00] that you had innate acting abilities which brought something to your pictures?

MINTY: No, it’s just -- you know, just do what you do, I guess. I was lucky. It just came naturally.

SICULAR: And what are you doing these days?

MINTY: (laughs) I’m living in Idaho. Just having a great --

SICULAR: Good time?

MINTY: -- life.

SICULAR: I know you wrote...

MINTY: Skiing. Have my animals. Gardening.

SICULAR: And I know you’ve written a book.

MINTY: I wrote -- oh, yeah, give me that book. (laughs)
SICULAR: I know you wrote this book, about your life with your husband.

MINTY: Yes. OK, we’ll do a little plug here. *Steve McQueen: The Last Mile* -- please buy it; I’d like to go to Paris again!

SICULAR: And where can people buy it?


SICULAR: Or is there a website to find?

MINTY: Dalton Watson web-- is probably the website to go to.

SICULAR: And you met your husband through modeling in a way; isn’t that true?

MINTY: Nina --

SICULAR: Through Nina Blanchard?

MINTY: -- Nina Blanchard called me. I was in Idaho, and she said, “Steve McQueen would like to meet you for a part in a movie.” And, you know, if somebody’s going to pay my [14:00] way to go to LA, I thought, “Fine.” Flew to LA, thought I was meeting Paul Newman. Met this man who -- grizzly beard and funky looking and strange. And Nina and I went -- met him. And I just fell in love with him. I thought he was awesome. So, the rest is history.

SICULAR: And then you married -- did you ever star in that movie?
MINTY: No! (laughs) And right before he passed away, I asked him, I said, “Steve,” I said, “Honey, was there a part for me?” And he says, “What do you think?” (laughter) I said, “No.”

SICULAR: You got the part of a lifetime. You got to be his...

MINTY: I got the good part, yes. I got the best part.

SICULAR: Is there anything you’d like to add before we close?

MINTY: No, not really.

SICULAR: No last thoughts?

MINTY: Everything was just a wonderful time in life.

SICULAR: That’s nice. Thank you.

MINTY: Thank you very much. [14:46]

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