PATTY SICULAR: [00:00] Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re continuing our series of interviews with models, photographers, editors, and other people in the fashion and beauty business. We’re in Beverly Hills, California. Today’s date is Wednesday, June 22nd, 2011, and we’re so happy to be interviewing and speaking with Shelly Smith, whose era was the 1970s and ’80s. So thank you for joining us.

SHELLY SMITH: Thanks for having me.

SICULAR: So, where did you grow up?

SMITH: I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee.

SICULAR: And how old were you when you started modeling?

SMITH: You know, I was -- I was an unusual case, because I actually started modeling after college, and I remember --

SICULAR: Wait, stop one minute. Should we ask them to shut the radio off -- the music -- or are you OK?

CREW: That --

[00:00:52] (edit)

SICULAR: -- from, Shelly?

SMITH: I’m from Memphis, Tennessee.
SICULAR: And how old were you when you started modeling, or how did you get into modeling?

SMITH: Well, I was kind of an unusual [00:01:00] (clears throat) -- I'm sorry. I'm starting again. I was kind of an unusual case, because I started modeling after college, and I remember when I had my first birthday under Eileen Ford's agency, and she asked me how old I was, and I said, "Well, I'm 21," and she said, "You can never tell anybody you're that old!" So it always stuck in my mind that I started kind of late. I had been discovered by Dianna Vreeland when I was in a department store. I was working on a summer job, and she --

SICULAR: Where was that, in Tennessee?

SMITH: No, no. That was in New York City, and it was a store called Lord & Taylor, which is no longer around.

SICULAR: No, it is around. It's on 38th. Yeah.

SMITH: Oh, OK. Great. It's not out here anymore. Anyway, this very exotic and eccentric woman came up to me and said, "You should be a model!" and "You need black in your eyes!" And she kind of put her thumb in my eye. It was really exciting, but I was a little bit overwhelmed. But I actually worked a little bit when I was in college, and then, after college -- [00:02:00] again, I was going to go into The Peace Corps, but I was in France. And someone
from Elle magazine found me and said I should model, so at that point, I said, “Maybe they have something here.”

SICULAR: And when you were young did you read fashion magazines, like, 12 or 13? Or when did you first --

SMITH: You know, I was a very unlikely model. I was gawky, and I had braces, and I was too skinny, and I never dated, and I didn’t really have a real sense of fashion or myself. So I didn’t read fashion magazines because I never saw myself doing this kind of thing.

SICULAR: And do you remember what your fa-- what your first print job was for?

SMITH: My first print job was for Vogue.

SICULAR: Oh my -- That’s the top!

SMITH: It was that summer. Yeah. I mean, I wasn’t on the cover, but they did a spread, and I was one of two or three people in the spread, and that was because of Mrs. Vreeland. She thought that I had something.

SICULAR: And how did you feel when you saw those pictures? You must have been thrilled.

SMITH: The biggest thrill I had wa-- Two. I remember walking [00:03:00] in Paris, and my very first cover was Elle magazine and back then, they did very tight close-ups of women, so when you were on the cover of a magazine, your face was right there. And it was just thrilling to see
that. And the other thrill that I remember is, when I came to New York, I started modeling in Paris for about a year. Then, when I came to New York, it was easy, because I had lots of tear sheets, and I did a cover for Harper’s Bazaar, Mademoiselle, and a big shoot for Glamour, and they all came out together, so that was really exciting to start at the top.

SICULAR: Did your parents get to see your success?

SMITH: They did. They did.

SICULAR: And did they enjoy it?

SMITH: My dad was in the fashion industry, sort of, anyway. He was the president of this store called Bonwit Teller, which is no longer around -- that --

SICULAR: Right. That was a fabulous store. It was elegant.

SMITH: It was a beautiful store. It was great.

SICULAR: I worked at Bonwit Teller --

SMITH: You did?

SICULAR: -- as -- in college, as part-time help.

SMITH: Oh, nice, nice! So -- [00:04:00] Yeah, he was very proud. And my mom -- My mom was always -- Well, you know moms. “I knew you -- I knew you were pretty!” you know? That was nice.

SICULAR: And did she save all your pictures?

SMITH: No.
SICULAR: She didn’t?

SMITH: No, they didn’t.

SICULAR: But, you know, the interesting thing you said about being gawky, or whatever, when you were in high school — Most of the models that I’ve worked with -- and I’ve worked with top models, like, with Ford and Elite -- ninety-nine percent said that they were wallflowers. They didn’t have dates, and they didn’t consider themselves beautiful.

SMITH: Wow.

SICULAR: And then all of a sudden, you know, one day they’re hired as a model, and they’re in Vogue or Rev-- doing Revlon, or Chanel, and, you know, they’re turned into butterflies.

SMITH: Oh, wow. You know, for me, it was really good, because I didn’t have a lot of confidence -- and certainly not confidence in what I looked like -- and, you know, that’s a piece of who you are as a woman. So having people tell me I was beautiful, that really -- That narcissism element was really good. It fed me and it gave me a lot more confidence.

SICULAR: And did that help you in other parts of your life? Do you think -- Could you --

SMITH: Yeah, everything I did has to do with what I do today. [00:05:00] I work in the fertility industry and help people
have babies, so I’m always looking for attractive, intelligent women who would be willing to be as gracious as they are, to give eggs to other women. And it -- and it reminds me a lot of Ford Models. A lot of times it does, because -- looking at pictures, treating the women very kindly, making it a family, being respectful of them, recruiting people -- all of that is kind of what Eileen did, and I saw her do it, and I would have to say that it had a big impact on how I started my agency.

SICULAR: If you -- Just going back to the egg donor for a moment. If someone wanted to get in touch with you, how could they get in touch with your company?

SMITH: Well, we’re --

SICULAR: What is the website, or...

SMITH: Thanks for asking. We’re -- It’s eggdonation.com. And --

SICULAR: And where are you based?

SMITH: We’re based in -- We’re based in Studio City, Los Angeles, and we get about 1,200 applicants a month. Take about 2%.

SICULAR: Wow, that’s great.

SMITH: [00:06:00] Yeah.

SICULAR: That’s really great. So, what’s the best piece of advice that Eileen ever gave you? Eileen Ford.
SMITH: (laughs) Gosh. I don’t know if it was that “Don’t tell anybody your age,” but that stuck with me. I don’t know if it was the best piece of advice. It really stuck with me. I think it had to do with not necessarily something she said, but the way she comported herself. She always was loyal to her models. She -- She knew that other clients paid her -- you know, the magazines, or the advertisers paid her -- but she always stuck by the models, and I think that was really important. It made it a family. It made it safe. She always paid you on time, which wasn’t my experience in France. And I think the way she respected, and her loyalty, is what really stayed with me.

SICULAR: Did you ever live with Jerry and Eileen?

SMITH: No, I lived around the corner from them, though. And I -- And I think -- maybe everybody says this -- it’s like, you know, “Mom always [00:07:00] loved me best,” but I think -- I think Eileen really liked me a lot, and we got along very well.

SICULAR: She loved her models. I mean, if she loved you, she really loved you forever.

SMITH: She really did, you know? She would remember my birthday, she would do all kinds of special things for me, and -- and invite -- I certainly went to her house in The Hamptons a lot.
SICULAR: And I’m sure you were happy when you were on covers, because you knew it made her so proud of you.

SMITH: Yeah, I don’t know -- I didn’t feel like she was proud, but she knew what business was. She was a really astute businessperson, and the composition of her and Jerry was really balanced, because Jerry was really laid back. But he also was really great at what he did. I remember all the bookers then, and how wonderful people were. You know, we were young, and they did care for us, and they cared about us, and they made our lives work, and they organized everything for us, and helped us have a career.

SICULAR: Who was your booker at Ford?

SMITH: [Rusty?] --

SICULAR: Rusty’s the best.

SMITH: -- and Monique. [00:08:00] Rusty was amazing. She was amazing. Really lovely person. And Monique was wonderful too. She was really funny.

SICULAR: That’s nice that you can say that.

SMITH: I remember them. They were a big part of my life.

SICULAR: When you were growing up, did you have any big style icons that you looked to, whether they were movie stars or models, in the ’60s?

SMITH: You know, I really don’t. As I said, I wasn’t really into fashion, so I really don’t remember having -- having
any-- having anybody that I looked up to or wanted to become. But I do remember, when I was in college, that I had started standing in front of a mirror and holding up a magazine cover, when I had first been approached. And I remember putting my head the same way that -- whoever this model was -- and going, “Yeah, maybe there’s a similarity. Maybe I can do this.”

SICULAR: I’m just so surprised, since your father was the president of Bonwit Teller, that they didn’t hire you to model.

SMITH: Oh, no, I was actually a salesperson there one summer, just like you.

SICULAR: Yeah.

SMITH: No -- I told you, I -- I did not look good. I had braces, I -- [00:09:00] you know, I was hunched over, I was too skinny, and, you know... I really -- I really don’t think that I was the model type, or I didn’t think I was until other people started to transform me.

SICULAR: Did you have favorite photographers that you got to work with?

SMITH: Oh, sure. I loved Arthur Elgort. He was wonderful. You know, Frank Scavullo was always -- he -- he always made you feel really good. It was always his special thing. I loved working with Bill King. I worked with him a lot. He
had a very unusual technique, because he wanted people to be very alive, and so what he’d do is have his assistant spray a bottle of water -- They always had a lot of fans on the set, because he -- you’d spend all this time getting ready, and then he’d just -- the fan would just destroy you in moments. And he had this spray bottle of water, and so you’d get wet, and if you weren’t active enough or didn’t have enough coming out of you, he’d spray you with water, and then, you know, you’d react, and he loved that. Albert Watson was great. I went on a couple trips [00:10:00] with him. He always did -- He was more quiet and subtle. He did beautiful pictures.

SICULAR: And who were some -- Were you friends with models?

SMITH: Yeah, I was, and, you know, funny -- I see a bunch of them here. Suzy Blakely was probably my best friend. She’s a wonderful person.

SICULAR: I know.

SMITH: Really wonderful person. And [Annie Holbrook?] was a good friend. Susie Coelho and I were very close. She -- She’s -- Susie’s funny. She -- I saw her recently, and, you know, she’s Indian, so she said, “Well, you girls were all the Caucasian ones. You got so much more work than me.” I said, “Yeah, but now that we’re older, you look much better than we do.”
SICULAR: (laughs) And how about some of your favorite clients? Did you prefer doing editorial, or beauty campaigns, or catalogue?

SMITH: It was always fun to work for a magazine, you know? You just got beautiful shots out of it. I -- I loved working with Bazaar. I did an awful lot with Harper’s Bazaar, and that was a little bit easier than Vogue, for some reason. There was [00:11:00] less pressure. That felt like a family to me after a while, too.

SICULAR: Did you ever work with (inaudible) when you were in New York?

SMITH: He was before my time, and Hiro was a little before. I did a couple of films with him. Oh, I know. You know who I really, really, really miss? [Wey Dandy?]. If there was a genius, it was Wey. He did ma-- He -- When I first started, you did your own makeup, but then, gradually, they had makeup artists, which was, of course, a really smart move. And Wey was so brilliant, that when he would do your makeup, you -- one time I didn’t wash it off for a day. I slept in it, because he was ju-- he just made you look great.

SICULAR: He was so nice too. He had such a beautiful --

SMITH: Sweet.

SICULAR: -- smile.
SMITH: Sweet disposition. Beautiful guy. Really fun. [Maury Hopson?] was always fun to do your hair. And some days you’d know you’d just have a great day because they were so much fun to be around.

SICULAR: If Rusty or Monique were going to call you up the night before and say, “You’re doing blah-blah-blah tomorrow,” what would put you in such a great mood for such a great booking, to look forward to?

SMITH: Usually it was people that were just fun to be around, you know? It’s -- It’s a little tedious. That’s a secret most [00:12:00] people don’t know, but it is tedious. If you’re standing there -- you’ve got to make clothes look good, and you’ve got to watch for wrinkles, and it’s really kind of tedious to sit in front of a mirror all that time with someone who does makeup and hair. I’m not the type that really enjoys that, so you’d hope that you could laugh and talk, and have a nice day, and a nice lunch with people, and --

SICULAR: Did you prefer working --

SMITH: -- it was easier.

SICULAR: -- with teams that you’d worked with in the past because it was like a family, or did you like going into a new studio, new photographer, new location, new crew?
SMITH: You know, I didn’t really much care, as long as the people were friendly and nice, and didn’t take themselves too seriously. But if I was going on a trip, I loved going on a trip with people that I knew and trusted. We’d have great camaraderie.

SICULAR: And what are some of the great places you got to see?

SMITH: Oh, God. Well, I went to India several times. That was amazing. I went to India with Jerry Hall, and they... It was funny -- who was the guy? It was a really cute male model. I can’t remember his name, but we -- [00:13:00] it was very interesting, because Jerry and the male model were really interested to get in the sunroom, and I loved India, because I went around with the photographer -- every day we’d go to a new place, and we got to see things that most people didn’t see. We got to stay places and palaces that people didn’t stay. And I would just go out with the photographer because I was so interested in it. I think -- I went to Japan with [Kenzo?]. We did all these fashion shows that were amazing, and they would give us tons of flowers after the show was over. I went to Europe a lot. I did a beautiful shoot in Venice. That’s one of my favorite places.

SICULAR: Who photographed, and what was it for?
SMITH: It was Chris von Wangenheim, and it was for -- I think it was for Vogue or Salon. I think it was for Vogue. It was beautiful. Beautiful. In fact, I’ve been to Venice a couple times. Whenever I’m there, I always think, “Where did I stand right there in Saint Mark’s courtyard? Where was I when we did -- when the pigeons flew, and I was wearing the veil, and…”

SICULAR: [00:14:00] That’s nice.

SMITH: Yeah.

SICULAR: Why do you think -- Why do you think the public is so fascinated with models?

SMITH: We love beauty, you know? I think we believe, for women, that if you’re beautiful, your life is going to pretty much be perfect. It’s a fallacy, but I think it’s there, and it’s certainly easier --

SICULAR: Has it made life easier for you?

SMITH: Oh, sure. Of course it has. Of course it has. The only thing that’s a little harder as you grow older -- it’s hard to lose that, and you have to find another purpose in your life, and something else that’s beautiful, which is, for me, hopefully, giving to people. And that -- And that feels beautiful and loving. That -- But I think when you’re looking at a woman and she’s gorgeous, it’s mesmerizing, because you -- you kind of -- if you’re a
woman, you kind of want to be her, and if you’re a man, you want to... be around her. (laughs)

SICULAR: When you -- Say, when you’re [doing a collections?] or something really fabulous, [00:15:00] did the photographers speak to you and tell you a little scenario first, and when you went on the set you would act a certain way? To act the scenario --

SMITH: I think it was more that when they took the picture, you knew what they wanted. They would let you know. Speaking of which, I did a great collections in Rome with Suzy, and that’s when Suzy and I became friends. And that was for Italian Vogue. That’s when they shaved off my eyebrows. But I remember that we were -- (clears throat) -- Excuse me. We were staying up late at night because the collections would be shown during the day, and then they would bus -- or trek -- the dresses to the photographers at night, because they had to get them back for the next day’s show. So we’d stay up every night taking these pictures, and I remember -- It was so cool, because when it was over, we’d be walking, and it was -- We had -- Suzy has this gorgeous picture of us walking over a bridge, and just stopping. I had short shorts on and someone took a picture of us right after the collections, walking back to our hotel at -- you know, at dawn.
SICULAR: [00:16:00] I hope she has a copy for you.

SMITH: I think she does. She told me she does. I have to get that again, because I didn’t keep it, but she did. I didn’t keep too many. I had moved to New York --

SICULAR: Here are some of your pictures. Can you take some of these?

CREW: Mm-hmm.

SICULAR: Because there are so many covers. It’s, like, pages and pages. I’ll let you --

SMITH: Thank you.

SICULAR: -- hold it up. Or do you -- Do you want it on the table, or what are we doing?

CREW: No, right there is good.

SICULAR: OK.

SMITH: It’s fun to see these. Wow.

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

SMITH: As a model?

SICULAR: Mm-hmm.

SMITH: One of the nice things was that I had a -- I did a lot of commercials. When I was in New York, not too many girls who were pretty could talk, and that worked out really well for me. When I came to California, there were a lot of people who were actresses, and they were really good at it. But I -- I got a contract with a company called Lip
Quencher, and I think that was really nice, because modeling was day-to-day, and even though you might be booked up a lot, it still was really gratifying [00:17:00] to have -- that was like having -- bread and butter.

SICULAR: Right.

SMITH: Or -- And it was just nice to have that reliable -- every year you would do a certain number of days, and you’d get paid a certain amount of money.

SICULAR: Did you do a lot of cosmetics campaigns?

SMITH: You know, not as much. I never did Revlon. But yeah, I guess -- I guess I did. I did a lot of everything. I did beauty and fashion. I was lucky that way. Now, back when I was working, also, it was really interesting because doing runway work was really not considered --

SICULAR: I know.

SMITH: the good stuff. The good stuff was doing the print work for the magazines. Nowadays, I know it’s very prestigious, but I still did it anyway. And Ralph -- Ralph Lauren always made me his bride. He really liked --

SICULAR: Wow.

SMITH: my look. And I remember doing those shows, and they were fun.

SICULAR: And that’s the prime spot to be the bride.
SMITH: Yeah. That was -- Back then... What was -- Jessica Lange and I did a bunch of those together. And she became a great actress, of course, but she [00:18:00] never did many photographs because her look just didn’t photograph as well, but she had the presence to really carry it off.

SICULAR: What’s -- Do you ha-- What -- You know, you’re so beautiful. You’re still beautiful.

SMITH: Oh, thank you.

SICULAR: And do you have any beauty secrets that you’d like to share?

SMITH: (laughs) Gosh. Hydrate.

SICULAR: Hydrate?

SMITH: Yeah.

SICULAR: Water.

SMITH: Hydrate. Be healthy. Feel good about yourself. That’s it, you know? That’s really it. It’s -- You have to -- You can’t just live on your look. You got to -- You got to live on your soul, and your charm, and your honor, and I think as you grow older, if you develop those, it can change your face.

SICULAR: When people look at this video decades from now, or 100 years from now, or -- it’s almost like a time capsule of your era of modeling, which is the 1970s and ’80s. How do
you think that you’d like your career to be remembered, and your era?

SMITH: [00:19:00] Gosh, it’s nice to think, if you’re any part of history...

SICULAR: You are.

SMITH: I don’t -- I don’t of what I did as having that much import.

SICULAR: It did. In fashion and beauty, it did, because you were the ma-- one of the major models in your era.

SMITH: Thank you. People do come to me today, and they say, “Oh my gosh, I followed you,” or “I dreamed about you,” or something, and you kind of go, “Wow, just for that?”

SICULAR: They did --

SMITH: I guess I keep coming back to -- I make my mark because there are thousands of babies of now, because I had a child, I lost him, and his memory helped me develop this amazing work that I do. And I think -- I think I’d probably like to be remembered for that, for all the couples who were suffering, and I could help take that away in my little way, by easing them into finding a family -- in a different direction. And I’d like to think that those babies born will have wonderful lives, [00:20:00] and every time a child is born in a happy home, the world is better.
So I think -- I think I’d probably remember that more than modeling.

SICULAR: Any last thoughts?

SMITH: Well, I think it’s wonderful that you guys are doing this, and that you’re trying to make a historic documentary about that era. It’s nice to kind of connect with everybody, and I see your enthusiasm, so thanks for including me.

SICULAR: Thank you. It’s our pleasure.

SMITH: Great.

[00:20:28] (edit)

CREW: OK, we’re rolling, and you’re in the shot too, as well.

SICULAR: OK. Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with professor Karen Trivette Cannell, who is Director of Archives and Special Collections at New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re continuing our talks with models, photographers, and other people in the fashion and beauty business. Today is June 22nd, 2011. We’re at The Vault in Beverly Hills, and we’re so happy to be interviewing [00:21:00] Verna Cornelius, whose career span— started in 1958, and went well into the 1990s, and I think she can still do some modeling.

VERNA CORNELIUS: (laughs) Thank you.

SICULAR: Was that OK?
CREW: Excellent.

SICULAR: Hi Verna, I’m so happy that you’re with us!

CORNELIUS: Well, I’m glad that you asked me. It’s been sort of a resurgence. It’s been a fun thing to get out my old pictures and look at them -- things I haven’t looked at for years. Yeah, it’s fun. I’m glad.

SICULAR: Now, you started in 1958. And what country did you start in?

CORNELIUS: In England, in London.

SICULAR: And how did you get started?

CORNELIUS: I went to -- In those days, you had to go to a modeling school. I went to [Cherry Marshall’s?] Modeling School, and started working str-- It was like three weeks, at night. I worked in a shoe store during the day, went to classes at night, learned how to walk and, you know, all that, and sit in makeup, and all of those things, and I really started working straight away after that.

SICULAR: And who did you work with in London at the time? Was it mostly in London?

CORNELIUS: Yes, mostly in London, but sometimes in Scotland. They would book you in London and then you would go to Scotland. I did fashion shows in those days too, so we did quite a lot of fashion shows around, you know, the United
Kingdom, and a lot of photography. Marks & Spencer’s --
You know, the famous --

SICULAR: Sure.

CORNELIUS: -- Marks & Spencer’s. And there was a crew ship that goes to South Africa, so at the time we went to Southampton and shot on the crew ship, and, you know, I just did --

SICULAR: Did you do magazines -- editorials?

CORNELIUS: Yes, I did Woman’s Own, which was a big magazine in those days, and The Queen, and The Lady. There was one called The Lady, I remember that. But I did a couple things for The Queen, and I did ads for Aquascutum and Jaeger -- fashion places.

SICULAR: How old were you when you started modeling?

CORNELIUS: Eighteen.

SICULAR: Eighteen years old? What did your family think of it?

CORNELIUS: Well, you know, they thought it was fine. I had always wanted to be a model, and [00:23:00] fortunately, I grew tall enough, and my bone structure was good -- I mean, I never dreamed I wouldn’t be a model. I just decided I would, and I was just fortunate that I was photogenic. So they were fine. I mean, I think they were very naïve, looking back.

SICULAR: And then you moved to New York later?
CORNELIUS: No, then I marri--- I met an American in London and got married, and we moved to Los Angeles. He started at UCLA, and I went to Univ--- Well, Nina was running an agency called Caroline Leonetti, and so she took one look at me and put her in -- put me in her car, and she drove me around to all of these places to introduce me to places, and that -- to people. And I didn’t realize that I’d been with the agency, like, four or five weeks, and was doing some jobs, and the other models said, “Oh, Caroline Leonetti’s not really an ad agent -- is not really a modeling agent. They’re more like a school. So you should be with either Flair or Mary Webb Davis.” Who knew? I didn’t know. So I went in to Nina and said that, and she said, “Oh, I thought you would find out fast enough.” It was before she [00:24:00] had her own agency. But we’ve been -- We were friends ever since --

SICULAR: I loved Nina.

CORNELIUS: -- right up until she died.

SICULAR: Everybody loved Nina.

CORNELIUS: I know. She was great. So, the first job -- My first job in the United States was an editorial with Seventeen magazine, and I worked with Gregory Peck, and we must have worked for about a week. I worked with Gregory Peck, Jack Lemmon at his beach house... Gregory Peck at
his farm in the San Fernando Valley, with the horses. And he was gorgeous. And on the set of Psycho with Anthony Perkins. I thought I’d died and gone to heaven.

SICULAR: And were you modeling on the set, or were you an actress?

CORNELIUS: No, modeling.

SICULAR: Modeling.

CORNELIUS: For Seventeen magazine. Sitting with the stars, you know, being photographed.

SICULAR: And were they all very nice to you?

CORNELIUS: Lovely. I mean, I found that even people -- I’ve worked a couple of times with Tony Curtis, and I really never liked him, but he’s a lovely person. Totally charming. (laughs) But for some reason, from his movies, I hadn’t -- hadn’t wanted to like him. But most of the people that I’ve met, you know, they’re very, very nice. Yeah.

SICULAR: And then did you ever work in New York City?

CORNELIUS: And I went -- Yes. After I’d been working here for about a year --

SICULAR: With what agency?

CORNELIUS: With Flair.

SICULAR: Flair, OK.
CORNELIUS: Some -- Several people said to me -- the photographers -- everybody said, “You should go to New York, because if you make it in New York, then you’ll really -- you’ll really do well.” So I just went to New York, and I went in to see Eileen Ford, and -- she’s supposed to be really tough, but she was wonderful to me. And I walked in, and she said -- first thing she said to me was, “You must get rid of those high heel shoes.” Now, these days, the high heels are back in like that, but I had high heels on -- and then it’s been out of fashion and into fashion. And she sent me to a little shop on Lexington Avenue to get the -- more like -- yeah, the little heels -- and took me on, sent me around to the... I already had a lot of tear sheets and things from Los Angeles, but it’s not the same as having it from New York. So she sent me to the young photographers who were taking pictures for their books as well, [00:26:00] and then they could -- So, you know, you set up a nice portfolio that way. And I shot a lot of stuff with [Jean Luciffe?].

SICULAR: He was a great, great photographer.

CORNELIUS: He was great. He was. And he used to do a lot of covers for the rest of the world. A friend of mine was in South Africa having her hair done, and she picked up a magazine and I was on the cover. So you never knew where
you were, you know? You never knew. But he used to do a lot of covers. And I was very successful in New York. I loved it. It was great.

SICULAR: How long were you in New York for?

CORNELIUS: Just about a year.

SICULAR: And did you live with Eileen, or --

CORNELIUS: No, I was married.

SICULAR: So you lived --

CORNELIUS: So we lived on East 57th Street. My husband took a year off from UCLA, and he did some modeling too, with Eileen.

SICULAR: Really?

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

SICULAR: Wow, we’ll have to get him --

CORNELIUS: Good-looking guy, yeah. (laughs) So -- So we were there for about a year, and then we came back so he could go to school again, plus we preferred the weather out here. I didn’t like the heat and humidity. But, you know, I had established myself, basically. And I had done a few TV commercials with Eileen [00:27:00] through Eileen’s -- I think she had another little agency, or somebody she sent to do for TV. I can’t really remember.

SICULAR: It was in-house at the time, I believe.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I can’t really remember.
SICULAR: Maybe Gene Barakat, or...

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I can’t remember. But then, when I came back out here, I started doing tons of TV commercials on camera, which is why I’ve had a much longer career than most models, because I do a lot of voiceovers, and a lot of on-camera spokesperson things.

SICULAR: Do you still do voiceovers?

CORNELIUS: No. I’d like to. I’d like to. But, you know, now they use a lot of movie stars.

SICULAR: Right.

CORNELIUS: Because they need the money. (laughs)

SICULAR: So, who were some -- Were you friends with a lot of models when you modeled?

CORNELIUS: Yes. I’m trying to think of the lady’s name in New York -- Dolores...

SICULAR: Hawkins?

CORNELIUS: Dolores Hawkins, yes. I loved her, really. Yeah, we did quite a lot of ads together. I really liked her. And, you know, it’s so long ago, I can’t remember the girls’ names, but out here, Mary [Morris?] is a good friend of mine, and still is, and we worked together for years. We did tons of swimwear ads, [00:28:00] because in California, you know, they -- Catalina, [Cole?], Jantzen -- all of those. So she and I used to do a lot of swimsuit
ads, and quite a lot of the girls at the time were friendly, but -- You know, when people move away in America, they really move away, because it’s like 3,000 miles. If you move away in England, you might be 300 miles away, so you can still see your friends, you know? So you lose touch over the years.

SICULAR: Do you remember some of your favorite photographers that you worked with?

CORNELIUS: Yes. Melvin Sokolsky --

SICULAR: Who’s out here.

CORNELIUS: Is he out here now?

SICULAR: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Oh, I didn’t know that. Well, Jean Luciffe. And Bert Stern. I did a lot of stuff with Bert Stern. And Cecil Beaton. He came to do -- He came out here, and we shot at the Bel-Air hotel. I think it was for Queen.

SICULAR: I bet he was so thrilled because you were British also.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I think so, and it was really funny, because on his -- in his bungalow -- because -- you know -- they had these bungalows -- I must have gone in to change clothes or something, and on the fireplace, he had all his invitations, you know, Lord and Lady, this -- [00:29:00] and he was really -- he was funny. But he was nice. And Francesco Scavullo was great. I mean, it was a -- It was a
great career. I could recommend it to anybody. I loved it.

SICULAR: If you could -- If you would want to take about some of your favorite models of all time, so any eras, do you -- who would you think was --

CORNELIUS: Well, Suzy Parker really inspired me, because I was probably 13 or 14 when she was really famous. And there was a model in England called Bronwen Pugh, and in fact --

SICULAR: I know who she is.

CORNELIUS: -- I called my daughter Bronwen, from that. So I couldn’t -- If I saw a picture of her, I wouldn’t know her now, but at the time, Suzy Parker and that -- I used to look through -- if I could afford to buy the English Vogue, which I didn’t have much money -- but I would look through and, you know, get some ideas about -- that’s when I did start going to modeling. Oh, and I remember seeing Audrey Hepburn in -- was it Funny Girl? -- with Fred Astaire, when he was supposed to be like Richard Avedon?

SICULAR: Funny Face.

CORNELIUS: Funny Face.

SICULAR: Right.

CORNELIUS: That was fabulous.

SICULAR: Right.
CORNELIUS: So, yeah.

SICULAR: [00:30:00] They were beautiful.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, they were.

SICULAR: Were you happy with the era that you modeled, or did you ever wish you could’ve worked in another era?

CORNELIUS: No, I was happy. I mean, all through the ’60s, it was great, you know? We had the mini skirts and the boo-- the Courrèges boots. Oh, I loved it. It was great. Jean Shrimpton was one of my favorites. She was very good.

SICULAR: Were you friends with her?

CORNELIUS: No, because she was in England when I was here, but... No, I think the ’60s really were a perfect time to be a model.

SICULAR: And what were some of your most famous campaigns, TV or print?

CORNELIUS: Well, TV -- My most famous, which people still remember me, is Chicken of the Sea tuna, when I was a mermaid. I don’t know if you remember it. There was --

SICULAR: I remember Chicken of the Sea.

CORNELIUS: I mean, people still -- men, particularly --

SICULAR: I’m sure.

CORNELIUS: -- still come up to me and say, “Oh, I remember you. I was a teenager.” (laughs)

SICULAR: How many little mermaid outfits did they make for you?
CORNELIUS: You never saw me as a mermaid. I was in the water up to here. But then at the end, I would say, "Look, it’s my little sister on the label." And if you see the Chicken of the Sea can, there’s a mermaid sitting on a rock, and I would refer to things like, "We’re having a party downstairs," [00:31:00] and so it was all about -- And I did -- I had a contract with them for three years. That was very fun and very lucrative.

SICULAR: And were you on land, or did they throw you in a tank of water?

CORNELIUS: No, I was in the water all the time.

SICULAR: Tank of water?

CORNELIUS: We used to do the -- mostly, they wanted me to do it out in the ocean, and I wouldn’t do it because there were sharks and heaven knows what. And they said, "Oh, we’ll have a frogman underneath" -- this is why we have the Screen Actors Guild here -- "We’ll have a frogman underneath, and they’ll be a helicopter..." I said, "No. I’m not -- I’m not doing it." So they had a big tank -- I think it was at Universal, which they used to shoot things there, movies.

SICULAR: The big aquarium.
CORNELIUS: Yeah. Huge. So I had a wetsuit, which was cut off here, and I had long -- They sent me to Max Factor to have all -- what you would call --

SICULAR: Extensions.

CORNELIUS: -- extensions now -- put in, so I had this long hair, so when I came up I had this long, wet hair down to here, and then you just saw me from here up. And I think they had interviewed everybody in Los Angeles, but the thing was, [00:32:00] they decided, well, they didn’t know how a mermaid would sound. They were worried about my English accent. Maybe people would be listening to the accent and not look-- not the product. And then somebody said, “Well, we wouldn’t know how a mermaid sounds anyway, so she’d be fine.” So I got the job. So I was really luck to get the job, because everybody was after it.

SICULAR: And did they give you any free tuna fish?

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I got a lot of free tuna fish. (laughs) I had some last night, actually. Not the older ones, but it’s still good stuff. Then I did -- I did a lot of -- a lot of swimwear. I did a lot of Jantzen ads for a long time. And White Stag. We used to fly up to -- I think it’s in Portland, Oregon -- We used to shoot up in Portland. But, you know, the nice thing about being a model in Los Angeles and being married and having children
is that you’re home almost every night. It’s not like in New York, where you have to fly to the Bahamas to do swim— which I did. I had flown to the Bahamas to do swimwear, but here, you can go to the beach and work all day, and then have a proper family life in the evening. And you’re not working every day, as you know, so it really is ideal.

SICULAR: What did your kids think, having a model mom?

CORNELIUS: Well, my son loved it, because his little friends would come around, and I was on TV, honestly, every day. And commercials every day. And one of the things I would say — Oh, I — something about my neighbor — and so my neighbor would kid me, because she’d say, “Well, I saw the commercial last night. You were talking about your neighbor. Was that me?” But they — I think the kids loved it, because you — it’s not like, obviously, a nine to five job. So you get plenty of time home with your family. It works very well. And I don’t know these days, because I don’t know many of the young models, but all of us were married and had children. We could have a regular — Well, Heidi Klum is married with children, so obviously some of them still do. But others seem to be flying around all over the world, and I think it’d be — I think it’d be much more difficult, yeah.
SICULAR: If -- Say, in a few generations from now -- because this will be a piece of history -- how would you want your era of fashion and beauty and modeling to be remembered?

CORNELIUS: Oh, dear.

SICULAR: What do you think would be the great -- point to the best.

CORNELIUS: Well, one of the things is we weren’t so thin. I think a problem these days -- I get a lot of the fashion magazines, and I think it’s not doing a good job for the young girls growing up, because everybody’s so thin. That heroin chic. I mean, you see people with jeans on, and their thighs look like our calves used to look. I mean, they’re just teeny. And it’s not natural, and I think they’re not eating. We all ate. We were naturally slim girls, or we wouldn’t have gone into modeling. People often say to me, “Oh, did you have to diet all the time?” No. When I was young, I never had to diet, nor did any of my friends. I mean, I think that’s one of the reasons you go in it. You’re a certain height and you’re a certain size.

SICULAR: How tall are you, or were you?

CORNELIUS: I was five-eight. I’m probably five-seven now.

SICULAR: And that was tall at the time.
CORNELIUS: That was perfect height at the time. Five-five was a junior, so they didn’t get a lot of work -- five-five, five-six. And if you were over five-nine, it was hard to get a job. I didn’t know any of the girls -- [00:35:00] Now, some of the girls are six feet tall now, which -- I mean, that’s good. That’s good. But I don’t -- I -- I don’t think it’s a good thing for them to be all so thin. No. We were regular-looking people, you know? We had breasts and hips and we looked good in bikinis. (laughs)

SICULAR: I don’t know if I -- I forget if I asked you. Did I ask you if Eileen ever gave you any advice?

CORNELIUS: Only about the shoes.

SICULAR: Just the shoes.

CORNELIUS: And -- No, not really. We got along really well. She was a lovely woman.

SICULAR: And did you socialize with Jerry also? Her husband was so nice.

CORNELIUS: No, I only -- I hardly remember him at all.

SICULAR: Such a gentleman...

CORNELIUS: I hardly remember. But when Eileen was out here visiting Nina -- and as I said, Nina and I were friends, and lived very close to each other up there on Mulholland Drive, and I would see Eileen occasionally, and she was
always very charming. And she’s still -- What, she’s in her mid-80s? -- and she’s been to Europe a few months ago.

SICULAR: Yeah, she just -- Yeah.

CORNELIUS: I mean, she’s terrific. She was -- She was a great agent.

SICULAR: Yeah. You’re so beautiful. Would you like to share any of your beauty secrets?

CORNELIUS: Oh, thank you. Well, stay out of the sun.

[00:36:00] (laughs) I’ve always been very careful about my face. I used to go when my son was little -- and I would go maybe with his friend and the friend’s mother, to the beach. Other mothers that weren’t in the modeling business, they’d kid me about how long it took me to get myself organized with the -- we didn’t have sunscreen in those days. But one of the -- I always had a hat, and I always had glasses, and I would sit out under an umbrella, and they would kid me. But now, look at --

SICULAR: You were right.

CORNELIUS: I certainly was right. So I’ve always been very careful about my skin.

SICULAR: You look like an Irish rose -- oh, a British rose.

British rose.

CORNELIUS: (laughs) Thank you.

SICULAR: Do you have any last thoughts?
CORNELIUS: Well, I mean, I can highly recommend it as a career to anybody. I mean, you have to be -- You have to have your feet on the ground. You can’t be -- I’ll tell you one of the things that was important to me. The fact that I was married -- I was talking about this to somebody the other day -- because so many guys come onto you when you’re a young model, the photographers, and all that.

[00:37:00] And if you weren’t married, and you would say -- and turn them down, they’d be upset, and go -- you know. But if you say, “Oh, I’m sorry, but I’m married,” they think, “Oh, well I probably would -- She would’ve gone out with me if I hadn’t been...” I think that was very helpful. I do. Because I know a lot of girls that got in trouble having affairs with photographers, and Eileen would send them -- Oh, a good friend of mine, [Karen Burkey?]. Do you remember Karen? She was gorgeous. She was gorgeous. She died a few years ago. But Eileen sent her off to Paris because she was getting too involved with a photographer, you know? So things like that, I think, to be -- it helped.

SICULAR: It’s amazing how Eileen could keep her eye on --

CORNELIUS: I know, everything!

SICULAR: Yeah.
CORNELIUS: She knew everything that was going on. No, I think I was lucky to be with her.

SICULAR: With Eileen?

CORNELIUS: Eileen, yeah. I think she was great. And Nina.

SICULAR: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: The agents who cared -- they really cared about the models, you know?

SICULAR: And they knew about them.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

SICULAR: And do you have one last favorite antidote [sic] or a story, or a fabulous [00:38:00] story you’d like to share?

CORNELIUS: I can’t -- I can’t think of anything in particular.

SICULAR: Well, you’re so beautiful, and we’re so grateful that you --

CORNELIUS: Well, thank you. I’m so pleased that you asked me. It’s been fun, and I’ve got my old pictures out that I haven’t looked at for years.

SICULAR: You don’t have any with you?

CORNELIUS: No.

SICULAR: We’ll get them another time. (inaudible).

CORNELIUS: (laughs)

SICULAR: Thank you.

CORNELIUS: Right. Thanks a lot.
SICULAR: It was great.
CORNELIUS: Thank you.
SICULAR: It really -- And we’re going to get you a copy --

SICULAR: OK.

CATHERINE OXENBURG: He has freeways across his face. (laughs)
SICULAR: I know, it’s great.
CREW: We’re all -- We’re all set.
SICULAR: Ready?
OXENBURG: OK.

SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, we are archiving the history of fashion, beauty, and photography. Today is June 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2011. We’re at The Vault, which is in Culver City, California, and we’re so happy to be interviewing Catherine Oxenburg, whose era spans -- I guess the 1980s, before you went into acting, [00:39:00] is that correct?
OXENBURG: Yes, early ’80s.
SICULAR: Early ’80s. Here? OK. So Catherine, are you from England? Where are you from? You come from a very illustrious family.
OXENBURG: You’re so sweet. Well, my dad is American, and I was born -- So I am American. I was born in New York City,
and then my parents were divorced when I was little, and I went to live in London between the ages of 5 and 15, hence the illustrious accent. (laughs) And my mother is a European princess, and my dad is -- well, he was -- he passed away a year ago -- but he was Jewish, from Brooklyn, so I used to say that --

SICULAR: How did they get together, though?

OXENBURG: That’s a very good question. At a skiing trip. It was my first -- It was my mom’s first trip that she was ever allowed to travel on her own, [00:40:00] and she must have been, I think, 24. And she went to St. Anton in Austria, and my dad was there as well, and they met, and then she eloped to the United States.

SICULAR: What did the palace have to say about that?

OXENBURG: Well, they were in shock and horror. (laughs) It was a big scandal.

SICULAR: Right.

OXENBURG: And --

SICULAR: Right, I can imagine so. Was your mother -- I know your mother was a beauty.

OXENBURG: Yes.

SICULAR: I’ve seen pictures of her.

OXENBURG: Yes, she was lovely.

SICULAR: And so you were brought up in England --
OXENBURG: Yeah.

SICULAR: -- a large part of the time? And did you have both the American and the British culture?

OXENBURG: Yes, I used to come to the States on vacations, and, at the age of 13 -- actually, at the age of 13, my mom was engaged to an actor called Richard Burton, and he introduced me -- I grew up in sort of a roy-- like, around a lot of members of the royal family, and it didn’t really have a lot of [immure?] mystique to me, but when I met Richard, and we went [00:41:00] to visit him on sets, and we traveled first class, or in private jets, and -- the lifestyle was so intoxicating to me, even at 13 years old, and I had decided that that’s what I wanted. (laughs) And somehow, I, like, archived that bit of information, tucked it away, and later on decided that that’s the life that I wanted.

SICULAR: And what -- When you were young, were you into fashion and beauty? Did you read fashion magazines?

OXENBURG: Oh my Go-- My dad was in the schmatte industry, and -- I don’t know if anybody’s going to know, that’s Yiddish for “clothing” -- and he made his fortune in maternity, which was a good time, because it was after World War II, so it was a lot of ba-- you know, baby boomers. And I remember, literally as soon as I could go
shopping at the age of 10, I already knew designer labels. And in those days, it was things like Newman and Cacharel. You know, Newman, I don’t even -- exists. But I was always brand-conscious form the earliest time. I used to get a lot of flack from my -- from my parents. (laughs)

SICULAR: [00:42:00] Did you read American and British fashion magazines?

OXENBURG: I loved to shop even before I read magazines.

SICULAR: And who were some of -- When you were younger, who were your beauty and fashion icons?

OXENBURG: God, good question. Not so m-- I didn’t read a lot of fashion magazines at that time, but I saw movies, and I remember Julie Christie, thinking she was exquisite, and Olivia Hussey, and Elizabeth Taylor. Actually, I met Elizabeth when I was about seven years old, and fell in love with her two sons. This is before the -- before -- When Richard was married to Eliz-- not Elizabeth -- my mom, and so... Yeah, I think that’s the three -- the three women that I thought were really beautiful. And obviously Brigitte Bardot.

SICULAR: Of course, everybody --

OXENBURG: Everybody, yeah.

SICULAR: And when did you start modeling?
OXENBURG: I started modeling [00:43:00] at 17 so I grad--
Well, I graduated from high school at 17, and then I went
to London, and I did a couple of, like, photo shoots,
because I said I wanted to model at that point. And then I
went to New York during the summer, and my mom, who was
good friends with a man called Alex Liberman, who at that
point was editor --

SICULAR: He was creative director and editor of --

OXENBURG: Yeah, of Condé Nast --

SICULAR: -- of Condé Nast.

OXENBURG: -- Publications. And he had taken pictures of me
when I was about four years old in New York, at my ba--
even younger, I think, at a birth-- my birthday, because I
have baby pictures of me taken by Alex. So I went in, and
I was a couple months short of turning 18, and my mom had a
meeting there, and I had a couple of -- no, I had, like, a
tiny portfolio with like two photographers in it, and he
asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I really -- I had
just gotten into Harvard University, but I really wanted to
take a little bit of time and try my hand at modeling, even
though I was really tiny. I was five-five and a half. And
so he looked at my photographs [00:44:00] and he called in
Polly Mellen and Grace Mirabella. And they were very
theatrical. I don’t know if editors these days are as theatrical as those two --

SICULAR: Probably --

OXENBURG: -- especially Polly was really of the top, and she went "(gasp) That face!" which I didn’t, you know... Anyway, they hired me on the spot, and I did a two-page spread with Patrick Demarchelier, which then, they recast with Denis Piel to their opening 10-page spread with just me. So my first real modeling job was the 10-page opening spread for American vogue. (laughs)

SICULAR: What year was that?

OXENBURG: Nineteen seventy-nine.

SICULAR: Wow.

OXENBURG: I know. I mean, I was --

SICULAR: Did you realize how lucky you were? Or was it just --

OXENBURG: I think -- I think I realized that I had struck the mother lode. (laughs)

SICULAR: Because, you know, a lot of young models that -- now they’re middle-age, whatever -- but they said that they would start at age 17, and every day someone would call them to say, “Oh, you’re working with Avedon today,“ or “Tomorrow you’re working with Mr. Penn, and then you get to work with Mr. Demarchelier, [00:45:00] and then Denis Piel, and then --”
OXENBURG: (laughs)

SICULAR: “-- and then (inaudible), and then Marco Glaviano,” and they thought it was normal, that everybody just picked up the phone and had these bookings for Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar all over the world, and Revlon, and Chanel.

OXENBURG: No, I mean, when I started in London, for that one month before, I had a lot of rejection, and, I mean, it’s thanks to my mother for opening that door for me that, you know, things turned around.

SICULAR: And what agency were you with in New York?

OXENBURG: I didn’t have an agent at that point, but as soon as I got that job, then I was signed with Eileen Ford immediately. (laughs) Like, overnight.

SICULAR: And did you stay with her?

OXENBURG: I did, yeah.

SICULAR: You did live with her? And did you do chores, and peel potatoes, and --

OXENBURG: No, no. I didn’t live in her --

SICULAR: You didn’t live with her?

OXENBURG: No, I didn’t live with her. No, no, no. But I was -- I became a Ford Model then on, and I remember, the only thing that I used to do that I thought was a little unusual, is that Eileen used to organize these dinner parties, and you would show up, and there would -- I
remember one night, there was [00:46:00] (inaudible) and Björn Borg. So I don’t really understand what was going on. I think -- I mean, I don’t want to say that it’s like being a call girl, but, literally, as a model, you were invited to these dinners with, you know, high-profile sportsmen, or politicians...

SICULAR: She wanted all of her models to be happily married to men who were secure. That’s what it was.

OXENBURG: Oh. Oh, that’s so sweet.

SICULAR: And that’s what it was. She wanted all of them happily married and in secure relationships.

OXENBURG: That’s so adorable.

SICULAR: She watched over everybody, really.

OXENBURG: That’s really sweet. Oh God, I -- Yeah, I never understood, because she was never really blatant about it.

SICULAR: Right.

OXENBURG: We would just show up at these dinners, and --

SICULAR: She wanted everybody to be happily married and taken care of.

OXENBURG: Oh, she was a yenta. (laughs) That’s so cute. That’s adorable.

SICULAR: I know, it really is. Very, very sweet. Who -- Were you -- Did you start [New Faces?] then, at Ford? With [Nancy Noonan?] or Louise Roberts --
OXENBURG: No. I -- My booker was a woman called Kathy, and I think that was just in the regular division.

SICULAR: Right.

OXENBURG: [00:47:00] And I -- The only other client that I knew that she had was Kelly LeBrock, because I met Kelly when I came out to California.

SICULAR: What was the best part of modeling with Eileen and Jerry -- the agency?

OXENBURG: Gosh... That’s a good question.

SICULAR: We can come back to it.

OXENBURG: Yeah, I’m not so sure.

SICULAR: We’ll come back to it. Did Eileen ever give you any advice?

OXENBURG: Well, there was a lot of emphasis on weight in those days, and not being above a certain weight. I -- And also, they told me that I shouldn’t put on my card that I was five-five and a half.

SICULAR: Right. So did they say five-six and a half, or five-seven?

OXENBURG: Yes. (laughs) Yes, absolutely.

SICULAR: I say it in almost every interview, but I never ever ask anybody -- people that -- I’m really good friends with models -- their height, their age, or their hip size, because I will never get the truth.
OXENBURG: Seriously?

SICULAR: Yeah, I never ask. And I’m really good friends with these people. I never ask that question.

OXENBURG: Oh, I always tell the truth. [00:48:00] Oh, that’s so funny. Well, I can’t really lie about my age, because every year on Entertainment Tonight, they announce --

SICULAR: The --

OXENBURG: (laughs) Yes. It’s kind of hard.

SICULAR: So you were a model for a short time, and then you went into acting?

OXENBURG: Yeah.

SICULAR: But I want to finish with the modeling first. Did you prefer doing -- Did you ever get to do any fashion?

OXENBURG: Yes.

SICULAR: Because you did mostly beauty, because of your --

OXENBURG: No, no, no. I did fashion. I did a lot of fashion, actually. I mean, I have great stories and I have horror stories too. I think -- Do you want a horror story?

SICULAR: Of course.

OXENBURG: OK.

SICULAR: We want everything.

OXENBURG: So, this was probably the most mortifying moment of my career when I was modeling. I think I was 18 --
maybe 18 -- like, almost 19 -- yeah, 18 and a half. And I was ecstatic, because I had been hired to shoot the collections in Paris with Richard Avedon.

SICULAR: Wow.

OXENBURG: It was going to be me and Brooke Shields. So I arrived in Paris, and the first thing that Richard says to me -- and I did like one shot -- and he said, “I want to cut all your hair off.” [00:49:00] And so I was like, “(gasp)” -- horrified. And he -- And I said, “Well, I don’t really want to cut -- How short?” He said, “Well, like a bob. No, shorter, like spiky, punky.” And I said, “I don’t know if I’m comfortable with that,” and he started screaming at me. He started saying, “Don’t you know who I am?” I’m not going to say it the pitch that he did. “I want you to be” -- what did he say? -- “a (inaudible) to counteract Brooke Shields’s beauty.” And he started -- He was really quite of a bully in that particular situation. And Brooke started crying, and I started crying, and so I think Polly -- was it Polly or Grace? I can’t remember which one, which editor was there, but they gave me $500 and they sent me home. It was pretty mortifying. And that’s -- I never worked with Avedon ever again. So it could be tough.
SICULAR: No, I know. It’s not always nice (inaudible) work. You know, them painting some of our models’ blonde hair royal blue, or, other times, [00:50:00] them cutting their hair to, like really, short like that -- touching their hair, and -- “Oh no, I don’t want that,” and then they wouldn’t even take a picture. The model’s hair was ruined. So I know.

OXENBURG: Well, actually, the reason I was a bit tentative about my hair is -- I think one of the first job I had was for one -- I think French -- I don’t know, one of the Vogues -- and John Sahag --

SICULAR: Who was so handsome...

OXENBURG: John Sahag was the hairdresser, and they wanted kind of a dramatic haircut, so he cut my bang from like there to there. And I went into the agency afterwards and they were horrified, because it took months and months to grow out, and it -- So, you know...

SICULAR: They weren’t supposed to surprise models like that. They were supposed to ask their booker, or tell them beforehand and say, “We’re going to -- We’re going to -- or thinking about -- cutting your hair,” or whatever it is. But you’re not supposed to just alter or surprise a model.

OXENBURG: I know, I think there --

SICULAR: Especially a young girl.
OXENBURG: Yeah. Well, a young girl that’s easy to intimidate, too, so...

SICULAR: Because her looks are her --

OXENBURG: [00:51:00] Her livelihood, yeah. I know, there were a lot of egos.

SICULAR: I know.

OXENBURG: Not un-different from the acting world, but...

SICULAR: Did you like doing fashion also?

OXENBURG: Yes, I did.

SICULAR: And did you do any fashion shows?

OXENBURG: No. You know, that’s funny. I was too tiny to do fashion shows.

SICULAR: And what fashion did you do?

OXENBURG: Oh my God, you’re asking me to go back so far.

(laughs)

SICULAR: If you remember.

OXENBURG: I -- I just remember -- I can’t tell you. I don’t remember the designers there. Oh, that’s not true. You know what, I did a lot -- I did a lot for Italian designers, and there was Gianfranco Ferre, I did a lot for him. And -- Gosh that’s -- Because I remember actually going to Italy to be fitted by him in the early ’80s. Who else? I did a lot -- I just remember everything was too long. The sample shoes were way too big for me, and
everything had to be clipped behind with like giant bulldogs all over the place.

SICULAR: And did they ever send you (inaudible)?

OXENBURG: Oh, yes. Plenty of times.

SICULAR: And then -- [00:52:00] So you modeled for a few years.

   Did people recognize you in the streets?

OXENBURG: No, not -- I don’t -- No, not so much.

SICULAR: What did your family think of it, your modeling?

OXENBURG: Well, they were surprised. First of all, because I had gotten into a really good university.

SICULAR: And did you ever step foot into Harvard?

OXENBURG: No I didn’t, I def-- because my modeling career took off, and then I started taking acting classes.

SICULAR: So you deferred for like 30 years?

OXENBURG: Yeah, maybe I should go back now that my kids are old enough. (laughs) And then I ended up -- I actually called the deans at Harvard and said, “Listen, I’m going to be working,” because I wanted to pay for it myself. And -- Because I started supporting myself at 17, completely.

SICULAR: Wow.

OXENBURG: So -- And they said, you know, “We can’t really allow for you to work in the city and then commute to Boston,” so I decided to transfer to Columbia. And I did
actually go to Columbia for the first year, and then my acting career took off, and then everything changed.

SICULAR: And how did Eileen feel about you leaving? Was she OK with it?

OXENBURG: Yes. And you know why? Because it didn’t happen all at once. I actually got engaged to a -- No, it happened -- I think it was a -- No. No, she didn’t mind. Sort of, like, a natural evolution of where I was going to go.

SICULAR: And what was your first big acting job?

OXENBURG: My first big acting job was -- I was hired in a CBS TV movie, and I had just turned 19, and it was called The Royal Romance of Charles and Diana, and I played Princess Diana.

SICULAR: Was it fun?

OXENBURG: Yes, it was a lot of fun. I loved it.

SICULAR: And then what? I know you were in the series.

OXENBURG: Yes. Then I got engaged -- while I was filming that, I got engaged to a Spaniard, and I went to live in Spain for a year. And then I got unengaged (laughs) because he asked me to make the choice between acting and marrying him, and I really didn’t want to give up acting at that point. And so I came back, and then I was introduced, on my 22nd birthday, with is on the 22nd of S-- Oh, today’s
the 22nd -- and -- to a gentleman called George Hamilton. And George volunteered to take me out to California, so I jumped on a plane the next day with him and went out to California, and he introduced me to Aaron Spelling. And I went in and had a meeting with Aaron, and he said, “You have the greatest windows in the business,” or, “You have --” Something like that. I wasn’t quite sure what that meant, so I had to go ask, and I found out that “windows” meant “eyes”. And then he had me audition for three shows.

SICULAR: Which were?

OXENBURG: Well, one, I don’t remember what it was. The second one was a show that Shari -- What was the name of it? Shari Belafonte ended up -- It was like three girls who were aerobics teachers, who were undercover (laughs) spies, or, like, James Bond type girls. It was ridiculous.

SICULAR: Like Charlie’s Angels, but --

OXENBURG: Yeah, but aerobics teachers. And I had never done aerobics in my life, so I was -- I didn’t want to admit that I had never done aerobics, so I ran off to Jane Fonda’s studio, and I was too embarrassed, so I hired a teacher to come to my apartment, and fully auditioned the next day. I was so stiff -- literally, I remember Duke Vincent, [00:55:00] who was the producer -- “Oh my God,
Catherine, what happened to your --” I couldn’t even move. (laughs) So obviously I didn’t get that one, and then the very next one was a screen test for Dynasty. And then I got that. And actually, I hadn’t -- because I had come from spending a year in Spain, I had not watched Dynasty, so I had no idea that the viewing audience was a hundred million dollars around the -- Oh, “a hundred million --” -- a hundred million people around the world -- and that it was such a big show. And I remember having lunch with this actress in New York like a week before I went to California, and she said, “Yes, I just auditioned for this part -- ten thousand girls have auditioned for this part -- to play the daughter of Joan Collins. I was like, “Oh, that’s nice.” I had no idea that I was going to be the one -- and I ended up getting it, so...

SICULAR: Did you enjoy it?

OXENBURG: Yes, I did.

SICULAR: And how many years did you --

OXENBURG: I -- I was on it for two years, and then the ratings started to slip, and tensions started to rise, and I asked for a tiny raise -- I mean really tiny -- [00:56:00] and I had sort of a big-shot agent at that point, and he was trying get me a little money. And Aaron said no, and so I said, “Well, I think I would -- I don’t
want to really come back,” because it wasn’t that pleasant when the ratings started to slip. And he said, “OK, well, in that case, you can leave, but you will never work again.”

SICULAR: Aaron said that? Wow.

OXENBURG: Yeah. So that was a rude awakening.

SICULAR: Right. Meanwhile, you’re here and he’s not.

OXENBURG: I know. Bless his heart. (laughs) But he gave me a great -- He gave me an extraordinary opportunity. I mean, that -- to be cast in a show like that at that time was explosive.

SICULAR: And then your name got out there more, so do you -- So, when you were working on the show, did you endorse any products?

OXENBURG: Yes.

SICULAR: Because then, you were endorsing it as a celebrity, and not as a model.

OXENBURG: Yes, yes, because, as a model, I did campaigns like Revlon -- I did a lot of campaigns as a model, and then, as soon as I was on Dynasty -- I made very little on the show -- well, God, I mean, for a young woman, [00:57:00] it was a lot of money, but com-- I mean, compared to what other people make on huge series, like, I
was a little -- but I would make as much as my salary in endorsements, so -- or more.

SICULAR: And did Eileen handle those endorsements?

OXENBURG: No, not anymore.

SICULAR: Who did it then?

OXENBURG: I don’t remember who. I think they might have come directly to my agent, actually. It seems -- Yeah, none of that stuff came through Eileen Ford when I moved out to California. Oh, I know. Didn’t she have -- Who was her partner out here?

SICULAR: Nina Blanchard.

OXENBURG: Yes.

SICULAR: And everyone loved Nina.

OXENBURG: Yeah, Nina was a sweetheart. So some stuff probably came through Nina.

SICULAR: Did you remember working with Nina direct?

OXENBURG: A little bit, yes.

SICULAR: She was a nice lady.

OXENBURG: She was a very nice lady.

SICULAR: I know. So my next question -- When people look at these interviews in, say, 100 years, or 50 years, how do you want your era of modeling and acting to be remembered?

What do you think the 1980s, or your years --

OXENBURG: Well, the thing --
SICULAR: [00:58:00] The big money years.

OXENBURG: The -- yeah, really.

SICULAR: Big hair, big shoulder pads...

OXENBURG: You just took the words out of my mouth.

(laughs) I’ve -- The one thing that I feel a little bit of, like -- a twinge of regret -- is that my era is so unattractive. I mean, I look at the pictures of me, and I had this --

SICULAR: Hair.

OXENBURG: -- ridiculous, giant hair. It’s just not pretty, and I thought it was attractive at that time. I mean, I must’ve been brainwashed. And these giant sh--

SICULAR: Shoulder pads.

OXENBURG: So my daughter laughs, because yesterday I did a photo shoot, and there was a Chanel suit that I was wearing -- I don’t know, it cost a fortune -- but it had, like, a tiny hint of a shoulder pad, and I immediately had like an allergic reaction to it, and she said, “Ha ha!” Like, ‘80s flash-- I still -- I still feel like I was traumatized by the ’80s. (laughs)

SICULAR: And you were so well-known. Everyone knew who you were.

OXENBURG: Yeah, I was really well-known in the ’80s.
SICULAR: What was the best part of your career for you, personally?

OXENBURG: Wow.

SICULAR: Of that era, because you still have a career.

OXENBURG: The best part of that era... [00:59:00] God...

Like, you never think like that.

SICULAR: I can come back to that. My next question -- When you were modeling, did you have to do anything to maintain yourself, or did you just wake up every day and you were lucky and you looked the way you did?

OXENBURG: I was very young and very clueless, and now that I’m much older, (laughs) and there’s so much more maintenance -- I did nothing. If I’d known -- Oh my God, if I could tell other young women who are starting out to start taking care of their skin literally the moment they hit puberty, I’m sure that I would have less sun dam-- because nobody knew about sun damage. I mean, we baked in the sun, we didn’t use sunblock, we -- I didn’t think about facials in those days, I didn’t really understand that much about di-- I mean, kind of diet, because... Well, I had a terrible eating disorder for many years, so that was not helpful, but my -- I grew up [01:00:00] sort of thinking organic and natural, and no sodas, and stuff like that, but... No, I’m a lot savvier now. So I can tell my -- I
have four beautiful daughters. I can guide them in the right direction.

SICULAR: So what’s the secret -- What are some of your beauty secrets?

OXENBURG: OK. Now, I’m quite strict. I’ve never smoked, so that’s not an issue. I don’t drink any alcohol whatsoever anymore, because I find that it dehydrates, and personally, I watched my father die last year from dementia, amongst other things, and I happened to see an MRI of his brain, and the atrophy. And my dad was an alcoholic, so, for me, that was sort of -- that was the moment where I said, “It’s really not -- I need to preserve my brain at all costs.” So no alcohol. Plus, my husband’s younger than me, and he has not had a drink in 17 years, and he continues to look younger than me, and I have to compete somehow. (laughs) I’m very careful about what I eat. I try and stay away from [01:01:00] gluten products and refined sugar. What else? Exercise is a key component in my life. I do -- I have a daily practice, whether that’s prayer or meditation. Something that, you know, combats stress, and kind of aligns me, and focuses me. Lots of very good water. I never drink things like soda or -- I don’t eat saturated fats. I cook very cleanly. I only eat organic foods. I --
SICULAR: That’s a nice regimen.
OXENBURG: It’s pretty -- a healthy lifestyle.
SICULAR: Do you have any last thoughts before we turn off the camera?
OXENBURG: Any last thoughts... Well... I -- Yeah, I mean, I talk about my 20 year-old, because she is -- My 20 year-old is -- her name is India, and she’s a beautiful young woman, and she started a gluten-free, refined sugar-free -- because of some health issues -- baking company called Scrumptious Soul.
SICULAR: Scrumptious --
OXENBURG: Scrumptious Soul.
SICULAR: OK.
OXENBURG: And her philosophy for her company is to teach young women to have a different relationship with their bodies, and food, and to learn -- to teach people that you can indulge guilt-free. And I know, growing up -- And there’s a tremendous emphasis, as a model, to be thin, and there are so many models with eating disorders, so I feel like, if I’ve succeeded through my daughter, that she has a healthy relationship with food, and that she wants to teach other young women that you can have a healthy relationship with food, that it doesn’t have to be this hate-love
relationship that so many women have -- I’m really proud of that.

SICULAR: That’s it? Thank you.

OXENBURG: You’re welcome. So I never got down to this thing about “What was the best --”

[01:03:00] (edit)

SICULAR: -- your era in the ’80s, aside from the big hair and shoulder pads? And that you survived it all.

OXENBURG: I know I survived it. I’m trying to think... I guess it was just so big, and so loud, and so much fun.

(laughs)

SICULAR: Larger than life.

OXENBURG: It was.

SICULAR: I know.

OXENBURG: Yeah.

SICULAR: And you got to model in that era, which was so great.

OXENBURG: I know. Yeah, my biggest success was -- Yeah, I have a lot to thank the ’80s --

SICULAR: I mean, it wasn’t ref-- It wasn’t restricted or -- you know, everything was big -- the jewelry, the clothing, the hair.

OXENBURG: Over the top, yeah.

SICULAR: Which was fun. I mean, it was theatrical and fun and fabulous. So you enjoyed it?
OXENBURG: Yes, very much.

SICULAR: Great. And we enjoyed interviewing you, so thank you.

OXENBURG: Thank you so much.

[01:03:46] (edit)

SICULAR: Ready?

CREW: And we’re on.

SICULAR: Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re continuing our series of interviewing models, [01:04:00] photographers, and other people in the beauty industry. Today is June 22nd, 2011. We’re at The Vault, which is in Culver City, California, and we’re interviewing Glass the Tramp, who’s been modeling since the year 2001. So thank you for joining us.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, thank you.

SICULAR: Let me just sit down.

CREW: No, I said the shot is like this, so you can relax.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh. Oh.

SICULAR: Do you want the pillow? Do you want another pillow?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, no, this is fine. I thought I was sitting -- Oh, OK.

SICULAR: OK. So Glass, we’re so happy that you joined us.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Happy to be here.
SICULAR: I’ll -- To be honest, you have a great sense of style. It’s a little different than the other models we’ve been interviewing.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, thank you.

SICULAR: Where are you from?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I was born in Belgium, and I grew up in London, but I’ve been in the United States almost 20 years.

SICULAR: Twenty years? And how did you get into the modeling business?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I did commercials as a kid for McDonald’s, Burger King -- and when we moved to New York in the ’90s, I did a Gap commercial, and I was involved in music, and... Anything to be in front of the camera, I was always about it, so my dad just -- he sent me out into the world and it was awesome. (laughs)

SICULAR: That’s great. Were you trained as a child?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes, I was trained in acting and music, but modeling, I -- actually, I got my first gig when -- I was in JC Penney’s with my dad one weekend when I was about 14, and we were walking through, and I think they were doing a casting, and they called me over, and my dad’s like, “You know this -- I tell, you, you only get one shot.” He’s like, “This is what you want. Go for it.” And I ended up working for them for almost four years, catalogue modeling.
SICULAR: That’s great.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah.

SICULAR: And you told me that you recently modeled in the Victoria’s Secret’s --

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah, I did. Fashion week last year, I was a part of the Victoria’s Secret’s Expo. I’ve done, since then, so many fashion shows, I can’t even rem-- keep count.

SICULAR: What are some -- What are some of the fashion shows?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I’ve done Dolce & Gabbana, I’ve modeled for a clothing line [01:06:00] [Avery Moss?], 7Lightningbolt, Calvin Klein... The list goes -- Oh, Von Dutch -- I was the spokesperson and the face of Von Dutch for about four years when Von Dutch ruled the world, from 2005 to about 2009.

SICULAR: And do you have rep-- Are you with an agency, or do you represent yourself?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Right now, I am with Pacific Talent and Models, and I’ve had different agents in the bag. And I also rep myself, which -- a lot of my friends laugh. They’re like, “You’re a mouthpiece. You get work, and your agent’s like, ‘Where’s my cut?’” and I’m like, “You don’t get any, because I did this on my own,” so... (laughs)

SICULAR: Yeah, but you’re the best -- You have such a great personality that no one represents you like yourself.
GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh yeah, definitely.

SICULAR: Do you always go out dressed like this, with your hair like --

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, I’m conservative today.

SICULAR: Oh, you are?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I’m edgy, which has gotten me a lot of work. I’ve also modeled with Dragon, which, when I first started with them, they were all about the avant-garde, and I’ve noticed now they’ve gotten -- done half and half -- you know, more normal models. And my look has just always gotten me -- My motto is, “Be for real or be forgotten,” so -- and it’s always worked.

SICULAR: And do you walk a little differently? Can you show us? Can you --

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, sure. (laughs) You --

CREW: Back that way.

GLASS THE TRAMP: This way?

SICULAR: Yeah.

GLASS THE TRAMP: I mean, I’m a character model, and I’ll do... Let’s see. So, for instance, I just did a runway show and they just wanted me to be myself, so I kind of have my own little signature pose where I just -- I walk, and then I just kind of... And just kind of give them all different types of --
SICULAR: And does the crowd go wild?

GLASS THE TRAMP: You know, just very funky, and --

SICULAR: Because they know you -- Does the crowd go wild?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Sometimes, like, it’s so quiet, and then I’ll come out and do some stuff, and everyone’s like, “OK, that’s what I’m talking about,” so...

SICULAR: Do they direct you, or do you know what to do?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I always know what to do. It’s funny, of course I take direction in rehearsal, and for some reason, whoever’s doing it, they’re always like, “Just be yourself. When you get out there -- I don’t think I can tell you -- I can’t do that for you.” (laughs) You just go, and it works.

SICULAR: Do you prefer doing fashion or beauty? I mean, do you pre-- Well, do you do fashion and grooming?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes. I do print work, [01:08:00] I do -- I honestly love it all. I love the camera. I mean, I’ve --

SICULAR: And do you like doing print?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes, I love doing print. Print -- Because, I mean, fashion shows -- I love watching fashion footage of myself on stage, but to me, photos are just -- they last a lifetime. Like, classic photos -- 20, 30 years from now, you can sit back and look at that photo, and it’s like, “That was that day.”

SICULAR: Just like this interview.
GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes, just like --

SICULAR: It will go on for decades.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah. So I love it all.

SICULAR: Who were some of your style icons, from all eras?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Whew. My number one style icon, who was -- also became my mentor, is the talented Miss Jody Watley, who was a music -- you know, she started off dancing on Soul Train. Then she became a fashion icon, singer, model -- I was just looking to her at Harper’s Bazaar at -- like, a few days ago. She’s a mentor of mine. As far as guys, Prince has always been -- I like more of the fashion -- the fashion rock. So I’m like George Clinton, Prince, Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie, [01:09:00] all those guys. And then I like a little -- I like a lot of the hip hop style too. I try to incorporate a little bit of that. Like, I think -- -- Tribe Called Quest, Busta Rhymes, guys like that who definitely brought fashion into the hip hop game.

SICULAR: And do young people come to you?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes. Little kids -- It’s funny, I was telling my neighbor, like, just the other day, little kids -- I can stand in the grocery store line, and they’re like, pointing, and their moms are like, “Don’t look at him,” and I’m like, “Oh, it’s fine,” and we’ll start talking, and... I just consider myself like a big toy.
SICULAR: And what’s the best part of the business for you?

GLASS THE TRAMP: The people. Some people say that people are an absolute nightmare, but my motto is, “When you treat people the way you want to be treated -- even if they are really nasty and so-called ‘stuck-up,’ -- when you’re really nice to someone, they have no choice but to give it back to you.” Even if it’s not real, they put on that -- I mean, you know? You imitate your atmosphere, so that’s my -- that’s how I live my life.

SICULAR: And where do you want modeling to take you?

GLASS THE TRAMP: All around the world. I love Japan. I’ve lived in a couple places around the world, and I know that modeling and music rule the world, and some things will change, [01:10:00] probably, thousands of years from now. Music and fashion will always rule the world, and I want to be a part of it. And I will be a part of it.

SICULAR: Do you want to be a designer, or produce fashion shows?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I actually do produce fashion shows too, because I love putting it together, but I also like being in it, so it’s so fun sometimes to multitask and just see it all fall into place, so, yeah.

SICULAR: That’s great. And who were some of your favorite designers -- are yours?
GLASS THE TRAMP: Whew. Right now, there’s -- Actually, there’s an up-and-coming designer -- well, two -- Avery Moss, Sean LePaul King of the Gypsies -- they’re -- he’s very -- he creates very Jimi Hendrix, very rock star type things of that nature. And then my favorite, who is more of a female designer, but I can grab accessories from her store at all times, is Betsey Johnson. I still love that woman to death. Like, I just think she’s this -- She’s everything.

SICULAR: Do you ever style fashion shoots?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I do.

SICULAR: You do?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah. I’ve styled Gwen Stef-- I’ve done music videos and fashion shoots for Gwen Stefani, I’ve been on the set with Prince before, and different people, so...

[01:11:00] As long as I’m in it, I love it. I’m not one of those people that’s like, “It’s all about me.” If I’m on the set and I’m having fun doing it, I’m still the star of the show. That’s how I look at it.

SICULAR: That’s great.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah.

SICULAR: Could you be as comfortable if I had you styled in a conservative suit and --
GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh yes, I actually recently shot an ad where it’s me in a -- And it’s funny, it’s, like, from the 1920s, and I’m just in a tuxedo with a -- with a -- a snifter of cognac, hair back, and I look just like my father. (laughs) And I’m like -- If I’m doing anything fashion-related, I can bring it to life, because I can definitely jump in and make you believe it.

SICULAR: And what does your family think about your career?

GLASS THE TRAMP: They love me. They -- At first -- because I come from a -- The funny thing is, looking at me -- You and I know I come from a very strong military background. My father, my brothers -- I’m the only artsy one in the family, and I guess they realized at an early age, “He’s going to do his own thing, so you might as well just let him be.” And so now my dad laughs at me, like, “You told me one day you were [01:12:00] going to let your hair grow all the way down to the floor just to be rebellious,” and I did it. So he knows me.

SICULAR: Does your mother save your pictures?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Hmm?

SICULAR: Does your mother save your --

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes.

SICULAR: That’s nice

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah.
SICULAR: So, what do you think it is about fashion and music that fascinates the public so much?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Fashion -- Some people -- Fashion and -- especially fashion -- it brings out that inner character that most people want to live, but they don’t really have -- I won’t say the guts or the courage -- it’s like they’re in one of those controlled environments, where it’s like, “Well, I’m a lawyer, and I really would like to dress like this or dress like that, but I never have the time.” So they live vicariously through the magazines and the shows, and the celebrities doing it, so...

SICULAR: And what fashions do you have hanging in your closet?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, I have Alexander McQueen, I have Gucci, I have Prada, I have some Betsey -- like, access-- I’m a big accessories person, so I have -- I have Vivienne Westwood stuff. I have -- I have a little bit of everything. Yeah.

SICULAR: And how would you like your era of modeling to be remembered, when people look at this in, say, [01:13:00] 50 or 100 or 200 years from now?

GLASS THE TRAMP: I want them to say what I always say, and whenever I’m asked. I’ll never go out of style because I was never in style. I’m just me, and this fashion will last long after I’m gone.
SICULAR: And do you have any grooming hints or secrets to share?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yes. If you really want -- and it’s -- I was just telling a friend today, there’s two things I always do. I give my own self-facials. I use bananas that have probably browned for at least a week, mixed with organic honey. It is the best feeling, and the most therapeutic thing in the world.

SICULAR: And how long do you leave it on?

GLASS THE TRAMP: For about 30 minutes. You mix it up till it looks like oatmeal, you pack it on for 30 minutes, wash it off --

SICULAR: Does it slide off?

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah, it just slides off, and you just feel dewy fresh. (laughs)

SICULAR: You look dewy fresh, if you don’t mind me saying.

GLASS THE TRAMP: Oh, thanks. And then baking soda. I’ve never out soap on my face, ever. I just -- I’ve never been a soap person. I learned from my grandmother, baking soda and warm water is the best exfoliant, and it just -- it makes you feel so good.

SICULAR: And what would your dream bookings be, that you haven’t had yet?

GLASS THE TRAMP: [01:14:00] Dave LaChapelle. I would just love to be -- I -- Every book -- I own everything Dave
LaChapelle. I just want to be one of his models for anything. (laughs) I don’t care if it was just standing on top of a building. If he says it’s cool, then it’s cool. So he’s definitely my number one.

SICULAR: Go and (inaudible).

GLASS THE TRAMP: Yeah.

SICULAR: And any last thoughts?

GLASS THE TRAMP: For everyone out there, just remember, be for real, or be forgotten. Love yourself and the world will love you, and let the music and fashion be the key to the soul, the heart, the mind, and everything. Everything. (laughs) That’s it.

SICULAR: Thank you so much for joining us.

GLASS THE TRAMP: You’re welcome.

SICULAR: I have --

[01:14:39] (edit)

SICULAR: OK. Hi, my name is Patty Sicular, and together with professor Karen Trivette Cannell from New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, we’re continuing our series of interviewing models, photographers, editors, and other professionals in the fashion and beauty business. Today is June 22nd, 2011. [01:15:00] We’re in The Vault, which is located in Culver City, California, and we’re so happy to be interviewing Kay Sanderson, who was an idol of mine when
I was reading my first fashion magazine, Seventeen, in 1964. Kay’s fashion career spans 1964 to the mid-1970s. So thank you for joining us today. Thank you very much.

KAY SANDERSON: Pleased.

SICULAR: Ready? So Kay, where are you from? Where did you grow up?

SANDERSON: I grew up in Manhattan.

SICULAR: Oh, you did? Wow. Where?

SANDERSON: On the Upper West Side. Seventy-fourth Street, between West End and Broadway.

SICULAR: And were you into fashion as a young girl?

SANDERSON: A little into trendy, I guess. I had an older sister, who always wanted to look very refined, and that was not me. I always wanted, you know, to have the latest fad. (laughs)

SICULAR: As teenagers?

SANDERSON: So we were very different, yeah. I remember I wore a red dog collar around my ankle at one point.

SICULAR: That’s pretty cool.

SANDERSON: Eight years old.

SICULAR: Yeah, but that is cool when you think about it. You started your own trends then.

SANDERSON: (laughs) Well, you might say that. At the time I began modeling, though, I didn’t really have my own style,
I don’t think. I was kind of -- I was, you know, trying to find it, you know? And after about a year, you know, I found it. I mean, if -- if it doesn’t suit me, I don’t like it, no matter how beautiful it is.

SICULAR: And you started modeling after college?

SANDERSON: Yes.

SICULAR: So where did you go to college?

SANDERSON: I went the University of (inaudible).

SICULAR: [01:17:00] And how come you never started modeling when you were in high school or college? Did you ever think about doing it then?

SANDERSON: No, not really. I wanted to work for a magazine. I actually wanted to go to Boston and -- and to work for a magazine. I was an English major. I was an English major, you know, so I wanted, perhaps, to be an editor of a magazine. You know, it -- You know, it could’ve involved fashion, also, though.

SICULAR: And how did you make your way into modeling?

SANDERSON: It was actually my husband’s suggestion. OK, so I was an English major, I graduated, you know, I married my college sweetheart. He was a few years older than me, and he was in advertising, and we lived in New York City, you know, because I couldn’t get a job, you know, in Boston. Even the girls on the switchboard of the magazines had
master’s degrees [01:18:00] and, you know, graduate degrees, and... So we ended up back in New York, about a block away from Eileen Ford’s office.

SICULAR: (inaudible).

SANDERSON: Yeah, so we lived between 2nd and 3rd, on 60th Street. Oh no, maybe he was at the Fifty...

SICULAR: Fifty-second Street?

SANDERSON: At the Fifty-second Street or Fifty-fourth Street address, at -- you know, the first time I went up there. I can’t really remember, but anyway, he moved to 59th Street, anyway, a block away. So I had just a job I had, an editorial job in the editorial department of Good Housekeeping magazine. And, you know, I hadn’t begun to write anything yet, you know? [01:19:00] I was -- I was kind of a glorified proofreader, and after about nine months there -- you know, I did not like my boss, and -- and I left. OK, so then here we were. You know, my husband was in advertising, and I had no job, and I --

SICULAR: What ad agency did he work for?

SANDERSON: Oh, he worked -- He worked for quite a few in those days. You hopped around. He worked for Doyle Dane Bernbach, he --

SICULAR: Huge agency.
SANDERSON: He loved that. And J. Walter Thompson, and something with a B... Bs...

SICULAR: BBD&O.

SANDERSON: BBD&O, thank you. (laughs) And so he used to see models, you know, come in with their portfolios for work, and he’s the one who suggested I go up to Eileen Ford, because he said, “Well, I see these girls. You know, they’re not all tall. They’re not all beautiful. I mean -- I mean -- You know, they’re all -- all types of girls,” so... He had a -- He got together with a photographer who worked in his agency, and had him take about a dozen pictures of me, and -- to blow up and to bring in to Eileen. So we did that. You know, we blew them up to 11 by 14, and at the time, I knew nothing about modeling, you know? So I was trying -- I was trying to give -- to give, you know, variety. I had a sporty look, I had a sophisticated look, and maybe another one. Another one was kind of a casual look, you know... A few different looks. And I -- I remember going up to Eileen [01:21:00] and interviewing with her, and she looked at the pictures, and she said, “Well --” (laughs) And she said, “Well, to begin with, you have too many looks here,” and she pointed to -- you know, to what I considered the sophisticated-looking one -- you know, with my hair in a chignon, and a
long black dress on -- and she said, “You are not going to do this kind of work. You’re not tall enough, you’re not sophisticated enough looking, and there are a hundred -- a hundred other girls in my agency who can do this kind of work better.” And so I said, “OK.” And I guess one of the young -- I guess it was, you know, a sporty, kind of an all-American picture -- hit her eye, and she said, “OK, I want you to have this look. [01:22:00] We need young models. How old are you?” I told her I was 22. She said, “Don’t ever tell anyone that again.” (laughs)

SICULAR: Everybody that sits in this seat has been saying the same thing.

SANDERSON: Really? She said, “Don’t ever say that! You are not going to get work for a 22 year-old. You’re going to get work for teen magazine -- you know, for Seventeen magazine, you know... Never tell them that. You’re not a day older than 17,” she said. I said, “OK.” (laughs) And then she asked how tall I was, and I said, “I think -- I think five-five and a half, almost five-six.” She said, “OK, never say that either. You’re at least --”

SICULAR: Five-seven.

SANDERSON: “-- five-six.”

SICULAR: Oh, really?
SANDERSON: Yeah. She said, “If you had come in a year ago, I would’ve said five-seven, but we’re looking now for young models.” You know, the youth revolution had begun in London, you know, The Beatles had come. All these little teeny boppers were beginning to be the rage, you know? And she didn’t have a lot of young-looking models. You know, the one I remember, even when I was in high school, was Carol Lynley. I mean, she was one of the only ones --

SICULAR: Tuesday Weld?

SANDERSON: Well, no. Oh yeah, maybe Tuesday Weld, you know, and I think -- and Colleen Corby was modeling at the time I started, and she was also -- you know, she was very popular. But they had an overwhelming number of high-fashion, sophisticated types -- Uma Thurman types, and -- tall -- you know, to do Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar, you know? So she was looking for young models, and, you know -- So it was kind of a case of I happened to be at the right place at the right time --

SICULAR: With the right look.

SANDERSON: With the right look. I mean, I could never model today, even if I was 20 years old. You know, it’s not the right look.

SICULAR: I don’t know. You have a beautiful face.
SANDERSON: It’s not the right look for today.

SICULAR: Can you see this? Look how beautiful these are.

SANDERSON: Oh, well thank you. (laughs)

SICULAR: I think, with your face, you could’ve modeled any era.

   Really.

SANDERSON: I don’t even think they’d interview me today, you know, just on the height.

SICULAR: I know. Five-foot nine and up, I know.

SANDERSON: You know, they have to eliminate people on the height. Yeah. So, you know -- And they’re not particularly looking for junior models. I mean --

SICULAR: Did you enjoy doing it -- modeling?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah.

SICULAR: So you started with what magazines, and what clients?

SANDERSON: Let’s see. You know, I didn’t do too much editorial work. [01:25:00] I did mostly ads, you know? I guess I began with a couple of the catalogues, and then I -- you know, what really -- really began me working a lot was one photographer.

SICULAR: Which one? Who was it?

SANDERSON: His name was Ray Kellman, and he did a lot of ads. He did the Bobbie Brooks ads, the Gay Gibson ads, the (inaudible) ads, the Dacron ads. You know, he did a lot of ads that were also in The New York Times magazine section.
SICULAR: I remember those ads.

SANDERSON: They had a lot of ads in there. And, you know, so I got my first booking with him, actually, by default. The agency called me one morning -- you know, I had just begun, you know? I had never even had a [01:26:00] up to raise studio to have him look at my portfolio or anything, and the agency called me one morning, and they said -- and they said, “OK, here’s the deal. We have a big booking today. There are top junior models involved.” You know, Colleen was there, I think, you know, Terry -- you know. You know, “There are top junior models involved, and one of the girls has just called in sick.” She said, “And the clothes have already been fitted on her, and it’s just too expensive to cancel all those girls, and the photographer,” you know, “to cancel the booking. So all of the other junior models -- the working ones -- are working. So you have to do this, and you have to look good, [01:27:00] because you’re the exact same size as the girl who cancelled.” And, you know, the girl was Rita --

SICULAR: Egan.

SANDERSON: -- Egan. I remember Rita Egan was the one. You know, the clothes had to fit. So I said, “OK,” and so I went down, you know, and in those days we mostly did our own hair and makeup. And the magazines --
SICULAR: Was this your first print booking?

SANDERSON: Hmm?

SICULAR: Was this your first print booking? Or one of the first?

SANDERSON: I might have done a couple of little -- you know, a couple of catalogue things before, you know, but it was -- it was one of my first. One of my first. So -- and, you know, so I did the booking. I think it was all day. And the pictures came out really good. OK, you know, so then he used me again, and the pictures came out really good. So then he used me again, and, [01:28:00] over the years, he continued to use me. You know, he did all the Gay Gibson ads, and that’s how I became, you know, the Gay Gibson girl. You know, Colleen and I used to do them together all the time.

SICULAR: Is that Lucy Angle on the left?

SICULAR: Uh-huh. Yeah, that’s Lucy.

SICULAR: And you’re in the middle, and then Colleen Corby.

SANDERSON: Right. And I don’t know how many of those -- You know, we did a lot of those.

SICULAR: Were they welcoming? Were they welcoming to you, since you were new, when you showed up that day -- the other models? Did they try and help you, or give you advice?
SANDERSON: Not really. You know, it was very professional. Ray was very professional, you know, so he told me, you know, what he wanted. He told me, “OK, OK, these are --” I mean, you know, “It’s a dress ad, and all these girls are young junior models, [01:29:00] so just look natural, and you don’t have to do a lot. I’ll give the instructions.” You know, he was very good at -- at, you know, telling you -- I mean, you know, “Turn away,” or “Drop your hand.” I mean, he saw things that I didn’t see, and -- Yeah, so that -- Yeah, it was a good day. I mean, you know, the other models were, you know, nice to me. I mean, you know, they didn’t really care. They were just --

SICULAR: And did they become friends -- And did you become friends with a lot of the models?

SANDERSON: Yeah, quite a few, you know, especially the ones -- You know, I worked with a lot, and the ones I worked with a lot were the junior models, you know, who weren’t extremely tall. I mean -- And I did a Gay Gibson ad with [Terry Rina?] one time, but, I mean, she was very tall, you know, so we didn’t work together too much.

SICULAR: Did you ever send -- Did Eil-- Did the agency ever send you to Europe -- the young girls to Europe -- the junior girls, to build up portfolios like they did with --

SANDERSON: Oh yes. [01:30:00] Oh yeah.
SICULAR: Were you sent to Milan or to Paris?

SANDERSON: To Paris and Milan, actually. Let me see. Yeah, so that was a couple years after I began working, you know, and she sent me to Paris. What was the name of that agency?

SICULAR: Was it Dorian Leigh?

SANDERSON: No.

SICULAR: Paris Planning?

SANDERSON: Yes, Paris Planning.

SICULAR: OK.

SANDERSON: Paris Planning. And then she sent me to Ricardo Guy in Milano. Yeah. So actually, in Milano, I ended up getting -- getting a contract for a TV commercial, you know, they did -- They called it "(inaudible)." You know, it was on every night, and it was a commercial -- a commercial, you know, for makeup, and I ended up, you know, getting [01:31:00] a five-year contract with them, and they flew me over for three weeks in the fall, and three weeks --

SICULAR: Wow.

SANDERSON: -- in the spring --

SICULAR: That’s a great campaign.
SANDERSON: -- and they paid for the trip and the hotel, and they paid me, of course, for the work. You know, so that was --

SICULAR: Was it fun? Was it enjoyable?

SANDERSON: Yes. You know, I preferred working in New York, though. I mean, it was more professional in New York. And the day ended in New York. I mean, you were expected to be on time, and you were expected to be through at the end of the day. In Milan -- In Milan, you know, it could go on, you know, until midnight, you know, until we finished the job. And also, it -- I mean, you know, the work and the social kind of blended more in New York. You know, you went to work, and you did that.

SICULAR: Were you treated almost like a celebrity because you were a model in that era?

SANDERSON: No, not at all. [01:32:00] No, never. I mean -- I mean, it was a job, you know? In New York, we were very professional.

SICULAR: Did people recognize you on the street, young girls who read Seventeen?

SANDERSON: Oh, no. (laughs)

SICULAR: They didn’t?

SANDERSON: No, nobody ever recognized me on the street.
SICULAR: And what was the professional life with Ford Models --

did you have your own booker there, or did all the agents
handle you?

SANDERSON: They had -- They had the bookers who handled the
junior models -- The junior models, you know, were the
younger ones, the shorter ones, you know, the cuter ones.
I mean, like, the all-American ones, you know, like I was.
And then the high-fashion ones who worked for Vogue and
Harper’s Bazaar had other bookers.

SICULAR: Right.

SANDERSON: But not one particular booker, you know? But
after a while, they get to know your type, and they get to
-- You know, they also -- they also get feedback from
photographers, and, you know, [01:33:00] so that helps
them, you know, to place -- you know, to place you, like --
you know, for which ads or commercials, you know, to go up
for.

SICULAR: And also, as -- By the time I started booking in the
1980s, every model had their own booker, so you’d

SANDERSON: Oh, you were --

SICULAR: Yeah.

SANDERSON: You were a booker?

SICULAR: I worked with Eileen and Jerry for 27 years.

SANDERSON: Oh, wow.
SICULAR: And at Elite. So you had the same model and the same booking, and it was a real relationship, because for years, you’d speak every single day.

SANDERSON: Really?

SICULAR: And you --

CREW: Pardon. I’m going to have to change tapes.

SICULAR: OK.

END OF AUDIO FILE