SICULAR: [00:00] Hi, my name is Patty Sicular. I’d like to welcome you all to Ford Models, New York City. We are interviewing Bob Strand today, who’s Director of our Ford Model Services. And today is June 23rd, 2010. We are interviewing models and other people in our business for the Ford FIT Archive, along with Professor Karen Cannell. And today, as I said, we’re going to be interviewing Bob Strand. So let’s start. Hi, Bob. When did you start working with Ford Models?


SICULAR: And how did it come to be that you got to work with Ford?

STRAND: One of my fraternity brothers in college, Joe Shane, [01:00] his father works for control, Howard Shane, and I went in for an interview and I got the job.

SICULAR: And when did you first meet Eileen and Jerry?

STRAND: That day. Of course, Howard brought me down to be introduced to them and, you know, that’s when I had the great pleasure of meeting Eileen and Jerry.

SICULAR: And that was the 59th Street Office?

STRAND: That was the 59th Street -- yes.
SICULAR: And did you have much interaction with Eileen and Jerry over the years?

STRAND: Quite a bit. Originally, I started out as just invoicing and accounts receivable, then I became the creative manager, and every Friday afternoon, I would sit down with Jerry and Eileen, discuss all the clients, see who they needed to call, always remind me that you get more with honey than vinegar, because I guess my attitude sometimes -- I was a little loud with the clients. So that’s when I really became close with them.

SICULAR: And how do you think the business has changed from 1977, over the years, till now?

STRAND: I feel, back when Jerry and Eileen had the agency, it was more family-oriented. [02:00] Models always had a place to stay at Eileen and Jerry’s townhouse. Now it’s going more corporate. Everybody’s looking for that extra profit. And, you know, we still try to keep it as friendly and personable as possible.

SICULAR: And do you have one best piece of advice that Jerry ever gave you, Jerry Ford?

STRAND: Jerry gave me a lot of advice. You know, just enjoy your job. I mean, he was really a great man, and he really wanted you to have fun at work.

SICULAR: And how about Eileen?
STRAND: Eileen?

SICULAR: Did she want you to have fun at work?

STRAND: Eileen wanted you to work first, then have fun, you know, but she was a great business woman.

SICULAR: And what do you think, besides having to tell you to be nice to clients, what were some of the other things you’ve learned working here and working with him?

STRAND: Just that if you’re nice to people, people are nice back to you. Jerry treated everybody equally, treated them just as he was -- you know, equal with him. [03:00] And that was always nice.

SICULAR: And who were some of the famous models that you got to meet, and worked with along the way?

STRAND: Rene Russo, Sharon Stone, Ted McGinley, Jerry Hall, Christie Brinkley, Cheryl Tiegs, Kate Capshaw, to name a few. Carmen, of course. You know, many.

SICULAR: And do you have any favorites?

STRAND: Kate Capshaw was very nice. You know, she was always very down to earth, always came in and sat down and talked to us. But they were all very nice to us.

SICULAR: You know, about two years ago, I had lunch with Eileen and Jerry, and about 15 models from the ’70s and ’80s joined us. And the one thing they all said -- no one spoke about their covers or their campaigns. They all spoke
about when they came to Ford Models, it was like home, and that was their favorite thing. And they mentioned you, and they mentioned accounting, and it was people like you that made them feel special.

STRAND: Ah. That’s nice to hear.

SICULAR: Because they were from such far away, diverse places, such as Scandinavia, and South America, and so on.

STRAND: Yeah. You know, you try to be friends with them, because it is difficult to discuss money with them, and, you know, you want them to have trust in you.

SICULAR: And did you give models advice about saving or finances?

STRAND: You know, you wish them to do it, but no. We try to stay away from giving financial advice.

SICULAR: And what -- do they still have the reserve fund for the model?

STRAND: Yes. A reserve fund --

SICULAR: (inaudible) --

STRAND: Well, the reserve fund is really to protect us against any bad debt if they leave. But also, some models use it as a tax fund. They withhold a certain percent, and at the end of the year, they take the money and pay their taxes off with it.

SICULAR: Interesting.
STRAND: Yes. You know, good idea, too.

SICULAR: And do you have to keep up with accounting practices that change, or tax laws that change over the years?

STRAND: No, not really. You know, we’re just really bookkeeping or -- you know, basic 1099, 1042S [05:00] tax forms, you know, and just advising them -- you know, who to go to, where we do recommend some accountants. And we hope they take our advice.

SICULAR: And what’s the best piece of advice that you’ve given to models?

STRAND: Not to spend all your money. How’s that? To save, definitely.

SICULAR: Are you still in touch with any of the models that walked?

STRAND: Not really. No. It’s a shame.

SICULAR: But I know when some of them come in, they ask to see you when they pop their head in.

STRAND: Oh, definitely. It’s great to see the older models from, you know, the ’70s, ’80s, ’90s, and 2000s.

SICULAR: A long time.

STRAND: Yes. It’s good to see them, and it’s nice that you’re remembered, too.

SICULAR: You remember fondly all the models. (inaudible).

STRAND: Yeah.
SICULAR: So it’s very nice.

STRAND: Mm-hmm.

SICULAR: Do you ever wish you could be more on the creative end, or are you happy doing the numbers?

STRAND: Back in the ’80s, I was asked to get -- you know, possibly become a booker. And I -- accounting is for me. [06:00] I mean, I enjoy to sit down and talk with models, you know, and -- you know, I’m easygoing that way with them.

SICULAR: And so what division did they talk to you about becoming a booker in?

STRAND: Women’s.

SICULAR: Wow.

STRAND: Yes.

SICULAR: I guess because the models liked you so much.

STRAND: Possibly. (laughs)

SICULAR: And what did your friends think of you working here?

STRAND: At my high school reunions, they think it’s the best job ever to have, but I have to remind them, it’s only a job, you know.

SICULAR: But it’s still a nice job.

STRAND: It’s a very nice job, you know. It’s -- you meet famous people. You know, you become friends with them, and hopefully be remembered when they become real famous.
SICULAR: Right. And do you have any advice to the young people starting out?

STRAND: It’s difficult. It’s tough to be a model. It’s tough to make a good living being a model. Only a few do make it. Stay in school, definitely. Finish school and then go for your dream if you want to.

SICULAR: And any last thoughts? [07:00] Anything you’d like to add?

STRAND: I love working here. It’s a great job. That’s why I’ve been here for 33 years.

F: And that was Bob Strand from our accounting department.

M: OK.

F: Thank you.

M: You want me to ask some questions, or --?

F: Sure.

M: Yeah? You’d just been talking about the accounting. I find it, you know -- when you think of modeling, it’s -- you don’t realize about accounting. And I think it’s really important -- like, what’s the difference between doing accounting in a business like Ford, where as it be somewhere else? Is there any difference at all, or --?

STRAND: Well, the accounting I do is dealing with these model -- their individual accounts, bills being paid, money being earned, when are they going to be paid. Some of our
clients are unadvanceable, so the model’s always looking for their money as quick as possible. So then account -- advances come into account. You know, dealing with them, trying to get approved for an advance, trying to keep them happy, keep them eating. You know, keeping [08:00] them well.

M: Now is there any trouble sort of getting clients to pay? Do you deal with that, or do you have [pension brought after?] the clients?

STRAND: I used to be the credit manager. I was the credit manager for six years, but that was back in the ’80s and early ’90s. So --

M: What was that like? Was that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

STRAND: That was -- you know what? It was easier than today, because today, with the economic situation, I think it’s more difficult to collect money. And plus, we have -- our business is growing so much. We have so many more clients than we did back then. We do have a credit department, three people, and all they do is call, call, call, email, email, email, just to try to collect this money. You know, I’m sure the average in payment in days have -- has gone up since the ’90s. The economy isn’t as good right now. So hopefully it gets better and business keeps booming.
M: What would you say is the hardest part of your job?

STRAND: There is no hard part. Getting up at four o’clock in the morning.

M: Really?

STRAND: [09:00] I -- yeah. I get here at 6:30. And I’ll tell you. I love this job. I love talking to the people. Where else do pretty women talk to a guy like me?

M: OK.

STRAND: Only at Ford’s.

M: Is there any hard part of the job?

STRAND: Long hours.

M: Long hours?

STRAND: Long hours. We do have this thing where it’s -- American Express our airfares. That’s one big problem. I deal with that and I do have my wife helping me at home. It’s, like, 1000, 1200 airfares a month, plus hotels that we have to reconcile and pay with in 30 days. So that’s my toughest part of Ford Models. The other part is like cake.

M: So pretty much, awake in the morning, you really happy to come to work, and it’s just like, it’s --


M: That’s very rare, --

STRAND: Love it.

M: -- I have to say.
STRAND: I love this job. People are great, too. When you work with good people, you have fun.

M: And so what’s next? I mean, just -- want to just continue here at Ford?

STRAND: Send -- definitely. Send my daughter -- well, one daughter’s going off to college -- Kirsten, you know. Then I have [Dannica?] that’s going off [10:00] in two years. So -- (laughs) I --

M: You’re just living life to the max.

STRAND: I guess just wheel in the box and take me out when I’m done. (laughter) That’s about it.

F: But he was more than just accounting. He was kind of like a bouncer. Whenever we had crazy people at Ford’s or people that came in off the street --

STRAND: Yeah. We’ve had one woman.

F: (inaudible) -- he’d always be the person of -- they’d go, “Call Bob.” And you’d call Bob, and Bob would have to take care of it.

STRAND: Yeah. We’ve had a woman threaten that she had a -- some type of weapon in her pocketbook. She wanted to be interviewed. So I was the one that interviewed her.

M: Really?

STRAND: And I asked her to keep away from her pocketbook.

M: (laughs)
STRAND: And we’ve had people come in, threatening -- you know, I --

M: A lot of crazy stories? Any specific ones?

STRAND: Well, you know --

F: We know someone -- when I was -- when we were on 59th Street, some woman came and she said that she was being, like, radar beamed from another planet. And they were telling her that she should be doing Revlon and other cosmetics.

STRAND: Exactly.

F: And we couldn’t get her to leave. So at that point, then, they’d say, “Call Bob.” And Bob would come and escort people like that out.

STRAND: Yeah. We’ve had people that swore that they were Scavullo’s -- was it Scavullo’s [11:00] son?

F: It was Avedon. Dean Avedon.

STRAND: Avedon.

F: Dean Avedon.

STRAND: Dean Av--

F: Remember that?

STRAND: -- who thought that -- you know, said that --

F: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

STRAND: -- he was the son, and we knew he wasn’t, but every day, he would come in and we would have to deal with him.
M: Every day?

STRAND: Every day. Yes.

F: And you’d have girls come in with him, too.

STRAND: Yes. So you have to keep the phonies out, too.

   Protect our girls.

M: Yeah. Is there anything recently that happened like that?

STRAND: No. We’ve been -- it’s been pretty good since we moved to 5th Avenue. Green Street -- when we were at Green Street in Soho, a couple of things happened. You know, just guys that wouldn’t leave. You know, maybe just to see the women, but you’d have to escort them out. But at 5th, because we have a doorman downstairs, and we have an enclosed reception area now, nobody gets by.

F: I think people were crazier then, too, though.

STRAND: (laughs) Who knows.

F: When we worked together one time, five Rastafarians came up and they were just jumping, just jumping.

M: Just jumping.

F: So someone yelled, “Call Bob.” And Bob had to come in. It was always, “Call Bob!”

M: What was -- what would you say is the Ford lights? [12:00] What do you think it represents?

STRAND: Ford models?

M: Yeah.
STRAND: Well, F-- back -- definitely with Eileen and Jerry, it was family oriented. I mean, if a girl came in here, didn’t have enough money for an apartment, boom. They’d be put into their townhouse. They would be fed. There would be rules, definitely. You know, you come in after ten o’clock -- I heard one story about -- oh, great -- Christy Turlington sneaking out -- getting caught sneaking out a window at one time when she was younger.

F: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) used to sneak out a lot, and smoking, (inaudible) --

STRAND: And, yeah. And Eileen would stop that. Now, well, we do have model apartments that we put them up for much less than it would cost for a hotel, or for them to get their own apartment. We do have a chaperone there, but, you know, I think the 15 -- well, the 17 and 18-year-olds are more street smart than they were back in the ’80s, and they handle themselves pretty good. And New York City has become a very safe city. You know, not too many places to worry about. And then, [13:00] you know, it’s nice that it’s one big family.

M: Would you think -- would you say Ford -- you know, when people hear that, it says quality?

STRAND: Oh, definitely. The name is -- especially Eileen and Jerry, man, they made that name --
F: Pristine.

STRAND: Pristine.

F: And they --

STRAND: Definitely.

F: -- ran a tight ship. Because as hard as we worked -- and we worked really hard -- they worked harder.

STRAND: Definitely. There was never a problem in the press about Eileen and Jerry. Everything, as I said, was run as it was her big family. And she did care.

F: And about her staff, also. She knew every staff person, and about their families, and weddings, and showers, and --

STRAND: Right.

F: She knew everything.

M: And now that, like, time as passed in -- what is it going to take to keep that?

STRAND: The employees. And, I mean, of course, it’s more corporate. Everybody wants to make the extra dollar, but it’s the employees. And these employees treat these models very well. [14:00] As I said, they come in, they sit down, we have fun. We talk about other things than money and modeling. How’s your mom? You know, you try to remember things like that. If they went home because their mom got sick and they came back, you know, it’s -- makes them feel good that you remembered and you asked about it. And I
think everybody in this place really carries on that --
carries on that way, you know.

M: So Jerry and Eileen were the nucleus from before.

STRAND: Yes.

M: Who is carrying the torch into the next --?

STRAND: The employees.

M: The employ-- all the employees?

STRAND: The employees.

M: Whether they’ve been here a year or 10 --?

STRAND: They learn. They learn. Like in accounting,

[Annette?] and I, who are -- who is also my partner in the
model services, she’s been with me at model services for 12
years, and with Ford for 18. There’s quite a few people
that have been here for a very long time, and they’re the
leaders, and they’re the ones that teach people how to
treat these models.

F: And [Sherry?] also has been here.

STRAND: Sherry -- Sherry’s been here longer than me. Sherry’s
going on her 35th year. So where -- [15:00] the way they
see us treat the models, that’s how they learn.

M: Well, that’s actually very refreshing.

STRAND: Yes. You know, it’s -- you try to protect these --
and especially the girls, you know. I have two daughters
at home, so I’m very protective of girls. A son might be
different. I mean, double standard, maybe. But the girls, you worry about, you know, and make sure everything’s OK. If they need extra pocket money, extra petty cash, no problem. You know, just try to be nice to them.

M: What would you say is the toughest thing for a model these days, especially a young girl model? What’s the

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

STRAND: Well, it seems like there’s ever-- an agency on every corner, and there’s just -- it’s just so many different agencies, so many models out there, vying for the same job. And I guess it’s working consistently. Working -- you know, getting a job all the time, keeping working. Why -- what’s good to see is a lot of these models are going to [16:00] while they’re modeling. Back in the ’70s and ’80s, they would drop out of school to become a model. Now they at least have their high school education and they’re taking courses at, you know, Hunter or NYU, trying to better themselves. That’s a good trend. Better than it was.

M: Well, Bob, I mean, we have our [Ray Winston?] lookalike here. So --

STRAND: There you go.

M: I mean, I’m glad you came by. It was very interesting.

STRAND: Thank you very much.
M: And Patty? Any other questions?

SICULAR: Well, we’re thrilled. It’s been an honor for me to work with you all these years.

STRAND: Me, also, Patty. A long time.

SICULAR: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

STRAND: Since 59th Street.

SICULAR: That’s right.

STRAND: Decades ago. We can’t say years -- decades.

M: Yeah, right. Well, thanks.

SICULAR: Thank you.

STRAND: Thank you.

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