ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE FASHION INDUSTRIES

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

CARLTON FISHEL
FORMER CHAIRMAN
TRIFARI, INC.

THE FASHION INDUSTRY LEADERS

DATE OF INTERVIEW

Wednesday, November 10, 1982

INTERVIEWED BY

Mildred Finger
The founding generation of Trifari, Inc. were Gustave Trifari, Louis Krussman and Carlton Fishel. Their sons, Gus Jr., Louis Krussman and Carlton Fishel succeeded their fathers in the 1950's and later, in 1975, sold the business to Hallmark, Inc. The predecessors of the jewelry business were makers of hairgoods who changed their product mix when women cut their hair!

The business remained relatively small, although very profitable, until the sale to Hallmark, Inc.

Included in the interview are interesting facts concerning the financing and promotion of jewelry businesses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>Start-up of business: Trifari, Krussman and Fishel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>Personal background of C. Fishel; entry into business; description of early jewelry collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 8</td>
<td>Impact of WWII on business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 10</td>
<td>Growth post-WWII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>1952 second generation took over from fathers. Promotion of jewelry. Trifari, Inc. was sold in 1975 to Hallmark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 16</td>
<td>Financing the business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>Brief description of jewelry firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 22</td>
<td>Trifari, Inc. exports to England and other countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: Carlton, would you like to start with the story of your own personal background, and then the story of the firm and your own involvement with it?

A: Well, first I'd like to start with, as I know it, the start of the firm, which you've heard so much about. And this goes back before Trifari-Krussman, which was a predecessor, one of the predecessors of Trifari-Krussman & Fishel. Back in the, I guess around 1900, my father went with a firm called Rice & Hochster who were the biggest comb manufacturers in the country. Now, combs were very important in those days.

Q: Excuse me... Hochster was H-o-c-h-s-t-e-r.

A: Yes...

Q: Rice is...?

A: R-i-c-e.

Q: Thank you.

A: And... Spanish combs. Fancy combs. All that kind of thing women used. They had long hair, and they were very, very important, much more important than costume jewelry. They had many more people in their comb departments than they did in their costume jewelry department. Well, at one time, Mr. Trifari did some contract work for Rice & Hochster, and Mr. Krussman was with Rice & Hochster. And my father became the Vice President of that company, in charge of sales. My father used to go to Europe for them, to seek out styles, every year, and he went over and came back in the fall of '24 and he went to the President, Mr. Hochster, and he said, 'We're going to liquidate the business next year. And Hochster said, 'You're crazy. We have a very,
very profitable business." He said, "That's fine. But I just came from Paris. The women have bobbed their hair; there's no place to put a comb." And they liquidated, 100¢ on the dollar the next year. And my father was in his 50's then, or around 50, and was looking for something. And Leo Krussman called him—they'd always been good friends—and within 15 minutes, they had arranged a company—Trifari, Krussman & Fishel. To make some hair ornament things, because it wasn't completely dead, and costume jewelry. This is 1925. And while it was more or less a partnership, it was a corporation, my father being the older was President, and the other two were Vice Presidents. But they always considered themselves a partnership, with my father taking care of the sales end, Mr. Krussman being the administrator and the liaison, and Mr. Trifari being the factory man, and the designer at one time. And then I would imagine that Louie Krussman told you about the advent of Mr. Alfred Philippe, the designer.

Q: He did, but you tell me.

A: Well, he was with Sheer & Company, as I understand it, which were great manufacturing jewelers. They manufactured for Cartiers and Van Cleef & Arpels, and so forth.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: I have no idea. I wish I did. And he became our chief designer and had an interest in the business and was always treated as one of the firm until the day he retired. And was a tremendous designer. He was the one who really built the design end of Trifari, so that it became outstanding.
Q: He had originally been a designer of fine jewelry.
A: Fine jewelry, yes. With Sheer & Company. And he had been trained at...I think it's called Boule or something. One of the very fine jewelry schools in Paris. It draws fine artists. The business was very small. I was in college.

Q: What year were you born?
A: 1908...I'm a little bit older than my partners. I'm about seven years older than both my...Mr. Krussman and Mr. Trifari, who just died recently. And I had no intention of going into this business. My father said, "You know, this is a lousy business. If we could ever get it up to $1 million a year, it might be a decent business. But it's just too small." Well, I got out of college at the wrong time, in 1930, and went down to Wall Street, and watched it go from bad to worse. And in 1932, I decided I would see if my father would give me a job. And he was delighted to and I worked first as the...first I learned something about the factory, which was at 34th Street then. And then I was the office boy, because they had promoted the office boy to be a southern salesman, and in 1935 I was made the West Coast salesman, which meant from Denver west. Out of New York. And I'd go out there two or three times a year and travel 6 1/2-7 weeks at a time.

Q: Carrying a line with you.
A: Carrying the line with me. And, of course, you went by train in those days, selling.

Q: And what did the line consist of in those days?
A: It consisted...We were the rhinestone kings in those days. We had a very extensive line of rhinestones. Trays and cases of them.
Trunks...What we called brooches in those days--we call them pins today--clips, which were very big in those days. Clip earrings were just starting then, and that was a new item.

Q: Because women had had their ears pierced before that?
A: Well, up until then they wore screw back earrings. No-one had ever heard of a clip earring. That was quite new. And necklaces, bracelets, etc. But usually set...not much in sets, and we always had a feature line too. Rhinestones with colored stones, and we always had our colored stones made up specially for us, exclusively for us. They were beautiful. Anytime we ever had emeralds they'd always be flawed emeralds, because a real emerald is always flawed. The colors were magnificent.

Q: Do you remember the price range at all?
A: Sure...They'd range anywhere from...We had merchandise in those days anywhere...I remember we had a pair of clips for $6.75 a dozen, to retail for $1, and we went up to maybe $20, $30 retail, which was very high in those days. Our features would range probably from $5-$25-$35. I will never forget--I don't know whether this is extraneous or not, but I traveled so long that I remember going up to...They gave me, in 1936, they decided I should include Minneapolis and St. Paul and Kansas City in the far West, just giving me a little more to do. So I went to Minneapolis on the first trip. It was in the fall of the year, and we had a feature line--I don't remember the name of it--but they had the most beautiful oblong, square cut stones, and we had to make emerald, ruby and sapphire. They were absolutely magnificent. And the ruby was a pigeon blood ruby. A beautiful imitation.
And that was really the feature that was the smart....So I went up there and I did a pretty good job and I sewed up the whole town and sold them all the rubies. And I went back the next spring, did more business than we'd ever done in the town before. I came back, and I had every piece of the ruby left. The little sapphire I sold them. They sold. Because this was a Scandinavian place, Minneapolis, and anything in blue sold. So we had to take all the pieces back and change them. Because these weren't glued stones; they were prong set in those days. And we changed them all to sapphire and everybody was happy.

Q: So this really had nothing to do with a fashion trend. It just happened.

A: The fashion trend was a ruby, but up there...It just showed how provincial places were in those days. Which wouldn't happen today. We were the first people to ever advertise jewelry. Costume jewelry. And we started then...I don't remember the exact year, but I would say it was around 1938 or '39 that we started to advertise. In magazines. And we ran a couple of black and whites and didn't like that at all and went to four color advertising. We were the first people that did that. And built up quite a reputation for ourselves by so doing. And another thing that happened, during that period--Jewelry became unfashionable.

Q: In the mid to late '30s you mean?

A: This is around the late thirties. The late thirties. I think it was during that time. I think it was before the war. I get a little confused. And my father and Mr. Krussman got a hold of a woman named June Hamilton Rose, who was a very clever publicity woman. And got the rest
of the industry interested, and we started an industry-wide campaign to publicize costume jewelry. In other words, to try to get Vogue and Harper's, whenever they'd show anything, to show jewelry. The department stores, when they made up their window displays, put jewelry in them. Put it on the models. We constantly were giving jewelry to advertising agencies. Be sure that on the Camel ads and the Fisher body ads, there'd be jewelry accessorizing. And it succeeded. She did a splendid job. Of course, when we got the thing going again, then everybody else in the industry dropped out and we had it for a while, and then we had to drop out, really, because we weren't big enough at the time.

World War II started and we had nothing but sterling silver to make. We couldn't use our white metal. It was tin and antimony and tin was a critical material for the war effort. We had all our own molds, which were in copper and brass, a lot of the tools and dies. We gave them all up to the war effort so that we had none of those old tools left after the war, and we had to manufacture in sterling. And the traumatic shock of our first line in sterling was really something.

Q: Yes. Actually, Louis mentioned that there was a certain apprehension that you would not be able to sell that because it was so much higher than the line ordinarily had been, and that everybody was delighted and surprised that the sterling silver sold very well. So, I think he documented that story.

A: He did document that. That's fine...So, from then on it was just a matter of quotas, and I suppose he mentioned that. All through the war, everyone had a quota. And every firm...We'd give them a $1,000 for six
months you know, and that's all we could give them.

Q: You mean the stores.

A: The stores. We'd give them a quota, and it was completely a seller's market. And we had an item during the war known in people's stock as the Trifari crown. It was very, very famous. I don't know if Louis told you the great poem that was written about it later.

Q: I don't think so.

A: Well, it went something like this. "My dear wife adores me; calls me the real thing. I gave her a crown, which makes me a king. Now she sings during the day as would a canary. My God, how I love this guy called Trifari."

Q: Who wrote that?

A: A man by the name of Hall, who was an entertainer, primarily, from Detroit, who... We knew him and he wrote it. We always thought it was rather clever. But it was... The demand far exceeded the supply all through World War II, and we did one thing... And I don't know whether Louis mentioned this or not. But when the first line came down and we were very dubious about the prices, and we marked as close as we could. And then it sold very well.

Q: That was the sterling silver?

A: We were not going to take more than our normal markup on anything, and all through the war we weren't going to gouge. We were going to give a fair price. And as a result, we built up a reputation for having the finest quality, the best price per quality, of any company, and we built up an enormous reputation, right through this country and
South Americans who came up at that time. One of the things they'd HAVE to get hold of was Trifari jewelry. Finally, after the war, we went back to our regular metals again, and started our designing. Then just after the war, we ran into a lot of problems on design piracy. We'd make something and the first thing we'd know, it was knocked off. We'd always had that problem, but before the war we'd always used design patents, which took forever to get. And then, by the time you got the patent, the whole fashion was finished. Well, we worked with our attorney, and we decided that we could use copyrights. We did a lot of research on it, and we copyrighted all our designs. The first case we had we pursued very diligently and went to court, and it held up. So we were the first people, in fact we were the originators, of the idea of copyrighting jewelry designs; and it's been done ever since. And it had a fair amount of teeth in it because we didn't collect millions or anything at the time, but we stopped an awful lot of people.

Q: About how much volume are you doing by the end of the Second World War?

A: Oh, we were doing as much as we could. We were doing well over a million at that time. We were privately held. Well, the growth occurred as soon as we were not on a quota anymore, where we had enough material. And we came out of World War II with an enormous reputation. Now, being in sales, I could be very conscious of this. I would walk into a department store, back in the thirties and early forties and I'd say I was from Trifari, and the sales girl would say, "Well, I think the buyer might be around," and I'd wait around all morning, trying to get an appointment, you know, as so often happens.
I couldn't really believe it. I went out around 1946 to do some good will work, because there was no selling to be done then. I really started selling in '47 again. And the number of people who wanted to open accounts with us. And the minute I walked into the department store, and the sales girl would in a very disinterested voice ask me who I was, and the minute they saw my card, they couldn't get to the phone fast enough. The buyer couldn't come down fast enough. That was the difference. We had an enormous reputation, and we could have sold much more than we did but we couldn't produce it. We were trying to get back into production again. So we did an enormous business.

Then, another funny one. I don't know whether it's history but... One of our salesmen had a contact with somebody, I don't know exactly how it came about, but there was this independent grocer's association--IGA--very, very big organization. National. And they had an idea to promote, and what they were going to do was to give costume jewelry away to anyone who bought so much in groceries at one time. And this was a great idea for them, and it was going all over the country. And we thought it might be interesting, because we could make up special designs, and it wouldn't interfere with anything. And I went to Chicago to tie this thing up and saw them--and I think this was something like a minimum of $200,000 and a maximum of a million--something like that. It was enormous then. We're all set to carry this thing out, and the Korean war started and we couldn't get any more material, and had to drop the whole thing.

Q: Gracious. And by that time, your volume had grown...

A: Well, it was growing all the time. Yeah. It grew over
the years. And we stepped up our advertising after the war and our publicity. Mr. Krussman and Mr. Trifari both died in 1952. My father, who was considerably older, wasn't too well. And was a man in his upper sixties-seventies, then, and so in '52, I got away from traveling. I became a Vice President of the company along with Louis Krussman and Gus Trifari, and we really ran the business from then on, with my Dad's advice—he was the President. Still remained as President. And he had marvelous ideas. We would listen to him, although he was not... He was more in an advisory capacity.

Q: How many salesmen did you have at that time?
A: Oh, we started... Maybe at that time, maybe five or six, which developed into maybe 23-25.

Q: And was Mr. Philippe still your designer?
A: Oh, yes. He was the designer until the mid-sixties, when he retired. And then his son was with us until recently. We had very much of a family business. A family oriented business. And a very personalized business. And I, having always been interested in the sales end, and Louis Krussman followed more or less in his father's end, administration and liaison, working with the designers. And Mr. Trifari being the factory man, making the goods. And while Louis and I were... I mean, he sold and I sold... My interest primarily was in selling, and we would be alter egos, if one was away and the other was home. But primarily that's how it broke down. And I'll say one thing. My father had the greatest sense of publicity. He was a great salesman himself and marvelous at publicity. And in the early fifties he got... He was a man of 75, and he got interested in Eisenhower, and he had been a pretty sick man. But he got so interested he was working like a
beaver for him. And then we made the jewelry for Mrs. Eisenhower at both inaugural balls. Which was an enormous amount of publicity. It certainly enhanced our reputation. We never sold one of those sets but we made replications and we had them shown in store windows. Another thing, I have to go back every now and then. But speaking of other publicity, back in the thirties, we used to do jewelry for shows, and I think....

Q: Designer's shows or...?
A: No, for...
Q: Store shows.
A: No. Theatre.
Q: Oh, oh. For theatre!
A: The first one we ever did was "The Great Waltz." It opened at the City Center, I think. It was opposite the Music Hall. It flopped. But at that time they were going to do big shows there. But the day the show opened, Magnin's had a window in Los Angeles and in...or rather in San Francisco and Bulloch's Wilshire in Los Angeles, and Neiman-Marcus in Dallas and Saks Fifth Avenue in New York, of all the jewelry in the show, with photographs, you know, from the chorus and the principals. And naturally we sold the jewelry. And it was very successful. We did it for several shows. One of the biggest we ever did was for "Roberta," which was a fashion show anyhow. And we...It was very good business for us. Then...I guess it was around the mid-fifties, later fifties....Our business was on a...growing...And then a little drop off and then it would go way up again. But there was a lull where jewelry became unsmart to wear. Television had come in
the naked look had come in, and every gal who appeared on television would wear a strapless dress with nothing up here, you know. And that didn't help jewelry very much. And again, this time I helped start this, and we got the Fashion Coordination Institute started. And I forget the gal's name that we hired, but we got most of the big companies. And that went on for a few years. But as usual, we had an industry in which nobody could ever do anything for the industry. It was always... What kinds of designs can we get, or what can we pirate, and so forth. And we were trying to be very constructive, and have it on a just complete publicity basis. But these firms would come in and say, "Well, this is all right, but I think that we ought to make up our minds what we're each going to make every season, and then we can all make the same thing." Well, that was about the end of that organization. Because these people were only in there to find out what we were going to make, and a few other people like us, and they would copy us. You know, ideas.

Q: You're saying that they weren't really, basically, fashion people.

A: They weren't fashion people. We had to get every... How many fashion people there were were very, very small and they were so individual they wouldn't think of joining in anything for the industry. We were trying to do something for the entire industry.

Q: In terms of publicity and...

A: Yes. Publicity and fashion. In other words, to... I will say one thing. At that time, the man who did more to bring jewelry back...
And I must hand it to him, is... What's the matter with me? Ah...?

Q: The man who did the most to bring fashion back was Kenneth Lane.

A: I see that he had done a great deal, because he brought these great big, long droopy earrings. He brought them out and they became very fashionable, and it started a great trend toward more ornate dressing. And I must hand it to him.

Q: That's very interesting. Because that wasn't so very many years ago either. Was it?

A: This was in the late fifties, early sixties.

Q: And you're saying that, really, before that there were...

A: For a while there was just all this naked look. Oh, we used to have meetings with the heads of Vogue and Harper's and they would try to do the best they could. And things started to come back. And, of course, Lane did do a very good job there. But I think this Fashion Coordination Institute got it started. But when business got a little bit better, as I said, they all dropped out again. It's a very funny industry.

Q: What ideas did you and your partners have about the succession within the business? Did you discuss the future of the business?

A: We always discussed the future of the business, and we had a pretty strong family succession in there. I had no sons. I had a son-in-law who was in there, and Mr. Krussman had nephews, a nephew or two in there. And Mr. Trifari had his brother in there, and his son, and... But...

Q: You mean Mr. Trifari, Sr.?

A: No. Gus Trifari, in my generation, his brother was in
there. Bob. And then Bob's son and Gus's son were called in. Quite a bit of family.

Q: Yes. But nonetheless, you decided to sell.

A: Yes. We decided to sell. Right. I think with any private corporation sometimes you can't help it, with the taxes and everything else.

Q: Yes. But it's interesting, historically, what happens to businesses. Why some can go on and others just drop out. And certainly in the...

A: Well, I think we sold at a very good time.

Q: You sold it, actually, in...?

A: '75. And here again, we'd just gone through a so-called "depression" year, '74, and it was one of the biggest years we ever had. Because jewelry was in fashion, and we've always claimed that if it was in fashion, it wasn't the times that made costume jewelry. I think possibly it's a little different today. Because prices are so high, with inflation coming in. But until the '70s you could get some pretty darn nice jewelry anywhere from $3 to $20-$25 and up. But I mean, some very nice things in those popular prices.

Q: Wholesale.

A: No.

Q: Retail prices.

A: Sure.

Q: But I assume, as you did sell, it was partly because it was favorable financially, but also, perhaps, because by then...
A: Well, we were getting older, and we thought that our, you know, that our younger generation, we thought we'd trained them pretty well.

Q: But they did not want to go on in that way?
A: No, they didn't. Well, they did, but evidently Hallmark had different ideas. It appears they wanted to run a business with completely different people than we did. But look, it's their business.

Q: But at the point where you sold it, where the three of you decided to sell, I would assume that you found the advantages of selling outweighing the disadvantages.

Q: Now, we haven't discussed at all--nor had I with Louis Krussman--anything about the financing of this kind of business. I'm not familiar with it...
A: Well, it's very interesting as far as the financing is concerned. For many years we never borrowed a nickel from the banks...

Q: You started the business with your own money?
A: Uh huh. And for many, many years...I don't know too much about back in the thirties because I was out on the road. I wasn't one of the partners or anything at the time. But for years we rented space, always, and I remember my father and Mr. Krussman saying, "You know, maybe we ought to borrow some money so that the banks will give us some line of credit at the banks." But we never needed it. And we financed everything. We were very conservative, and Trifari made money every year of its existence.
Even the time—I guess Mr. Krussman told you—we moved the factory from New York to Providence because there was a strike. And we made money that year. And the first time that we ever had to borrow any money, really, was when we built our factory up there. That year.

Q: So that you didn't take over space that was already set up.

A: No, no. We had rented. And we moved several times in Providence, and we had this place on Chapman Street there, and then we kept getting more space and more space. We started with a floor, and then two floors and then the whole building. And then we had a... There was a supermarket in the front, and we cut into that. They were cut in half, and they rented us the space. And it was a hodge podge. But, we had a fair amount of space but it wasn't the most efficient space. And then we finally decided to build, and we considered that... We bought the property, oh, back in '52 I guess. But we never built until, oh, I guess it was in the sixties. Around '66. And then we weren't sure we were going to build, and we finally did build, where we had bought the property.

Q: And for that you did borrow money.

A: Of course. Which was paid back in 10 years. So we were... We were always a very conservative business. I guess we're conservative by nature.

Q: Yes... Tell me. In a market where there were three dominant firms—Trifari, Napier and Monet...

A: They were later.
Q: Later.
A: Yes. In other words, when I was early in the business, there was one dominant firm which was Core. They were enormous. They made the cheaper goods, but they were enormous. They used to...They ran the whole thing. And Monet was just starting. Then Mazer Brothers was a very good firm at that time. But...Go ahead...with the three firms.
Q: Yeah. So, Coro went out?
A: They finally went out of business. They were sold to...
Q: Was it Richton?
A: Yes. Richton. I think they're out of business now. A very well known firm at that time was D. Lissner Company. Yes. A well known firm.
Q: Because this is an industry in which there have been only a few large firms, and then, I assume, that there were others but they have been much smaller.
A: Oh, yes. Yes.
Q: So that...It's been rather difficult to get a handle on some of this...
A: There have been very few. And the last 15-20 years, it has been Monet and Napier. But Napier has been in business for years.
Q: Did all of you start in the notions business? Is that the background, do you think, of most of these firms?
A: Well, I don't remember. I think most of the firms came out of Coro.
Q: Oh, really.
A: A lot of them. And Lissner. They were the two oldest firms.

Q: And did Trifari come out of...

A: No, no. I told you that Trifari came...

Q: Yes, but I just wondered whether Mr. Trifari himself...

A: No, no.

Q: Right. Well... Would you talk a little bit about the business that you did abroad, which must be a rather special story, because export has not been one of the prime targets of the fashion industry.

A: Well, I may go into a long story. This again was an awful lot of hearsay as far as I'm concerned, but I've heard it so many times, from my father. But... He went over to England to sell. This was around.... probably in the late '20s. Maybe... I guess it was the late '20s. And, as he said, he was getting no place fast. And one day he had a letter of introduction to a man, I think in some apparel or textile business. And he wasn't busy, so he went up and spoke to the man, and the man said, "You know, I have a brother who might be very interested. He is the Managing Director of Ciro Pearls in London." And so, he said, "Fine," and he called the man the next day and he said, "Well, I'll come over and take a look." So, Mr. Penney came over and took a look, with his assistant, and he'd say to my father, "Well, how much is this?" And he'd say, "Well, it can't be that inexpensive." And he'd say, "Well it is." They were used to buying sterling silver from Forzheim and this was white metal.

Q: Forzheim.
A: Forzheim is the center...the jewelry center in Germany. It's where all the Christian Dior jewelry is made, there. Today. So they called all their people over and they had a big conference, and he said, "Now, I want you to know one thing. Anything we buy we have to have exclusively for the British Isles." And they put an awful lot of stuff aside. And he said, "I'll just give you the pieces. I won't show them to anybody." And he says, "Well, I hate to tell you this, but we've made most of our commitments. But would you consider doing this if we bought a gross of each item?" Well, this was enormous in those days. So he came back with this huge business from England, and from there. The merchandise tarnished the next year! It was before rhodium finish was invented. It is the finish they put on silver colored jewelry so that it's always non-tarnishable. It's a very, very hard thing.

Q: Is this silver plate we're talking about?

A: No. Much harder than silver plate. Because silver plate won't stand up. Rhodium plate will. All the rhinestone jewelry today is rhodium plated. And always has been since that time.

Q: What I mean to say is, they use that on metal, on base metal?

A: On base metal. Oh, sure. And about a year later, or two years later, rhodium finish was invented and we had it. Got it immediately. Then my father went back there, and from then on, why Ciro was an enormous account. And we sold...We'd go over there every year and we sold Harrods, and we sold many firms, you know. And after the war, we were on a quota,
because we'd sold them quite a bit of stuff before the war. And we were allowed to export a little, but only enough for Ciro's, and then a little for Harrods. And in 1960, in November...I guess it was at the end of '59, they said the first of '60, they would permit imports, and I went over with two trunks of jewelry at that time, and started up that business again. It has not been as big as it was before World War II. There's been too much competition really, and the English are so very...You know. They've had a pretty rough time since that time, and they haven't got the buying power. It's too expensive.

Q: Are there any other American jewelry firms that do exports?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: T-ey do?

A: Oh, sure.

Q: That's interesting.

A: Oh, we've sold all over the world, at Trifari. I don't say in huge quantities. We've sold a lot of Japan in the '70s.

Q: So they don't just buy....They don't just buy licenses. They actually buy...do direct importing.

A: They used to do direct importing. I know when I was in business....I don't know what they're doing today. We sold all over. We had an account in Lebanon at that time. And we had accounts...We sold a little in Paris, not an awful lot. A little in Italy, a little in Spain. Then I suppose Mr. Krussman mentioned to you about the Majorica pearls. Or didn't you
mention that at all? Well, that's a whole other story....

Trifari had always been in the pearl business. They made very lovely pearls. But we did recognize the fact that the finest pearls was the Majorica pearls made by a company by the name of Heusch.

Q: Do you know how to spell it?
A: H-e-u-s-c-h. And he finally...We got the franchise in this country. And these were pearls that were...The sheen was just marvelous. The lustre was just marvelous. The wearing quality was...And it is the first time that imitation pearls were sold, really, by the inch. And we almost custom made pearls for people. We'd have standard lengths...Say, a 16" necklace knotted, always. But if someone wanted a 17", we would do a special order, and we would charge by the inch. And we would also give people a choice of clasp, if they wanted it. And we gave stores a complete booklet and promotion on it.

Q: Now, these were not sold as Trifari...
A: Not at all. Because we had the Trifari pearls, and this was only sold as Majorica. Separate advertising campaign; separate everything, except the same salesman.

Q: And when Trifari was sold, the Majorica firm was sold with it.
A: No, we gave it up just about then. It was given up, just about that time. There was no...The franchise was sold. We didn't own the company, we just had the franchise. And when we gave it up, I believe...I don't know what they do today...But I believe they took it on themselves.
The company. Which had also changed. But it's still a fantastic pearl.

Q: Very good. Thank you very much...Just one final question. At the time that the firm functioned, in the last few years, what were your positions?

A: I was Chairman of the Board, Louis Krussman was President, and we were Co-Chief Executive Officers, and Gus Trifari was Executive Vice President.

Q: Thank you very much.
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE FASHION INDUSTRIES

Transcripts housed in Special Collections:

1. No photocopying without written permission from the oral author or his designee. The Director of the Library will furnish addresses; the reader must write for permissions.

2. Written permission is needed to cite or quote from a transcript for publication. The user must send the Library Director the pertinent pages of final draft; the Director will assist in obtaining the final permission. The form of citation normally used is: "The Reminiscences of ______, (dates), pages ______, in the Oral History Collection of The Fashion Institute of Technology."
   No fees will be charged for published use.
   User is asked to furnish Oral History Program with a copy of the published work.

3. In order to see PERMISSION REQUIRED or CLOSED memoirs, the reader must obtain the written permission of the oral author or his designee. Contact the Library Director for addresses. The reader writes for permissions. Written permission if obtained must be presented when the reader visits.