THE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, F.I.T.

THE FASHION INDUSTRY LEADERS

(ORAL HISTORY OF F.I.T.)

ELEANOR FRIED

DIRECTOR OF PLACEMENT

AT

THE FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Interviewed by

Mildred Finger
Q. ...for the Fashion Institute of Technology and specifically for the project which is the history of the school itself, this will be an interview with Professor Eleanor Fried, who was the head of placement, the Director of Placement, from 1947 to 1973, when she retired, and retained the title of Professor Emeritus.

Eleanor, you started here, technically, in 1947, but you had done some work for the school before that, had you not?

A. Yes. Actually I became acquainted with F.I.T. because I had put in a new placement office in the High School of Needle Trades, of which Mortimer C. Ritter was the Principal. And it was he who dreamed a dream of the Fashion Institute of Technology, which was born, as you know, in 1944. And when I set up the placement office in 1944 I came over, regularly, to supervise it and to confer with Dr. Ritter. And during that period he discussed placement with me. I became more and more interested in the college. And so in 1947 I actually moved from my job ...

Q. Which was what?

A. I was a manager in the New York State Employment Service, a job I liked very much. And while I was very interested in F.I.T., I must admit that one of the reasons that I moved was that I could not work out a part-time arrangement where I was. And, as Mr. Ritter wanted me to come, he agreed that I could try this out on a part-time basis. So I moved into F.I.T. in the old building, where the high school was, in the fall of 1947.

Q. Now. Let's stop for a moment and go back. Because I'd like really to know how you got started in the field of placement. In fact, why
don't we go back to when you were born, and what you did as a child?

A. Do we have time for all that?

Q. Yes. We do.

A. Well, I was born right here in New York City, and...

Q. In what year?

A. In 1913. And I guess when I was about two or two and a half we moved out to Long Island and I...first to Hollis and then we moved to Jamaica. I went to Jamaica High School, and then I went to Barnard College and graduated from Barnard in the Depression in 1933.

Q. Did you have any notion of what you would like to do if you had your choice?

A. No. I was really a typical liberal arts student. I had no specialized interests. I was very interested in working and having a career, in the very broad sense. And when I graduated from Barnard I was very fortunate in getting a job through the college placement office with the New York Times in a new department that was called the School Promotion Department, and I stayed there for two years. And it was a wonderful job. First of all, any job was wonderful during the Depression, but this was an interesting job as well. But the interest in it diminished somewhat in the second year where it wasn't....I realized that we were doing more in relation to circulation of the Times than in the educational area. And so I left. And actually I pinpoint that period to a very key development for me in my interest in the whole field of employment. Because, really, at that time I sat down and analyzed
what a good job hunting campaign would be, without verbalizing it to myself. But I really planned how to go about job hunting. It really was effective. And the basic principles of that have stayed with me and I can now talk about it very much more professionally. But I really did proceed along the lines that I later on advised students to do.

So, I went into...I was offered more than one job. One was in the glamorous field of radio. But I was also offered one with the New York State Employment Service. And because it was the Depression, and because I really had led a life where, though I knew about unemployment, I had never faced it either for myself or for the people I knew. And I thought it was a time for me to take that kind of a job. It was supposed to be temporary. I went in and I was working with young people primarily, at a time where you might interview 50 people in the day and possibly get two jobs. Maybe then they'd only be messenger jobs; stock boy jobs. And I stayed with the New York State Employment Service for 12 years, getting more responsibility and getting a great deal of job satisfaction. I really had found a field of work that interested me very much. And as I have pointed out, I moved from there to F.I.T.

Q. Had you developed a specialized area of employment?

A. No. One of the lucky things for me in the employment service...there were two lucky things. When I started, I was put in what they called the Junior Division. And way, way back then the person who was the staff person responsible for the development of that program was
very concerned about training, and he really had excellent exposure, very good training for all aspects of employment, career planning and methods of interviewing. So I really got a very good on-the-job training. I was able in those 12 years to ....Certainly if you're working with young people, as I was in the early days or a good part of it, you must be exposed to all aspects because you're interviewing people who do not have specialized interests. Well, I learned about a large range of occupations, and as I gained more experience and took more civil service tests and was promoted, I did have supervisory, considerable supervisory responsibility. And my last job was in what you would call...What is now called the Apparel Industries Office, and I was there for several years. So I did come to F.I.T. with a background in that industry.

Well, I think, Mildred, if I might point out one of the unique things that I think I brought to F.I.T., was the very fact that I was not myself interested in F.I.T. as a college for me. I didn't have any of the specialized interests in design or merchandising or any of the aspects that F.I.T. is so well known for. But what I was interested in was coming to a college that cared about placement and career planning, and I certainly couldn't have found one that was more amenable to that than F.I.T.

But I think one of the things that I brought that was very healthy for the college was this broad liberal arts approach of not having students become over specialized. The whole time I was at F.I.T., this
was something that I emphasized in training staff, in working with students, and as much as I could, in working with faculty. In other words, if a student comes in and says, "I've majored in design, I really don't feel I necessarily want to go on. I took a course in merchandising, or something else, that interests me much more..." I wanted the placement office set up so that there would be no problem with that student being able to try jobs in different areas. And the danger to me (and occasionally I ran into this with the individual faculty members) where a faculty member who was very specialized and had to be, might feel that student was in a sense failing if she or he did not keep to a particular area of specialization that he had selected.

Now, human beings have so many potentials for different kinds of careers, that to me it's healthy to keep the options open. And the training that we get, that we give people here at F.I.T. is transferrable to...certainly within this broad field of fashion, to different aspects. And that I think is a contribution I made.

And the other one that I started right at the beginning was that I felt the placement office had to be integrated into the faculty medium. And especially when we were small, I was involved with curriculum planning, not that I would ever have the final word, because I wasn't a teacher. But that I could give them the input from industry. I could evaluate and even test some of the ideas that they had by discussing it with employers. So it was a very good arrangement for me when I came as far
as being able to apply some of the principles that I felt were important in the whole field of career planning.

Q. What was the nature of the school body when you first arrived at the school? As I understand it, there were about 100 students.

A. Yes. There were 100 students. When I got there in the fall of '47, the first class had graduated in '46, and of course I knew about them because I had been visiting the school. I don't know the exact number; it wasn't very much larger. A little bit larger.

There were some very good students. The management program, which was a new and unique program in the college for the apparel industry, had some outstanding students. We were getting back some veterans, who were older. We also had some very bright young ones. Careful recruiting had been done for this new program, so that we had some students, say, from Stuyvesant High School and Brooklyn Tech, some very outstanding students as well as some of these veterans. And as you probably know, from what you know of the college, we had Apparel Design, Textile Design, and Millinery Design. Plus, the Management...I'm trying to think if Fashion Illustration was a major at that time too.

Q. I don't know. But I think fashion buying and merchandising...

A. No. I'm very much aware of when that was born. That wasn't born then; it was later. Several years later. In fact...Well, I guess we still were in the old building but it was not in those early days.

And, of course, as far as you're interested in the placement office, my commenting on that...Or did you want to...?
Q. I was interested in the student body from your point of view.

A. Oh, right....

Q. Were they young, middle aged...

A. Oh, they were all young...

Q. There were veterans...

A. They were all young except in the management program, and the management program wasn't that large so we weren't overwhelmed with veterans. But I can still remember them. I could name them to you... Some of the men in those early classes--'47, '48, '49--were outstanding and stimulated the younger people. Because believe me when these veterans came they meant business. They wouldn't allow any fooling around.

They had good students in the other classes...My recollection of them, in the design areas, was of a good group. There was a very good admissions director--Marian Brandriss--who was somebody who was one of the founders and one of the key people in the development of F.I.T. And Marian's ability to select was excellent...

Q. And these were all high school...

A. These were all high school students.

Q. None from liberal arts schools.

A. No...Well, I mean, they came with whatever liberal arts they had in high school. This was way before the college program where you took on students with previous college. Mary would know better than I on this, but I do not recollect that we had any students at that time who had
previous college. That would have just been a fluke. But...Really, one of the lovely things about those early days was that I got to know all the students, even if I didn't place them myself. Because I... placed only some of them and had a colleague, Beatrice Zelin who was a teacher...

Q. How do you spell that?

A. Z-e-l-i-n. Bea taught in the apparel design department, and she was assigned a half of her day to work in the placement department. And as she taught apparel design, it was only natural that she would be the person to do that placement. And she also took care of the millinery design. Whereas I took over the management...which was a very special challenge to me; this brand new program.

Q. Now, what courses were given in management...

A. Oh, don't get me started on this, because I...It's a basic engineering program, as applied to the apparel industry, and it was the first such program in the country really. And so they were not only pioneers, the students who went out, but we had to introduce the idea to employers. And the placement was something that I watched very carefully. I arranged with employers to come in so they could see the program in action. And to carefully follow up with them the progress of the students.

Q. How many people were involved in teaching this kind of...?

A. Well, in this program...There were two people in the management department at that time. One might even have been part time. We had a
very good, bright engineer who was the Chairman... Somebody had to be the Chairman. And then I think he hired... He made him full time or part time, the other person. That's how it started. You know, for you seeing this large institution now... As you're talking to me, I'm now envisioning how it was in my young days, it was an entirely different thing.

And yet, you know, there are certain basic things that are not different. The management program is basically the same program. In fact, the fashion design program undoubtedly is, with specializations that come from there, but the basic approach, I think, was started and was successful enough that it has continued as before at F.I.T.

Q. What was the percentage of male-female?
A. Oh! Very female oriented. The Management, however, was primarily male. I think we wanted to have women then, and once in a rare while there would be a woman, but it was very rare. Just the same as it was very rare to have women engineers in any field, and this was the basic approach--engineering applied to the softgoods industry.

Q. So, 75 women to 25 men--is that the...
A. No, I would say the percentage was probably higher. I would think it would be 80-20. I don't know. Again, I think these are figures that would be easily found. There were a few men in the design department. A few. But as the management department was a small one, even though there were males there, they did not raise the percentage terribly high.
Q. And the women (who I assume for the most part were young women) came from a variety of high schools...

A. Right. But they were all local high schools.

Q. But they were people who really had decided this was going to be their vocation.

A. Yes. The people who came to F.I.T. had a serious interest in design even if they didn't know what all went into what design meant. But they thought they wanted to be fashion designers or textile designers or millinery designers, and some of those specialized interests might have developed when they were being interviewed. Let's say they just knew... One of the things that you'd find... A young woman coming in probably had made her own doll clothes. She gradually began to make some things for herself. She liked clothes. She looked at fashion magazines. But there were certain things in her background that related to this field. And you can go into this with Mrs. Brandriss much more carefully, as to some of things that she found and what she found to be indices of their genuine interest in this field. Some of them came having liked this kind of field and not really liking liberal arts, and this was a way they could go on to college but not have to take liberal arts. And if I might divert just a minute, one of the other things that was very exciting to me--again, as a liberal arts person without that specialized was that some students would come to me and say, almost shamefacedly, "You know, I came in because I wanted technical work, but I've gotten interested in English, Social Studies, the history of Art, and I think I
I will go on for more of that." And I would think, "Bully for them." But frequently this type of student, who would come in, would be saying now, "If I leave, if I go on to college, will I get a better job than you could get me now?" And I never made it easy for them. Because, in truth, frequently, I could get them a job now that would be a good job. And so I would always turn back to them and ask why they were going on to college, and hoped that they would be able to arrive (and I never said to them, "If you go to college you're going to get a better job."), but I would say....Let's take, in later years, a merchandising student, a student who can get on an executive training program, or a management student...I had three good jobs at least for every good student... "I can get you this kind of job right now." Because I could, without their going on. If you say to me, "Will I benefit from college?" You have to decide what the benefits are. When you say, "in the long run, will the future education help me on my job," then I'm going to have to give you a different answer. But if you're asking me if specifically now you're going to be able to get a good job, the answer is yes. And therefore you have to look at college in a different way. And I think this is why I think students should...They don't have to be embarrassed about wanting to learn more. And that's really what going to college is. And in the long run, it would help their career. And of course there are places immediately who will only take a four year graduate. Macy's for example. That was one of the things that I worked very, very hard....When the merchandising department started, that was the first thing I did. Because
I talked this over with the President before Jeannette Jarnow was here, or anything. We talked about the program, and I knew enough about the executive training programs to know that with all the great ideas that everybody had, to get a two year student, a two year college student into an executive training program was very difficult, if at all possible at that stage. So I said that the first thing I wanted to do was to invite all the personnel people (and I knew a good many of them) to a breakfast, where we presented a program. And I at that point offered to come around and see each one, each of the stores individually. I asked them if they would invite me so I could explain what the program was and how we were going to work. As I did that (and many of them did invite me), I asked this of the stores. I said, "If you interview two people; one is a two year college graduate and one is a four year college graduate, and the four year college graduate seems more mature to you, has a more outgoing personality that you feel is necessary for your program; has at least as good grades or better than the other, I would be very surprised if you didn't hire that student over the other. All I ask is that you interview them individually, and I will bet you that some of our two year graduates will measure up in maturity and the depth of their interest." You see, the thing that I had to sell from F.I.T. was that these merchandising students were vocationally mature. They had selected this field; they knew by the time they graduated, really, much more clearly than many of the liberal arts graduates that these stores had their tongues hanging
out to get, and it was really on that basis that gradually I began to get the stores....Because when they really approached them as individuals, they did find that we had some outstanding ones. Even occasionally Macy's. Very rarely, but....And Bloomingdale's. Bloomingdale's, Macy's and A&S were the three toughest. At A&S we were able...Again, it depends on the personnel people and how closely we could work...And we worked particularly closely with A&S's and were able...And what they began to find was that these students were outstanding. That they were good in selecting...They didn't take people who didn't have great potential. So that...This is a long way around in answering your question about the type of students, but gradually you see, as we grew, we got students who became interested in pursuing college. And naturally they had some doubts as to whether they should or shouldn't. And a good many of them, I'm so pleased to say, did continue and went on to get not only their Bachelor's degree, but some went on beyond that.

Q. In the first years, let's say the first five years that you started this program of placement, can you remember, can you identify the areas in which they were most successful at being placed? Was it manufacturing apparel or fabric manufacturers, or which kind of people...?

A. Well, there again, you see, there were more people who studied apparel design. That was the largest program. So that there would be more who would be successful just proportionately. But you see, within each group, there...We, you know, developed...We did everything
possible to develop jobs in all areas, and so that there would be people, a certain percentage who would be successful in all areas. We started...We did a follow up right from the beginning of our students, so we did have a pretty good record of what happened to them. And I can't give you...

Q. Are those records still around?

A. Oh, I hope so. And the basic program has continued, of follow up. One of the things that happens when you start on a small scale and you don't have adequate staff...We didn't have...I didn't have a secretary or a clerk. We occasionally had...Some students gave a certain amount of time, I think two hours a week, and once in a while you would get a student who would come to the office and I would have them address envelopes. But what I established right away was that there are certain basic things that to me are essential in placement; that you cannot do placement without counseling, without job development, and without follow up. And I was determined that I was going to do that right away, but we had no staff to do any of these things, so therefore I had to devise ways of doing things with a minimum of clerical work. So I devised what I called my employment calendar letter, which could be xeroxed. And people said to me, "You can't send out something that looks not beautiful; that's not printed." And I said, "I cannot afford more, and this is the best we can do, and the content is right and this is what we're going to send out." So that when a student came through I would say, "Do you have time now just to address 25 envelopes?"
And there were 25 employers who got letters. And I established a statistical method... Don't forget, I came from the government, where keeping records in placement is very important. But, I could discard the 25 carbons I used to have to keep and just do what I felt were needed. So we devised methods...

Q. 25 carbons you had to keep if you continued to work for the government.

A. I was joking.

Q. I'm serious...

A. Well, not 25... But I would say certainly 6 or 7 at a time. But here, I had to devise a system that I could keep... So that I had records but they wouldn't take up too much time. Similarly with follow up. I insisted we do follow up of our placements immediately, and so again, this is the... First of all, I do not think anybody in my field can justify being in this without knowing what has happened to the people you place. Now, you can't do this on a perfect scale, but one of the things I feel you should do is to be in touch with students, certainly a year after they have been out. It's for two reasons: To find out what they are doing and to extend a hand if they need help. So I devised a double postcard, so that... It was simple to fill out. It was printed, of course, with what we needed, and they could easily send it back. If they did not respond, we would send another one. And then if they didn't respond, we would get on the phone. We might stay there in the evening, each one of us, until we got... And I would not settle for less than 90% return.
Which is not really...Believe me, I think it is the minimum that people should do. So the basic things that...

Q. Well, it sounds like a lot more than most....

A. Well, unfortunately a lot don't do it because it....But give us no credit; give them discredit. This is really the basic thing in doing job placement. So this...The advantage of starting without help is that you must devise schemes to do these things with the least possible help. And I really think that...I know that as we expanded and as we had staff and clerical help, I had a secretary.... Those basic things had worked. And while I improved them and our promotional material was much prettier, the basic principles that we followed continued, and I think that...I say this about placement, but I think this is true probably about all the departments; that you establish a certain core of doing things, and if it works, you can improve on it and you can expand it, but to make this college work, with the faculty and highly limited clerical staff...I think all of us had to devise ways that would be very practical. And I think it is good that people have to do it that way...

Q. Uh huh. So that they really know what's being done by somebody else.

A. Not only that...But that you will learn to make things lean; not have unnecessary steps.

Q. Well, how did you go about this? Did you take a directory of the apparel market and write to everybody in the apparel market?
A. Well, we did different things. There were trade associations...

First of all, the college itself had contacts. We had excellent people on the board. We had... Mortimer Ritter himself knew almost everybody in the industry who was a key person. But we had a lot of source material. Trade associations were very important. And it was a visiting kind of college. People would come in and I was always invited to meet them so that I would have direct ways... And I was encouraged by the President to invite people to the college. And that was such a handy thing. I could invite them to lunch, and as we grew I encouraged all of my staff to do this. When you can get an employer away from his premises......I used to say to an employer, "Give me an hour and a half. I'll feed you. I'll take you around and show you the college in action. I can even arrange some interviews for you. If you want an interview, the hour and a half would have to be extended." But I could....And he was away from his telephone. And so was I, when I was taking him around. So it was a nugget of time that was useful.

Also, we went out into the industry. Ideally, I would like to visit (I'm talking about it as if I'm still doing it), I would like to have visited every employer, on his premises. I would like every employer to have visited us. That was not possible, but we did as much of that as was possible. And therefore, you...Particularly with a new program...You've got to get the employers to understand what's going on. And F.I.T., even in those two floors that we had, was such a wonderful place to show off. The students were so interested that
it showed, and as you took people around, they felt some of the enthusiasm...

Q. At what point did you begin to add staff, because you've mentioned...

A. Gradually...Well, you know, when you ask that...It strikes me so funny...When I arrived I had had a pretty big staff when I was in the employment service and I had my own secretary and I had a statistical clerk...I really had some people to do the work. So I come to F.I.T., and if I wanted to have a letter typed...Say something is going out to an employer, obviously I didn't even have a typewriter. So my question was...And I went to Dean Snyder, whom I know you'll interview if you haven't...And I don't have to tell you how important she was...And my question was...At one point so and so would type this letter, and at another time it was another person, and that became a little awkward, as once I got into the work I developed more work, and so needless to say I was longing to have a secretary. And finally I prevailed and we got one, and that was a great, great help.

Well, as we...As the college was increasing the number of students it was taking in, obviously there was more work for the teachers and for the placement office, which I had to keep reminding them. More students meant more development of jobs, more interviewing. Because every student had to have considerable attention. It wasn't just one interview; it was a continuing relationship. So we gradually got more.
Then when the merchandising department started, that was quite a
...It was a small group; I think it was 18-20 at the beginning.
In that first class that was graduating; I can still see them. I
can still remember some of the students. And so then I was able
to get counselors. So, how would I get a counselor? I went to
Rosalind Snyder and said, "Rosalind, how much money can you squeeze out
so I can hire a counselor? I had to start with the money, and then
work backward."

Well, believe me, the money was so small...But what I then decided
I needed...I obviously couldn't get an experienced counselor...I
would take a college graduate; if she had graduate work, fine, but if
she didn't, if there was certain evidence that I could find of interest
in this field, that would hire her and train her. So I did, and this
was...You know, the beginning...And I think this was probably typical
of other departments. And then over the years there was a expansion
of student body, expansion of the faculty departments, and gradually we
became as a college more recognized. We became(I suppose as the budgets
became more substantial) we were gradually able to increase staff.
Never enough, you know, for your department. You always feel that you
could use more. But gradually we were able to assemble enough people
to do what I considered the absolute basic necessity for a placement
office in this college, and that was that every student would have a
counselor--a placement counselor--to whom he or she could come; could
have a relationship developed well before graduation. We were...The work study program was endemic to each of the majors at that point so that there was a great deal of time spent with the students, preparing them for co-op. . . . And when we started, co-op was part of every major, really. . .

Q. That hasn't continued...

A. No. But it continued a long time and it was a very important part of the college development... I don't know if it's been completely stopped. I've been away from it for eleven years. I assume it must be going on in merchandising. I can't believe it isn't. But if it isn't...There are some now that do have internship programs, and I guess those are nonpaid. And I'll tell you one of the reasons why it's very, very difficult to develop paying jobs for as many of the students as they have now...That's really the basic reason. But I...This is one of the things that we struggled very hard to do, and one of the questions I asked when I first came...Before I came, I asked the President--Ritter--what happens when a student is not placed on co-op? Well, his answer is, they're all placed. Well, I didn't argue with him, because as a placement person, I know there is no such thing as 100% placement. It's not possible, that everybody is always placed all the time. And so I thought I would conclude from that that there is a high percentage of people placed, and they hadn't had that many students, so I would find out for myself. And I did. And I knew, I found that I knew that there would be...If your co-op period started on a particular date and you wanted a certain kind of a job and couldn't get it and you weren't flexible enough to take another, whatever it was, or maybe there weren't
enough jobs, than some would not be working. One of the things that I started then, when the college was small...I had students come in when they weren't working and we had job-hunting discussions. I had them going out doing job hunting and reporting back. I considered this a perfectly acceptable part of co-oping. The only thing harder than working is job-hunting.

From that, because I feel so...Unfortunately, job hunting is something that most people do not know how to do. And I thought if we could put forth effort to assist students in this, it was a contribution.

So one of the things, I started (not immediately but two years later), I wanted every student to have a resume prepared by the time he or she was ready for interviews. And this was particularly important when we got to the point where we had on-campus recruitment. Which started really...particularly with the merchandising students, when I would get a lot of stores in. Then I would have management-employers coming in. Other employers too. Once we got it going...And it was very important for them to have a resume, and so I expected myself and each counselor to work with students; to have each bring in a draft of a resume. We would go over it. We wouldn't write it for them, but we would go over it, give them a critique, and then they would have their final resume ready. And as I've said always about resumes, it isn't just the written paper. That's a handy tool. But if you've really done your homework in preparing your resume, you are therefore better prepared for job hunting. You know the
story of yourself, in relation to what you want; attempting to clarify what your goal is, because you want to put it down on paper. But you have to think about it first, don't you?

So that all those things are very time consuming for the counselors. But I thought it was absolutely necessary. Now, whether this can go on when you have thousands of students is another thing. And a good many of the counselors who were there, including the placement director, I hired and trained and I still have some connections with them--I think basically some of the same approaches are there. I can't tell you whether all the procedures are there, but they've had to make changes. They should make changes. You change as you grow. But what I hope is still there is what I've always said...You know, when I first got there I knew every student. But as we got larger, you couldn't know every student...I knew the students I worked with....But when somebody would say to me, "Do you know so and so?" And I'd say, "No, I don't." But there is a counselor there who does... I think...
A. ... As the college grew, I felt that our job in the placement department was to adapt and adjust our procedures. Because obviously there had to be changes with the great increase in student body. . . without losing the individual approach to the student. Because when you think about getting a job, problems on the job—job adjustment problems—and you continue to work with graduates, as you know, you think about this as an individual; you need individual counseling for this. So that was the effort in the placement department. To adjust the procedures so we could handle the increase, and at the same time never lose sight of the fact that each individual student required the same attention that those first 100 students needed and got back in 1944.

Q. What was your policy about seeing people after they had been graduated and placed in jobs?

A. Always open.

Q. For how many years?

A. For ever.

Q. Forever? In other words, a student could come back who had been there X years earlier...?

A. Right. Oh, the student could come back forever. And many of them did. Many of them became employers. And came back to hire, too... which was very gratifying. No, we felt that the placement office was . . . open always to graduates and we wanted them to use the placement office. And as I said, one of the great things was we also developed from this employers who came and hired F.I.T. students.
Q. When the school was very small, at the beginning, were you able to have some input so far as curriculum was concerned, especially if it turned out that some of the graduates going out were finding that something was inadequate in their training?

A. Well, one of the things that we found...For example, I mentioned follow up studies...After I had been there a while, when the first group of students had been out for three years, I felt we could do a more elaborate follow up study than we had been doing on this every-year basis. And one of the things that we did was to ask them to evaluate the curriculum within each one of their majors. And we did get feedback on that. This particular part about the curriculum was separated...The rest of the material was kept for the placement office. But we separated this page about curriculum out and discussed it with the Dean, and in turn it was discussed with each of the Chairman of the respective departments. I don't remember all of the suggestions ...We asked them to evaluate both positively and negatively, so that you got some of the curriculum measured as particularly helpful, some medium helpful, and so forth. And I can remember that the curriculum in pattern making was actually affected by that follow up study.

The Chairman found them very useful, very helpful, the suggestions that were made to the school by the graduates...

Q. And in this era of high technology, there must have been some dramatic happenings in the market...

A. Well, that's later...You were asking about the early days,
and remember, I've been retired for eleven years. A great deal of high technology has happened in those years. But I think that...

When I said...I used to meet with the chairmen...For instance, if a new curriculum was to be developed, I was always invited to participate in discussing it, because naturally the college was interested in what were the placement opportunities in the field. And I would explore them for the faculty, for the chairmen, for the President, and bring back the kind of thing...And, of course, they too would be bringing in people. We really worked together to try to do this. And, of course, I think there were informal things that happen too. Students would come back to see us, but they would also come back to see the faculty, and sometimes drop comments that might have stirred a thought in the minds of the faculty. And many of the faculty were from industry, and continued contacts with them, so I guess they got ideas that way too.

Q. Now, coming up to more recent times--you were there until '73--Were there any dramatic happenings in the '50s as to compare with dramatic happening's in the '60s...? I'm thinking of the '60s, with the unrest....

A. Well, I'll tell you...Well, you know...Mostly the other colleges were having more evidence of student activity on social and political grounds. But gradually F.I.T. students became interested, and during the Vietnam War they showed definite interest. Certainly after Kent State. During the...I particularly remember...What's the name of the Office...I think it was the Urban Affairs Office...It was after

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affirmative action became... I was on committees with students...
I was delighted to find this interest on the part of minority
students, and white students working with them. And one of the
poignant things I remember... I had been on a committee with some
students I had worked with enough so I felt we really knew each
other, and one of them, who was at the point of working with the
placement office too, so she knew me in both connections, through
the placement office and on this committee--and so when she came in
one day I said I'd like to talk to her. In my placement office we
had an all white staff. And I was interviewing at that time people
for a counselor's job. And I was really quite troubled because I really
would have been very glad to have a black person on my staff, and I
had interviewed some black people... And it was a good job and we had
quite a few applicants, and I had interviewed both white and black
people, but more white... And I was getting down to making a decision.
And there was a black person I was considering but I did not feel she
was as qualified as the white person, who was very high on the list.
And I said to this young black girl... I didn't tell her that I had the
problem, but I said to her, "How do you feel about coming in to this
office and seeing that there are no black people here?" And she said,
"Well, I would like to see a black person here." So I said, "Well, I
would too. But tell me, do you want me to go ahead and hire a black
person, particularly as a black person?" And she said, "I'll tell you
what, Miss Fried. I'd like to see one. Get me a black Mrs. Fried.
Get me a counselor I can relate to the way I can relate to you but if not if she isn't as good as the white people you're interviewing, get me the white counselor." That was probably one of the most moving interviews I had. And I...

Q. I'm just a little confused...Was this a student?
A. This was a student, a black student, who had been...

She'd been on a committee so I had gotten to know her really more personally than I might have otherwise. But I also had known her because of her coming to the placement office. And she was very...She was an active one. And for her to be able to say this, I thought was quite remarkable. So that there was...During that period, people were concerned that there be more emphasis on opportunities and rights for minorities --the college was involved in this...

Q. The student riots is really what I was asking about...
A. Oh, there weren't riots...No.
Q. '68, and the unrest and...
A. Well, there wasn't to the same extent...I know that after the Kent State murders, there were marches and pickets, but we didn't have disruption, if that's what you're asking, as there were in some places....

Q. Yes. I was interested in that I was never aware that there were any, and I was curious to know if there was something other than what appeared to the public eye...And whether it was because these students were so highly career motivated that they did not take the time... It's not important, but...
A. Well... Exactly. But it gradually touched them, but not
to that degree that... We didn't have the people locked out of buildings
like at Columbia, and....

Q. It's interesting... I'd like to know something about your
personal life through all this... Now, you were working and you had a
family, so in a sense you were a role model, or could have been, a role
model...

A. We didn't have role models in those days... I've always
been a working mother. I have one daughter, who produced three grandchildren,
and that's why I started at F.I.T. on a part time basis. And the reason
I wanted to work part time was because I was a mother, and I wanted to
work if I possibly could. So I designed the hours at that time so I could
have maximum time... When you're working also, at home... What I found was
... I said to Mr. Ritter at the time, "I'll set my hours from 10:00 to 2:00,
but no meetings." And that was really a brilliant thing to say, because
you know how much time meetings take. And I had been in an organization
where there were lots of meetings. In fact, I was always there at 9:30,
because I dropped my daughter at nursery school and picked her up
at nursery school. I also had a housekeeper, so she was geared to come
if I had to stay later... But what I did after I got home... If I needed to
telephone anybody... They didn't know I was at home. I could do everything
but interview students at home. So I would say that F.I.T. got more for
their money during those part-time days than at any other time... I
probably did 80% of a full time job....
Well, as she got a little older and as the needs of the job changed, I had to work full time. It was a very full time job and a very satisfying one. Somewhere along the line, a long time later, when we got into the sixties, I remarried and acquired three step-daughters. They all grew and went off to college and moved on to their own normal, healthy adult lives, and I continued working very...I've always enjoyed my work at F.I.T. It was...I was well placed at F.I.T. It was very satisfying to me, and I think it was satisfying to the college to have me, so it was a good connection.

Then a revolution happened. I was going to be 60 in 1973, and at that point I would have worked 40 years. No birthday, no set of figures ever hit me until then, and that was pretty amazing. Forty years, and I was going to be 60. Those are startling figures. I had never not worked since I graduated from college. I'd always...It's always been a different kind of life from the lives of most other women I knew, some of whom went to work at some point, but were home for a good many years with their children. So, I thought about retiring, and it was a difficult decision, because I loved my job. And, you know, 60 was young to retire. But I decided to do it out of curiosity. Why shouldn't I do it when I was young enough and healthy enough to really try it? And I might not like it as well, but I would never know. So I did, to everybody's great surprise. But what I did do, that has recently developed into something, a very tangible thing...This was such a revolution to me, that I was considering it, that I began secretly to write; to keep a little journal. I did it in
the form of letters to my daughter; letters that were never sent.
Which I anticipated....

Q. What year was this?

A. Well, I can remember the first letter was in August of 1971
when I was in the country thinking about his momentous thing that I
was considering; under the pine trees, smelling the beautiful clean air,
was where I wrote this first little letter of anticipation. And I did
this...I kept this after I retired, a little journal for a while, and
little sporadic things.

Over a period of seven years...I was very secret...My husband
didn't know I was doing it. And I had this kind of ambivalent feeling
about it, that it was for me and it would never see the light of day.
But also I felt there was something in it that maybe was publishable.
And I had ideas of what I would like to do beyond my own personal retirement,
as far as a book, but I wouldn't do it unless I got a publisher. And
all this was very secret. No publisher knew, nobody knew. And I really
didn't want to talk about it because this first part that I had written
was so personal...I'm not a famous person so I didn't think any publisher
would really want it. And I figured an agent wouldn't...And so...I would
put it away and then it would come back into my mind, and finally I said
to myself, "You know, you're supposed to know something about job hunting.
Apply this to you." And one of the things that I always say to people is,
"You try everything." So, I tried something that is unorthodox; people
say, "You can't get publishers this way." But it's just like people say
you can't get a job by writing to anybody cold. And I say, you only need one job. I only needed one publisher. So I went to the yellow pages and I called publishers, and with my training on using the telephones to get jobs for people—I was kind of adroit at getting names out of people and finding out from the telephone operator...Buttering up the telephone operator and getting her to give me information...I eliminated some, and then I wrote a letter--just a little statement about what the book was about and said if they were interested I would send them a partial manuscript. Well, out of that actually came a publisher. And then, once I had a contract, then I zoomed ahead and it only took me six months to do the rest of the book, which was two thirds of the book. But I didn't have a job to do at the time. I didn't have any little children to worry about. I could concentrate on it. Lots of interviewing. Notes, no tape recorder. Just interviews and going back immediately and putting it on paper so I wouldn't forget it. And I'm pleased to say that the book is out. It came out in July and I just had the pleasure of finding it in the college bookstore.

Q. And what's the name of it?

A. It's called "Retirement: You're in Charge." And the publisher's Praeger. It's not a how-to book. I have no rules in it. My theme is that I think each retirement is unique, and each one makes the decision--his decision/her decision--depending on his own personality, his own interest. It's just another slice of life. It's got its slow days and its good days, and just...
Q. It sounds great. I'll bet you'll have a runaway best seller.

A. I doubt that. I doubt it will be a runaway best seller. I had a great deal of fun doing it though.

Q. That's terrific. And that's part of the tradition in a sense, of F.I.T. For it seems to me that an awful lot of people at F.I.T. have published books because the material that they wanted to teach didn't exist in book form.

A. Well, that wasn't why I did mine. I had done two other books before, but this was my first personal one.

Q. What were the books on?

A. The first book I did was a Fairchild publication. They asked me if I would do a pamphlet about job opportunities, and I really... I wasn't sure at all I was interested, but I was too embarrassed to say no. It sounded so unprofessional--not to be interested. So I went down and talked to the man who was in charge of this, and he said, "Look, I don't want a pamphlet. I want a book." And then I was really stuck, because a book is... If you have a job why do you want to write a book? I didn't. But the summer was coming up and I faced it with myself, and I said, "What kind of a schmo are you? Why not?" And I was very glad I did it. I enjoyed doing it. Again, I was able to do it exactly the way I wanted. I said, "I'll do it if I can do it this way."

Q. And what was the title of that?
A. "Is the Fashion Business Your Business?" And there have been three editions of it, and the third one, which came out in 1970 or 1971, that was about 50% rewritten. Of course each edition had to be changed, but this...And it was completely out of date...Because they wanted (and I understood it), they wanted salaries in it. So it's like looking at ancient history. You should find one of those to discover how some people started on jobs at $40 a week. A good job was $40 a week.

Q. I believe I started at $37.50, at Macy's on Training Squad.

A. Yes, but that's because you're so young. With my job at The New York Times, I started at $20. And if you lasted two months you were raised to $25, and let me tell you—that's probably the highest priced job anybody had who graduated that year. Because when you went to work at Macy's, maybe the Macy's Training Squad was that highly paid, but if you were a sales person, as some of them were, $20 was the salary. ... And the other book I did was one I did with a friend, a colleague in England, and that was great fun because that was kind of a hands across the sea, and that's called "Starting Work."

But this book that I did was my own personal...I mean, that was something that I initiated. Both of the other books, they wanted me to do, and I enjoyed doing them, but it was a more impersonal thing. But if you ever see the book...

Q. The title again, is...?

A. "Retirement: You're in Charge." It's about me. Just....
How it really was on a daily basis.

Q. It sounds very good. I think this has been fascinating

Thank you very much.