PREFACE

This memoir is the result of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted for the Oral History Project of the Fashion Industries by Mr. John F. Touhey with Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., in New York City on January 30, 1979.

Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., has read the transcript, and has made only minor corrections and emendations. The reader is asked to bear in mind, therefore, that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word.

The memoir may be read, quoted from and cited only by serious research scholars accredited for purposes of research by The Fashion Institute of Technology; and further, this memoir must be read in such place as is made available for purposes of research by The Fashion Institute of Technology. No reproduction of the memoir, either in whole or in part, may be made by microphoto, typewriter, photostat, or any other device, except by Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., her heirs, legal representatives, or assigns, or The Fashion Institute of Technology solely for the purpose of maintaining the memoir.

(signed) Mrs. William Randolph Hearst

(dated) May 15th, 1980
A Small Town Childhood and Fashion 1
The Training of a Southern Belle 7
College and a Job at the Washington Times Herald 10
Charles James 12
The Washington Times Herald and Cissy Patterson 13
Fashion in the '40s and '50s 15
Marriage and Newspaper Work 17
American Designers 18
Fashion Cycles and Fashion Philosophy 20
Licensing 22
Charles James 23
On Being a Patron of Madame Gres and Other Designers 25
Advice to Young Designers 27
The Future of Fashion Design, Fashion Reporting and Fashion Buying 28
Index 33
I: We are sitting in the living room of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., in New York City on the afternoon of January 30, 1979. Mrs. Hearst do you give your permission for this interview to be used by students and researchers through the auspices of the library at Fashion Institute of Technology?

N: That's like the minister asking at the wedding ceremony whether the bride will say, "I do" or not. I do. There's no possibility that I would say "No". I am complimented to be asked, and I hope that what I say can be a help to the students.

I: Thank you very much Mrs. Hearst. You were born Austine McDonnell in Warrenton, Virginia, and I remember in our preliminary interview to this session you talked about some early memories that you had with regard to a beginning awakening of fashion. Could you go back for us maybe, and recall some of those days?

N: I would enjoy going back, because I often do go back in my own mind. I was very fortunate to have been born in a small town, but it was
a sophisticated small town because during the 18th and 19th century it was almost considered a resort as well as a farm community. It was mentioned in Gone With The Wind. Scarlett's father said if she would do something he wanted that he would take her for a holiday to the Fauquier Springs. It was like the white sulphur springs, the Warrenton Springs. So there was high life, entertaining, reasons to dress up, reasons to be interested in clothes even though it was a small town off the beaten track. I was also fortunate to have grown up in a big old house with an enormous attic, and trunks of elegant old clothes. I was allowed, I can't understand how they would allow me to, but I was very indulged and spoiled by my mother and grandmother. I was allowed to go up to the attic, rummage these trunks apart, put the clothes on, parade around in them and play with my friends, "dress-up"! I even remember some of the clothes. Just after my mother died I went down to Warrenton to go through those trunks and give the cloaks, dresses, petticoats and shawls all to the Valentine Museum in Richmond. All those delicious clothes reminded me of my childhood, and I can't help, even though I know they're being carefully preserved and studied and added to that great museum collection, I can't help but regret that I can't "dress-up" in them. They've come back in style. All those lace shirtwaists and velvet mantles and lace hats. I even remember one hat had curls in it, false curls so that when you put on the hat your hair was all done too. Oh, the fun of opening up those trunks! I believe that clothes should stimulate you the way art does. They should excite you, renew your image of yourself. Help you get through the often tragic business
of life. They should cheer you the way flowers do and art does, lift your spirits. That is, I think, one of the prime functions of adornment, self adornment; to make you feel better. Often the question is asked, "Do people dress for men, or do they dress for women?"; there's no doubt - people dress for themselves.

(INTERRUPTION)

I: You mentioned in the preliminary interview a tin cake box that was up in that attic.

N: A tin cake box?

I: Right.

N: No it wasn't, it was a tin hat box.

I: Oh.

N: It was a tin hat box, and that's where the word "band box" came from. Our ancestors traveled often with hats, and I guess as people now want to transport their clothes without having them crushed, they did the same in the 19th Century and the 18th Century as well. They had to invent not only the clothes but the cases to carry them in. Dress is reflected in styles in furniture too. Furniture was designed to accommodate the clothes that women like to wear in a particular period. The wide arms of the French Bergeres and the chaise lounge were made because the dresses had panniers and they had to have room to spread them out when they sat down. The chaise lounge, for example, was designed because the people were so tightly corsetted they got tired standing up at court functions. In France for instance, or Spain,
they had to have a chair on which they could lie on, put their feet up and rest. They couldn't take their clothes off because that would take hours and hours, so they rested between court appearances on a chaise lounge, a day bed. In other words, a chair where they could lie down fully corsetted and wigged, and relax. So the furniture and the rooms and the widths of doorways are determined by the designs of clothes people wear.

I: Hmm. That's interesting. You made a wonderful comment that small town children are truly born like royalty because they're constantly being showered with attention.

N: Showered with attention, and like royalty recognized wherever they go. Into a store, down the street, everyone you pass knows you. Everyone knows who you are, and in a small Southern town particularly where they're interested in genealogy, they know who your great-grandmother was. They know your great uncles, they expect you to have the habits of your ancestors. You're known in the town. That, I think, is one of the problems of young people today. They have a feeling that they're not known, they're not appreciated, they're lost in the crowds. So you often hear the expression, "I'm looking for myself" or "He's trying to find himself, trying to find out who he is." In a small community you would know who you were. You'd be called by name by everyone. In the large busy civilizations people do have a feeling often that they're only numbers, rather than individuals. That's one of the fields where science needs to work. We've done all we can to give ourselves every comfort that the body could possibly want. Now
we're beginning to explore the vast universe of the mind and the soul, the spirit, and the psyche. We're beginning now to recognize diseases of the spirit, illnesses, malfunctions caused perhaps by our rushing, impersonalized civilization.

A small town childhood provides a secure life. I can remember my grandmother going out in the garden and picking the vegetables every day, for that day's meals. Nowadays I'm afraid even the pleasure of planning menus is not permitted to the housewife. She goes to the market, buys a dinner already planned, vegetables put into compartments, and the meat cooked. While it does take less time, it certainly deprives the person of the pleasure of picking out what to eat. One of the important ways that fashion sense, or taste is developed is being able to make decisions. You must have the free choice to exercise preference.

Now money does often germinate good taste because with money one has the freedom to choose. If one has no money, has to worry about where the next meal is coming from, one cannot take time, thought and leisure to develop taste. But in a civilization like ours, in fact in every highly civilized, industrialized country, people have the time and the money, and therefore they have the responsibility to form taste. You can't wear three hats one on top of the other, so you must choose, you must decide, and that requires discipline. I'm sure that a great many buyers, consumers, women who are dressing themselves realize the responsibility to choose carefully. They do not buy everything but exercise discipline. However, if I had anything
to criticize about the way people look today, it's that they often do
seem undisciplined in the way they are put together. They look as
if they stood under the cloak rack and let everything fall on.

I: Could we go back, I want to get back to one point. I have a question
in mind. What picture did you have of yourself having been raised as
you said by an indulgent grandmother and mother, in a town where
you were well known and you said also even your ancestry was well
known; what image did you have of yourself as a young person? What
were you objectives, let's say?

N: Let's see...back again to the house in Warrenton where I grew up. In
that town every lady always had a dressmaker. Being in a town like
that, stores weren't accessible, and so you had a dressmaker. Even
if you knew how to sew yourself, you would work with the dressmaker.
She would either come to your house to work, or you would go to her
house. I always remember having a dressmaker exercising taste and
planning clothes. Sometimes in my family they re-made, re-styled the
old clothes over and over. They would go up in the attic, choose an
outmoded dress and re-style it...take the buttons off of one thing and
put them on another. Well, that stimulated my creativity. In the South
in that period before and following the Civil War, when this attic
began being filled, they saved everything so that in my girlhood there
were just endless resources, pieces of ribbon, bolts of lace, boxes of
feathers, and pieces of fur, buttons, buckles...Nothing was ever
thrown away.

So I had the enjoyment of working with the dressmakers. The first
clothes, the first party clothes I remember...I think my first party
dress was made out of another dress. It was pale yellow organdy and as I was only 13, I was made to wear patent leather shoes and white socks. I wanted to wear high heeled shoes but, "No," my parents said. My feet were much bigger than the boys at the dance. How I hated those patent leather pumps, but as I look back it must have been a rather pretty dress, appropriate for a girl that age, even if it was made out of an old dress. There's nothing sadder to me than some women who don't make any attempt to change clothes to suit themselves. They don't dare to change the buttons, they don't change the belt. They're afraid to touch a dress because it was designed by Halston or Adolfo. A woman who doesn't adapt things to suit herself and her own styles, and her own taste, misses a lot of fun, a lot of creativity. But, happily, women are starting to become more independent. They don't feel that it's necessary to follow fashion. They express themselves with more independence. Women have been liberated to the extent that a great many more of them are "doing their own thing." Outstanding leaders of fashion have always done that.

But to get back to the question you asked me, I've gone wandering. I didn't really have a fashion image of myself. I was brought up by my mother and grandmother to be a professional Southern belle, which was something of a cross between a geisha girl and a duchess. I was taught really to value manners and the externals. I remember my grandmother commenting, "If you have a black lace dress and a ham in the ice box, you're ready for any emergency." Now, that may sound
frivolous, but there's a kernel of wisdom in believing that if you cover your body gracefully then you can cover whatever upsets your heart. If you can look presentable, people will believe you're in control. Authors today write books called, "Dress for Success." If you dress well, you'll get ahead is probably true. When you meet people you have no other way of judging them, except by how they look, their externals. So externals are important. I'm grateful to have been taught manners and to make a good appearance and not to reveal myself completely. I recoil when I see so many people writing memoirs telling secrets about their lovers and their husbands, their children, their parents. I feel exactly the same way about clothes. Clothes which reveal everything at first glance are not interesting.

One of the reasons why I admire Madame Gres and her clothes, and why I admire...I did admire Charles James. They both seemed to design clothes that indicated, rather than stated. They were very subtle and made you look twice to see how a seam was made, or how an effect was achieved. You couldn't see everything immediately, you had to study a little to understand the clothes.

Now, can I say anything more on that subject?

I: Feel free to, to go ahead or if you have something else; or I also have another question about that period.

N: Oh, I'm glad to.

I: Okay. You recognized I'm sure at the time you were in this "training process," and that it was going to take you someplace where you weren't sure.

N: No. That isn't altogether true. Young people of ten don't realize
that they're learning. They think they know everything already. It's only now, with reflection, that I realize what interested me in clothes, and how I got interested. At the time you don't realize that influences are making you a certain way.

I: Did you know - you mentioned being trained, or being raised to be a Southern belle - did you have any idea where this was going to take you in life?

N: Not the least notion.

I: Did you have aspirations of where you might go?

N: No, not at all. I wanted at different ages, different goals. As a child I wanted to run fast, be a very good athlete. I wanted to ride well. Then later on I wanted to be popular at parties, so I wanted to have clothes that would be noticed at the party. I remember a dress that was a big success; it was red cotton gingham, bold checks, and had big white organdy sleeves. It was a great success with the "stag line" the young men. In those days the dancing was entirely different. There was no such thing as a disco. You went to parties, and there was an institution known as a "stag line." The hostesses planned to have three young men for every young lady, so that each young lady would be sure to have lots of beaux lining up to dance with her. I'm sure the young people today when they hear this they'll think I'm talking about the minuet, but anyone my age will remember. Those marvelous expensive parties on Long Island. I was lucky enough to have a first cousin, my father's brother's daughter who was a Long Island debutante. That was in the days when parents spent several hundred thousand dollars on a debut party.
I'm much more organized than I was when I was very young, but my fashion philosophy still is: I try to imagine what everyone else will be wearing, and then I wear something entirely different. Whatever is fashionable this year, I won't wear. If everyone is wearing black, then I wear yellow. I'm lucky because I love every color. I did talk my mother into letting me wear a dark blue net dress with an enormous skirt, thousands of yards of navy blue tulle. That was thought to be alright for a young girl to have navy blue, but not black. That was too sophisticated.

Well, if you go to a party and you're the only one in a navy blue dress you will be remembered. In those days no young girl was allowed to see only one person. Parents thought there was safety in a lot of beau. Now boys and girls set up housekeeping before they're 20. That was unheard of in my youth. The big idea was to meet an awful lot of young men, but not to get serious.

I: You, at a point very young in your life, you went to work in Washington.

N: Yes. I started out when I finished junior college. I lived in Washington. The year I made my debut I was going to junior college and I lived in Washington with a friend of my mother's, an old lady. I was enjoying myself very much, enjoying my life.

I: At one point you were working for the Washington Times Herald?

N: That's right, yes. I was very fortunate to have been employed by Cissy Patterson, a women's liber long before anyone knew what the word meant. She was one of the first publishers who was a woman and a dazzling personality. She believed in giving women a chance, so she gave me an opportunity to write for her paper. It was through her
that I first met Charles James.

Cissy Patterson was originally from Chicago, from the McCormick family. A brother of hers, Joe Patterson, founded the New York Daily News. Her own family would not give her a position on the Chicago Tribune which they owned. Probably the greatest paper in the country at that time. But, she had printer's ink in her veins, so she got William Randolph Hearst to give her a job and he made her the publisher of the paper that he owned in Washington. Later on she lent him money and he put the paper up as collateral. She foreclosed and therefore got ownership that way. But it didn't seem to affect their friendship. Of course this was long before I met my husband-to-be, William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

When I knew Cissy Patterson she had already made a damn good paper. If you can describe whatever makes a paper good - a lot of local coverage, excellent fashion and food sections - it was like a daily magazine. That's what good newspapers have become. Now the public does not depend on the newspaper for news. They depend on the newspaper to appraise the news, to re-evaluate it, to study it, to give background about it and to re-read it, to re-read what they've already heard on the radio or seen on television. But to me these service features make a paper good and she specialized in presenting them. Excellent food sections, excellent fashions, excellent coverage of what people were doing. That's what the reading public like to read about, what other people are doing. That explains the success of magazines like People, and columns like "Suzy" and fashion reporting like the Women's Wear Daily. I enjoy reading the Women's Wear Daily because it tells,
even though I may not know the people, it tells what they're wearing and what they're doing and what they're saying. It gives you an idea of what's going on with other people. So she did that, Cissy Patterson. It was very exciting being part of that team.

Cissy sent me to interview Charles James. I then became a friend and an admirer.

I: What were your impressions of Charles James at that point?

N: Well, I don't think they really changed. I recognized that he was a genius, but like a great many geniuses, a difficult person. I'm sure there are a great many opera stars, or sculptors, or artists who seem extremely difficult and temperamental to their friends and to the enemies. There was no one more difficult star than Maria Callas. Part of the personality of the artist is to be difficult. As I told you when we talked about Charles James before, I compared him to Leonardo da Vinci, in the sense that Leonardo da Vinci was given a commission by a doting husband to paint the wife's portrait and Leonardo never delivered the portrait of the Mona Lisa. That poor client paid for the painting and never got it. When Francis the First invited Leonardo to go with him to France and live at court, Leonardo took the picture with him and that's how it happens to be in the Louvre today. When Leonardo died, France claimed it. The man who ordered the painting never got it. If Leonardo da Vinci can be forgiven these vagaries then I think we can forgive Charles James too for what some of his clients felt was taking advantage. He was very good to me when I was working on the paper because he would allow me to pay for the clothes on an installment plan. His clothes were very expensive even then.
They would be expensive today.

I: Do you remember the prices?

N: I do, yes. Suits were $2,500 and in the '40s that was very expensive. Evening dresses were $2,500 to $4,000. A simple dress would be $950 or $1,000. Well, it would take me months to pay, but that has always been my philosophy. Buy the best! I think young people today are getting quite wise. They're looking for good construction, they're looking for clothes that are well made and of good material. Even the blue jeans have to be faded, have to be fitted, have to be a certain cut and style. They look for quality more and more. Which is again what I go back to, what I said before about making decisions. That you can't buy everything, so it's important to choose, to exercise your free will to choose.

I: You continued working for the paper until...

N: And I did everything for the paper. I did fashion layouts. I wrote a column, I wrote a diet book and many series of articles. I wrote one series, I remember, on the most beautiful women who had ever lived. Starting with Helen of Troy, down to the movie stars like Grace Kelly.

(INTERUPTION)

N: Now, where were we?

I: The series of articles.

N: Oh yes, talking about the beautiful women. Well, Cissy Patterson bought clothes from Charles James, and oh I admired her. I had an aunt I admired too, so much who bought her clothes in Paris. Funny,
I was talking the other day to Scaasi and he was remembering an aunt he had who made pilgrimages to Paris and who influenced him. She'd bring home these trunks and boxes of divine clothes, and so did my aunt. After she tired of the clothes, she'd send them to us.

I: You stayed with the paper until...

N: I stayed with the paper until 1955 or so. Even after I married I continued to write the column for the paper. It was 1948 that I was married, and Mrs. Patterson died, leaving the paper to seven key employees.

I: Did you attend Cissy Patterson's parties?

N: Yes. She was a compelling personality, a great party-giver and one of those beauties like Gloria Vanderbilt, beautiful in a strange way, with flaming red hair and a pug nose which was not considered beautiful in her day. In her day the beauty was a Gibson girl, classic features. The way people stand, the position of the hips, the curve of the spine, the position of the bust, the leg you stand on, the arms you wave, those ideals of fashion and beauty do change. In my mother's youth it was Irene Castle they wanted to look like. That was after the First World War.

I: ...and you were writing a column on style, fashion, society. You wrote fashion articles for the newspaper.

N: Yes, I was writing fashion articles, reporting about people in that time.

I: Do you remember some of the columns, the content of the columns, the people with whom you were impressed at the time, the designers that you felt were contributing?
You won't remember, but during the war we were cut off from every connection with Europe. So we had to depend on American design, and American design had therefore a chance to develop. It was just a bud, it was not yet a flower. Well, the government regulated styles. It's very hard to imagine that the government office in Washington would tell people how long their skirts might be, and how much material could go into a skirt. Certain materials could be cut full and others couldn't. Well, bureaucracy then and now is often comic.

I remember the biggest fashion excitement when Paris was opened up again. That was the beginning of Dior's "new look. But Charles James, an American designer had already made it. If you go back and read the records, Christian Dior credited Charles James with introducing the "new look" with inventing it. What was the "new look"? It was a tight, tight waist and a full skirt which no one had had for the war years, a longish skirt, romantic looking, big sleeves, full sleeves. I had already been wearing those "new look" Charles James dresses two years before the "new look" hit the fashion pages.

There will always be new looks. It is one of my credos that fashion consists of people getting tired of looking one way, and then wanting to look a new way, a way they haven't been looking, an appearance they haven't been having. When everyone has been wearing black, suddenly bright color looks new.

In years gone by it would take six months or a year for a fashion look to drift out to the hinterlands, but now it happens within weeks. With the press and the radio and television, changes happen very quickly. It doesn't take six months for the people who have been
wearing square toed shoes to suddenly want pointed toed shoes.
That brings us back to what I said before about women having been lib-
erated from fashion editors telling them what styles to wear. They
now feel much more free to wear what they damn please, to wear
clothes which they think are becoming to them.

I: But during the war, during World War II when the Paris market was
cut off, you certainly didn't stop being a woman or a customer, and
American fashion as you said was a bud at that point. With whom were
you impressed at that time? What American designers were coming
into the fore?

N: Movies had a big influence on taste, Adrian for instance. There was
Fira Benenson who had a made-to-order department at Bonwit-Teller.
Hattie Carnegie...they had been accustomed to going to Paris and buying
and bringing the things back and copying them and adapting them.

I: But you continued to buy from Charles James?

N: I bought from Charles James, and I always as I said had a dressmaker
making things that I thought were becoming.

N: So then, if we can be a little chronological at the moment, you
married Mr. Hearst and...

N: Right, in 1948. I had never been to Paris until my husband took me.
I had read about it, but I had never been. I went to Paris, and
before I went my friend Charles James said, "Well, besides Dior you
must go to Gres." He recommended Gres and that was when I first
became a client of Madame Gres. I also bought at Dior, at
Givenchy, and Balenciaga. When I first met Givenchy he was working for
Schiaparelli. Then he opened his own maison de couture.
I: What were you looking for in fashion in that period, that would be the late '40s now.

N: Right, the late '40s and '50s.

I: You'd just recently married...

N: Well, all the things we wore then are coming back, have come back. That's another point I want to make: that you cannot develop fashion taste, perception and judgement until you have lived long enough to see several of these cycles come and go. That's why it's very difficult for a person 15, 16, 18 to have a frame of reference. After a certain amount of age you develop fashion perception, because you remember these cycles.

I: But you were entering into a new lifestyle obviously at that point. You did continue to work for the paper...

N: Yes. My husband was then the publisher of the New York Journal American and I was working as a columnist and a writer for The Washington Times Herald. My column was syndicated. I had a house in Washington so we spent the week-ends there. I would go down and work on my column, contact my sources and make the rounds in Washington. Then Will would come down on the week-end. We lived in both Washington and New York. It was hectic. We had an apartment, a very small apartment at the Waldorf Towers. It was a hectic lifestyle. I still continued, perhaps it was a mistake, but I continued to enjoy Washington, to have lots of friends there, and to enjoy the newspaper world.

I: Why do you think it might have been a mistake?
N: Because I continued even after my children were born, my two sons; the one you just met was born in Washington and my elder son William was also born in Washington. I know that young women today feel that it's very easy to have children and to have a career, but I think it's very difficult. I think the only people who suffer are the children. My children have turned out all right, but I think I would have had more enjoyment out of them if I had not worked. But when you're very young, you don't realize that. Now I'm looking forward to my grandchildren.

I: But you did continue buying from designers?

N: I did continue buying from designers.

I: At what point... I know that you have bought American designers, at what point was there any contradiction in your own mind as to which way you should go, a loyalty to Paris, if you will, for what they were able to give to you or perhaps a new freedom that you might have felt that you could have taken to the American design area? Do you remember any contradiction along those lines in your thinking, or was it simply who was supplying?

N: Well, I always and still like to buy the best. There were only a few really excellent American designers. That isn't because they aren't talented or creative, it's because they don't have the system of the workroom here that they have in Paris. There are so many marvelous workers in Paris. It's very difficult here to have a workroom. I know that much without having been in business on Seventh Avenue. I bought in the past, and have admired Galanos, Norman Norell, and Pauline Trigere, and I have bought their clothes. Vera Maxwell,
Mollie Parnis, and Hannah Troy another woman designer, Ben Zuckerman. I bought what I liked and I was not faithful to any one. Several designers successful today, Scaasi, Halston, and Adolfo, were connected with Charles James. Oscar de la Renta took the job that Charles James had at Elizabeth Arden. He was brought here by Elizabeth Arden to take charge of her made-to-order workroom. I remember meeting him when he first got here, and feeling sorry for him because Miss Arden was a very difficult lady to work for. She had Charles James and then Castillo and then Oscar de la Renta in charge of her design studio.

Now we're very rich in talent in the United States; we have a lot of talent. Halston owes much to Charles James. He's still making some of Charles James' patterns. I notice in each collection there's some sleeve or some cut that has been something that Charles James first did. After you've been buying clothes for a long time and looking a long time, you begin to recognize the origins of designs.

That does happen. The very best designers have always said that they don't mind being copied, it's a compliment.

I: Of the cycles, of the fashion cycles that you have...

N: Yves St. Laurent too, I remember him when he was at Dior. After Dior died he was given the job. Now he's become such a successful creator. His collection wasn't corny and wasn't tacky, but when you read about it in the papers you might have thought it was. When I saw the collection in Paris I saw it was full of spark, of new ideas. One of the difficulties today is the fashion reporting. It has to be improved. The best fashion reporters are often the ones who've
been around a long time, who've been around the track. They have a frame of reference.

I: Of the fashion cycles that you have witnessed in your lifetime since the late Thirties, early Forties up to the present, with which ones have you been the most impressed or you feel have had the most effect on you?

N: Well, I don't think that's a good question, and that's the only bad question you've asked.

I: Okay.

N: I'll say that for this reason: if you walk into an apartment house, and every apartment is painted yellow, you're ready for a new color for any other color but yellow. You want to see blue, or dead white, or anything else. That's the way it is when you get surfeited with one kind of fashion. I cannot say that I prefer any one color over another. My taste changes. I have over the years always been partial to purple. Of course many people don't like it and you don't see it. Buyers in the stores tell me they never can sell anything purple. But perhaps one year everyone will be wearing purple, and then I won't like it.

Fashion has to be changed. The times when I haven't liked a style have been the times when it's been overdone, like the chemise. About six years ago I went down to a department store and bought myself a bed quilt, and I had it made into a coat. A bright red quilted coat. The quilt was from Altman's and the dressmaker who made it for me thought I was absolutely nuts. Then I liked it so much, I went and bought another one, a figured animal print, and had that made into a coat with gold buttons. I still have those coats, and now I
see everybody in a quilt coat. So I'll have to put them away for a few years, and take them out again. The only times I haven't liked a certain style has been when it's been overdone, repeated and repeated and every other person on the street is wearing it. Whatever it is, no matter how good, you get tired of it.

In general I have little patience with styles that are uncomfortable to walk in. Skirts that can't walk, and sleeves that can't move. I don't like very high heeled shoes. I like things to be comfortable to walk in. A great fallacy that has been perpetrated is that pants are convenient. Pants aren't really convenient but women got tired of skirts and so they wanted to be in pants. Actually for a lady to go to the loo in pants is very uncomfortable. Pants were designed for men and their plumbing, and not for the ladies'. To get undressed in a tiny little compartment on an airplane, take your pants down, take your panty hose down to go to the loo is not easy.

I: So consistently then the pleasure of wearing the design, whatever it may have been...

N: Is change.

I: ...has to give pleasure to you. Right, and change, right? And Charles James always reflected that for you? I think he was probably the person from whom you bought the most.

N: Well, no I can't say that because Charles James gave up making clothes for clients long ago. Looking at the total number of years that I've been buying, I think I must have bought more from Madame Gres and others than I have from Charles James. Charles James, I feel, made a
great contribution to fashion. He made a great contribution to construction, as Dior did, and to cut, and to making people want to look a certain way. Creative people, direction makers, are the geese who lay the golden eggs. They generate money for other people. I like to see Halston, Galanos, Trigere, Scaasi make money.

It's interesting to speculate where this licensing-designers giving their names to automobile, colors of wall paint and unrelated items; where it's going to lead. There is a saturation point I should imagine. Already some women say they don't want the initials of designers on their purses, belts, and clothes. Can creative people continue to make money on licensing?

I: It doesn't seem to have reached its peak.

N: Well it does show that the magic of what is thought to be fashion leadership can sell things. Just as a toothsome girl sells cigarettes or make-up. The magic of a designer's name gives acceptance. But if you're able to buy a Cardin in every drug store, every ten cent store...I wonder? So I don't think it has many more years to go, this licensing.

I: I'm reminded of a joke in the New Yorker of a young man standing at the tie counter telling the salesman that "If my mother wanted me to wear the name of Yves St. Laurent she would have named me Yves St. Laurent".

N: (Laughs) I didn't see that!

I: So there is some negative coming out at this point. Could you share
with us some of your memories of Charles James?

N: I'll be very happy to. He was an extremely entertaining speaker. He could hold a group of people spellbound. Perhaps after he had finished you would try to figure out what he had said, and some of it might make sense, and some of it might be obscure. But he had a lot of original ideas. I talked with him over a number of years, over a range of subjects. You could never find a subject where he could say, "Well, I know nothing about that." It couldn't happen. Whether it was changing diapers or picking Presidents, or cooking souffles, he had a strong opinion, usually a violent opinion. At the end he was out of the mainstream I'm afraid. One of his great faults was that he imagined that he was a good businessman, that he knew all about taxes, finance, and business, and I don't think he did. He thought he was a good lawyer and knew all about law. So that whenever he had a disagreement he would want to sue, and then he would want to handle the case himself. As you know, "A man who wants to be his own lawyer has a fool for a client." That was Charles' failing. He could never say, "I don't know anything about that, I put it in your hands!"

Whatever it was, taking the train to Newark, he would know everything. But he was a fascinating widely read talker, carefully educated. Perhaps his private life was a disadvantage to him, because it impaired his judgement. He would have a mad and passionate crush on someone, and that would...sometimes he'd be used by those people. His life, I believe, in the end became sordid because of his own wish to remain young and recapture the romance of his youth. What a gift to be able
to grow old gracefully, but it's a rare gift isn't it? I didn't see him in his last years, but I had the feeling that it was a sad life. Living in the Chelsea Hotel and not really having a workroom, not teaching, not being able to discipline himself enough to teach, and really to work in an organized way with young people. He really could have contributed a lot if he had been on the faculty of Parson's or F.I.T., or if he'd been able to discipline himself to lead an ordered working life.

I: I'm sure that's true. But before that period there were...

N: He was like Henri Soule of the Pavillion Restaurant - a well spring and from his spring came all those other restaurants. All those people Charles trained, Halston, Scaasi, many others. So he generated a lot of money for a lot of people. They all went to school with Charles James. He influenced a lot of young people. He gave out a lot of fashion ideas. I feel therefore he has his place secure, and I hope whoever his enemies are in the museums and in the fashion world, I hope they will be magnanimous enough to accord his rightful place as an inventor and creator and an influence on design. Perhaps there will be a Charles James retrospective exhibition. If you remember he was the first one to have his designs pulled together and exhibited in a museum, at the Brooklyn Museum when they had that retrospective of Charles James' work. Was it the Fifties?

I: I'm not sure either.

N: He has a lot of clothes in museums. It can be said and I don't think it could be contradicted that he has more of his work in museums than any other American designer. There is more of his work in the Victoria
and Albert Museum, in the Metropolitan, in the Brooklyn Museum, at F.I.T., in the Valentine Museum. I believe that some of his admirers are discussing in a preliminary way, the idea of putting together an exhibition of his work. He was hard on his workroom, on his clients, and on himself, but made extraordinary clothes. But now I hope the Cooper-Hewitt or the Metropolitan, or Brooklyn, or one of them will attempt an exhibition of his work - his works of art for that they were.

I: Did you have as close a relationship with other designers from whom you purchased clothes? I know that you've been very close to Madame Gres.

N: Yes, and to Givenchy, and to Balenciaga in the past. I cannot afford to buy as many clothes as I would like from Madame Gres.

I: You've been a patron of hers since...

N: Since 1949. I sometimes go to shops and buy Pauline Trigere and Galanos. I am a friend, I've been a friend for many years of Scaasi. I don't see him a great deal and I don't exchange ideas, but whenever I do see him it's just as if I'd spent the day with him the day before. We pick up exactly where we left off.

I: And Madame Gres?

N: Madame Gres...I'm close to her, but I have a feeling she is a withdrawn person. She is a non-revealing person, almost like a nun. Did you talk with her? Did you have the tape interview with her?

I: Yes.

N: What did you think?
I: I think she's fascinating, a fascinating person.

N: But she holds back a lot.

I: Yes, but she has some very definite ideas obviously, about design.

N: I'm sure she has.

I: And about fashion, and what's important to her, and the quality with which she's always associated herself whether in the selection of fabrics or the execution of a design. Quality is always...

N: Well, I don't think it's fair to compare Madame Gres, for this reason. Madame Gres has apart from her talent which is unquestioned, but she does have one thing that's very hard for an American designer to have and that is she has a competent, extraordinary workroom. In France they have a system that's as intricate as a Spanish court, of the workroom and the people who are in charge of the different departments in the workroom, and the training they have and the apprenticeship they take and the devotion they have. That does not exist, or if it does it's very rare, in the United States. I think it's very difficult under the union conditions for a person to afford to experiment. Now, we must look at finances. I have not been told by Madame Gres, but I am told by people who are close to her, that her workroom, her couture department, operates at a loss, and this is often true of other couture houses in Paris. Of course the perfume offsets the loss. The couture is an ornament and an inducement to people to buy the perfume. I'm sure that at Dior, because of the number of licenses and franchises and other products, the business operates at a profit overall. I don't know why they should lose money unless it's because the cost of labor, and rent, and fabric, are very high. The people I have known in
this fashion world have all told me that in the made-to-order
departments the minute you have a second fitting on anything you've
lost money. You must have a garment that will satisfy the customer
in one fitting. Look at Edison, he made hundreds and hundreds of
models before he finally got the lightbulb to work. It's experimentation;
whether it's in fashion or other industries, experimentation is expensive,
and invention takes experimentation. Even the largest companies like
DuPont find it hard to justify experiments to stock holders and to
boards of directors. So if that is true in the richest industries,
it's very hard to justify such outlays for research in the workrooms
of Seventh Avenue.

I: As a consumer of fashion and looking into the future if you can, a
little bit, into the crystal ball as it were, what advice would you
have for young people who are starting out as designers?

N: Well, I hoped you would ask me that question. The civilization we are
a part of is such a varied one. The designers of one hundred years ago,
or fifty years ago, didn't have nearly the numbers of different kinds
of materials to work with to inspire them. We have hundreds of different
trimmings, zippers, snaps, hooks, buttons, loops; dozens of different
closing for clothes. Incredible chemicals for dye colors, textures of
fabrics, man-made or natural fiber fabrics to cut from. A young
designer today has so much to select from. However, young designers
learning their craft must not think that they can skip any of the
boring lessons of sewing, cutting, draping. The ones who learn the
boring details will succeed. They must learn the background knowledge
of how to sew, learn to cut materials, make patterns. I still don't
want to be operated on by a doctor who hasn't learned all the parts of the human body, no matter how boring it was to memorize them. These years of internship are important. Young people should not abandon the apprentice system. That's the one sure way to learn, to go to work for somebody else. Pick out the designer you admire and be willing to take a job in any capacity as you finish your education. There are not steps you can skip.

The advantage these young talented people have today, they have these schools like Parson's, Rhode Island, F.I.T., Cooper-Hewitt. So many places to learn, so many organized libraries, and the young person who works the hardest learning basic skills will, I think, be the most likely to succeed. If I had a class of fifty aspiring designers, the ones who are willing to do the basic hard work, I think will most likely be able to earn a living and get to the top. Do you agree?

I: Absolutely.

N: Of course a young person like Mary McFadden had the good fortune to have been backed in her fashion career, and once having been given the opportunity was able to capitalize on it. I consider her extremely talented. Whether she had a formal fashion education or not, she did come from a family who developed her taste. Her mother, a friend of mine, has had a lifelong interest in fashion and the arts.

I: What would you hope for in the future of design?

N: These are hum-dingers of questions! Lalapaloozers! Well, it makes me happy to see women improving their appearances, they're looking better.
They're understanding themselves. I hope in the next few years to see women looking very neat and tidy. I'm so tired of everything blousy, loose and sloppy. I would hope also that the fashion industry over the world could agree on sizes. That seems to be a great difficulty.

I know the Bureau of Standards here sets sizes, they do sizing, but I wonder how they reach their decisions? I doubt that they consult the fashion industry often enough - knowing the government in the past in other fields. It would be a step, a giant step, if they could agree all over the world, universally, that a size 10 was going to be cut a particular way, and that a size 6 was going to be a particular measurement. That would be one improvement I can think of for the future. I wish there were a way of protecting design as there is for protecting patents in the industry, or copyrights in other... the publishing business. No one can protect designs. Perhaps there is no way. As I grow older and I see more cycles coming and going, I hope that I will continue to be excited, exhilarated, renewed, reborn through fashion. I hope fashion will continue to stir the imagination, to uplift and to cheer our hearts. A woman will go into a store and try on and buy a new hat, and come away feeling she's a new person, that she's put on a new skin and has been rejuvenated. That in the mad world we live in is therapeutic. Fashion is therapy. I would like to see, I told you before, the fashion magazines, the fashion media unafraid as they used to be, to report not only what is being worn but to keep readers a step ahead and tell us what is going to be worn. In every fashion magazine there should be a part of the magazine devoted to what is magic, what is special, what is dazzling, romantic, fantasy. You can't buy it but you can be stimulated by it. You see a picture
that inspires you and you can try to find something nearly like that. Women are very interested in seeing dresses even if they can't buy. They're very interested in seeing the marvelous wardrobe of a movie star. That has been shown by the Metropolitan exhibit of the Russian court costumes, or the Vanity Fair exhibit. People weren't going to be able to buy those dresses, but they did like to see, and have their imagination stirred by costumes they couldn't buy. I think that has been the one failure of all the fashion magazines and of fashion reporting. They report only what is being shown now, today, in the stores. But I do think there's a place in every fashion publication for stimulating the imagination in the same way that people are stimulated when they see Russian court costumes, or the Hollywood costumes of the past. So I hope that will be an improvement in our fashion future. That fashion editors will not be afraid to direct and give leadership rather than only following. I don't know whether that's a valid point. What do you think?

I: I think I can take lots of the comments you've made during this interview and project them into the future as things that the consumer will look for, an independence, a wisdom, a cheerfulness, and yet a sense of self-identification, of security in that. Being secure in being yourself when it comes to fashion, the designers interpreting that need and encouraging that by their designs. There are many things which you said in the interview which could be taken into this final question.

N: What I said about the fashion media could also be applied to the buyers in the department stores. They should and they are beginning also to
go out and find new sources for their departments. Young designers are packing up a suitcase and taking them in and showing them to a buyer. I hope the buyers will continue to be open minded. I hope they'll be willing to take chances. It's very hard, as I said before, when you have to answer to a board of directors, and when you have to show profits, to be willing to take chances. But it seems to me that successful fashion managers like Geraldine Stutz have been willing to experiment, to take chances, to take a flyer rather than just do what's safe, what's proven good last year so let's do the same thing this year and next year. The willingness on the part of the managers in the retail business to experiment, to give opportunity to young designers, to develop their own sources of fashion design in the United States, particularly in the United States more than abroad. Now the buyers are rushing to Hong Kong, and they're rushing to Italy, to France, to buy, but they perhaps ought to be rushing out to San Francisco, to Miami, or other parts of the United States where they could develop young creative American fashion talent. Of course it's not as much fun to go to Miami as it is to go to Paris. Oh, these buyers! It does annoy me, it annoys me very much when I see enormous coverage, a whole issue given up to the ready-to-wear in Paris and every store has got the same thing. I can't believe that's good business, but they must be doing well or they wouldn't keep doing it.

I wish the retail department store people in Indianapolis or San Francisco or Dallas would develop their own resources. Then we could look in the store and find something in one store that isn't in the other store.
Years ago you could buy at Marshall Field all sorts of things that they had developed. You still can at Nieman Marcus. Let's hope this will continue in the retail stores. They'll develop independent resources, American designing talent.

I: Mrs. Hearst, I would just like to thank you very much for giving me your afternoon and talking about your observations of the fashion industry, and I can assure you that students and researchers will benefit from this interview. It's the first interview we've done as you know with a customer of the industry as you are.

N: Well I've enjoyed every word. I don't know whether what I've said will be of any help, but I have enjoyed talking and I hope that by talking I can make young people and students realize that fashion is not trivial. It's a deep need in each of us, and it deserves as much thought, as much study, as much preparation as a career in art or music or any other important contribution to our civilization, to our better life. Thank you for coming and listening and talking.

I: Thank you again.

(END OF TAPE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolfo</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arden, Elizabeth</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balenciaga</td>
<td>16,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benenson, Fira</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonwit-Teller</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brooklyn Museum</td>
<td>24,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Standards, United States</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callas, Maria</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardin, Pierre</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie, Hattie</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle, Irene</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumers, fashion</td>
<td>5,7,13,16,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-21,22,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper-Hewitt Museum</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DaVinci, Leonardo</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de la Renta, Oscar</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debut parties</td>
<td>9,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dior, Christian</td>
<td>15,19,22,26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressmakers</td>
<td>6,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPont</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Arden, Inc.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashion buying</td>
<td>30-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashion designers, American</td>
<td>15,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashion designers, French</td>
<td>16,26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Institute of Technology</td>
<td>25,28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashion reporting</td>
<td>19,20,29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis I</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furniture design</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galanos</td>
<td>18,22,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>16,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gone With the Wind</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gres, Madame</td>
<td>8,16,21,25-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halston</td>
<td>19,22,24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearst, William Randolph</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearst, William Randolph, Jr.</td>
<td>11,16,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearst, Mrs. William Randolph, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Austine McDonnell)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advice to young designers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a patron of Charles James</td>
<td>12-13,23-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a patron of Madame Gres</td>
<td>26-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a &quot;Southern belle&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a working mother</td>
<td>17,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childhood</td>
<td>2-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hearst, Mrs. William Randolph, Jr.
(Austine McDonnell)

- fashion experimentation
- fashion philosophy
- first party dress
- future of design
- future of fashion buying
- future of fashion reporting
- marriage
- on American designers
- on fashion in the 1940's and 1950's
- on fashion reporting
- working for Washington Times Herald

James, Charles

- licensing
- McFadden, Mary
- Marshall Field
- Maxwell, Vera
- Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Neiman Marcus
- "the new look"
- New York Daily News
- New York Journal American
- The New Yorker
- newspapers
- Norell
- Parnis, Mollie
- Parson's School of Design
- Patterson, Cissy
- Patterson, Joe
- Pavilion Restaurant
- People Magazine
- Rhode Island School of Design
- St. Laurent, Yves
- Scaasi, Arnold
- Schiaparelli
- schools, fashion
- Soule, Henri
- Stutz, Geraldine
- "Suzy"
- Trigere, Pauline
- Troy, Hannah
- Valentine Museum (Richmond, VA)
- Vanderbilt, Gloria
- Victoria and Albert Museum
- Warrenton, Virginia
- Washington Times Herald
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>term</th>
<th>page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's Wear Daily</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workrooms, fashion designer</td>
<td>18, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuckerman, Ben</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.