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BARBARA D'ARCY

The Bloomingdale Interviews

by Estelle Ellis
Q. You've heard that we've made Mr. Traub the recipient of the 1987 award "One Person Makes a Difference." Taok to that point, personally, professionally. How do you see the difference, and how has it made a difference to you?
A. Well, it makes all the sense in the world. I think it's wonderful that he has been selected for this award, because he's always been interested in education. He's also been a firm believer in specialization and in-depth training in specific fields, which is really saying the same thing. He's always taken an extraordinary interest in young people and the development of young people, and we were all young people when we started out together at Bloomingdale's.
Q. Tell me about that. Tell me how you started out here. Because I know what the transition was, and I also know that in choosing you for this particular position, he really broke new ground.
A. Well, I started out in Bloomingdale's as a decorating consultant on the fourth floor in the upholstery fabric department. At that time, Marvin Traub was, I believe, the assistant buyer or the buyer of hosiery in the basement, as it was called in those days. And although I didn't work with him at all at that time, it was very soon that he was promoted to...I have to get my facts straight. I'm sort of talking and I just realized that this is a tape....
Q. Don't worry about it.
A. But it seems to me that probably, back about that time, he was brought into Frank Chase's office, who was the merchandise manager for home furnishings, as an assistant to him. And I got to know him at that time. But it was the very, very, very beginning of the development and the growth of Bloomingdale's.

Mr. Davidson was the chairman of the board at that time, and he was also very interested in the training and development of young people. It was clear at that time that Mr. Traub was one of the people who was selected to be groomed for a higher position. But it was an incredible, extraordinary period of development that ensued in the next ten years, as Bloomingdale's moved from a neighborhood store of modest aesthetic excellence—however you want to explain it!—to a very gradual move in the direction of being a fashion leader, not only in the world of home furnishings, but of fashion.

Q. It had always been a strong home store.
A. It was always...I was born around the corner from Bloomingdale's and, as a child, I was wheeled to the furniture department by my mother. So it was always...But it certainly didn't have a fashion...

Q. It didn't have a cachet.
A. It was just...It had a very nice, middle-of-the road selection of furniture. But then that eventually began to change, probably in the late '40s and 1950s.
Q. Chase began to change that too, didn't he?
A. Yes, he started to change it, yes. Exactly.

Henriette Granville was the fashion coordinator at the
Q. For home?
A. She was the fashion coordinator for men's and home. Because Frank Chase had both of those areas under supervision. And it was during that period that she was the model rooms and there were. The furniture of "Robb Givings," which at the time was really very important fashionable. I remember coming for my first interview Bloomingdale's and just being overwhelmed by the beauty of the rooms at that time, with marble floors and multi- and beautiful collections of pre-Colombian pottery. When that time was really quite revolutionary....I'm stuck.

Q. No. You went on from there...

The important thing to me was, you moved into the arena and grew in that arena, but at one point--a very point--he brought you out of...You were doing these inc rooms (You have to bring me up to that point.), where the person who was identified with the traffic-building of Bloomingdale's. And this was an incomparable period. Then had, as I remember it, the insight and the intelligence, "If she knows how to create environments in which want to live, why shouldn't that same expertise relating the store a place where people would enjoy shopping things with which they live?" Am I right?
A. Y-e-s.
Q. So let's talk to that whole point.
A. Well, I think it really started earlier than that. Because I had been an assistant to Henriette Granville, working on the model rooms. She selected all the colors and fabrics and really set the tone for the rooms, and I was responsible for helping her put them together and helping her accessorize them, but all under her direction.

There again, she was an excellent teacher and I was given extraordinarily good direction for a period of about five years. At that time she resigned from Bloomingdale's, and I received a phone call from Marvin Traub to accompany him to Grand Rapids, which was then the important furniture market for our industry. And riding out on the plane, he proposed that I should take over the position of designing and decorating model rooms and working on the development of merchandise for Bloomingdale's.

Really one of the things... Most people think that all that I did, or all of us involved in fashion coordination during that period, that all we really did was sit back and design model rooms. But the rooms were really a showcase for collections of merchandise that we felt made sense. And we traveled all over the world and created furniture, first in France and then in Italy, and in England, Spain, Portugal. And, of course, the Scandinavian countries. And the furniture kind of created the mood.

Before we ever went off on these trips to Europe,
we would sit and have think-tank sessions to come up with probable collections of furniture that made sense, and that would be salable at Bloomingdale's but would also have a fashion leadership image. Then we'd go off to Europe and work on the design of them; we would go over with all of our ideas in November, come back in January and really place the orders. Along with the development of the furniture, we worked on the design of rugs, fabrics, lamps, bought lots of antiques in the way of furniture and accessories to enhance the model rooms, and were constantly working on opening up new markets and looking for new ways that we could reach out to enhance the already growing collection.

So, for years, along with doing the model rooms, I was equally involved in the product development. Which was very important to our development at that time. I was not alone in this. Marvin Traub and Carl Levine and I worked, really, as a trio. They very much involved with...

Q. What was Marvin's position then?
A. Marvin...let's see...was the merchandise manager for home furnishings.

Q. And Carl?
A. And Carl was the...Early on he would have been the buyer. Then he became a merchandise manager, but Marvin was the merchandise manager and Vice President in charge of... This doesn't make sense, but there were two vice presidents. At that time, there were two vice presidents. It was Oliver
Roberge who was in charge of part of the home store and Marvin had the other part, which was furniture, rugs and decorative accessories. Oliver Roberge had things like lamps, china, glass and silver. Which really doesn't pertain to this.

But the interesting things, in the early days of development, which are wonderful to look back and think about, were that we all traveled together and we investigated these markets in enormous depth, from early in the morning until the wee hours of the morning. Very, very long days, but going off into the countryside to visit someone we thought might have the old wonderful country chairs that we were looking for. Going off into the countryside in another direction because we heard there was a wonderful source for antiques. Because we were constantly looking for the inspiration in real antique pieces that would act as the source material for what we actually developed. We used research material in libraries. We also used antique pieces.

So we were, in the very early days--before Marvin became involved in many other parts of the store--traveling together to all of the craftsmen and artisans who were the original creators, at the beginning of our move toward the fashion image, in the home store. And that was a very...

Q. So this was a very important cultural imprint ...

A. Very rare for retailers. There are others who have
done it, but we certainly did it for many, many, many years and in great depth.

Marvin made the first trips to France and Italy, probably it was in 1957 or 1958. And the chairs that are in his office right now, that are at his conference table, are chairs that he bought in Italy on that very first trip. And I remember the fact that he called Carl Levine and I into his office one day and said, "Tell me, whaddya think of these chairs?" And we said, "They are just fabulous. Where did you ever find them?" And, of course, it unfolded that he had found them up in the foothills of the Dolomites, in the factory of a man who became one of our most important manufacturers of Italian furniture. But there are many stores like that, where...In Spain, in Portugal, in Italy, in France...

We worked seven days a week, long, long, long hours, and no one really minded because it was a very exciting period of development. I keep repeating that...Because it was the very beginnings.

Q. That was...What decade was that?
A. This would have been....

Q. Seventies?
A. Oh, no. This was in the '60s. I made my first trip to Europe for Bloomingdale's in 1958, and Marvin and Carl Levine had brought the drawings over on a November trip for furniture that I had designed in New York from research material that I had found here. And they put the samples into
work. And then that following January or February I went back over there to see the samples and to make any necessary adjustments, and it was at that time that the first commode I had ever designed I saw coming toward me on the back of a donkey--strapped to the back of a donkey, coming across a field toward the factory. Because at that time, some of the factories were really cottage industries where the furniture was really made in various farmhouses around the countryside, during the depth of winter.

So, of course, that all changed. Because as the economy grew in Italy and as we placed more and more orders, we saw some of these very humble factories grow in great proportions and become very important to our business.

But that kind of thing evolved not only in the furniture business but...We bought lamp bases in India and lamp bases in Venice. Rock crystal in Venice, brass in India, laquer in Japan, hand turned, wooden balustrade lamps in Italy, beautiful glass lamps in France. And it was one of those things where the world just grew and grew as we explored new territories.

And it was in 1966, January, that a small group of us, including Marvin Traub, visited the Orient for the first time. And on that trip we went to China, Japan, Bangkok, Hong Kong, as well as our regular stint through Europe. And that was the beginning of...

Q. Of opening up the Orient.
A. ...of opening up the Orient. And then a few years later we went to India, and that was the beginning of opening up India, which has become a very important source to us.

Q. Well...

A. I don't know whether that covers the kind of thing...

Q. No, it's fine. Just keep going. what you're saying, though, is that he was part of a...There was a unity of commitment to seeking out the really great, wonderful new ideas that were part of, maybe, the old craft......

A. Yes.

Q. ....ideas, of old world and the oriental culture.

But what I'm really reaching for now is...

A. Is getting to where I am now.

Q. Not only where you are now, but what role did he play in keeping this going? How did he, as someone...Were you on a peer-equal level at that point?

A. No, no no.

Q. He was still...He was leading in some way wasn't he?

A. During this period he was the merchandise manager, and Carl Levine was the...He was the vice president in charge of home furnishings.

Q. So he was really leading this division.

A. And he was...
Q. And he was leading this division into new territory. Would you say?
A. Definitely.

I have to think a little bit. Because Mr. Davidson was still around, and Mr. Davidson was also constantly leading us into new territories.

But this is... The important thing was that at that point he was trying to dramatically increase our business. And it was his belief that we could do it by creating unusual, distinct merchandise that was exclusive to Bloomingdale's. And we were able to do it in Europe and in the Orient and in India because of the availability of craft people.

Now, this was not just a matter of collecting the creative merchandise. The model rooms and the furniture floor were used as a showcase for the merchandise. We would come up with ideas for the model rooms. I would create images: This is going to be a room for.... Oh, heavne...

Q. A rock star.
A. Well, no... Who is the... For instance, I would sit there and say, "I think this furniture would be perfect for a setting for Ernest Hemingway," because he traveled around the world and he would have had an eclectic collection of things. And I would go through the seven or eight rooms that we were doing at the time and dream up personalities, just for my own personal use, to be able to develop a personality around "a" kind of person, and have the variety that we needed.
Because it was very important in a store such as Bloomingdale's, located in New York City. We knew that our customers were a diverse, sophisticated, educated, well traveled, well read group of people. And it was our aim at that time to reach out to the various kinds of people involved in diverse professions and try to appeal to them. Of course, all of this was in home furnishings. And we did that not only by having a room based on English furniture, then an Indian room, a Spanish room, in order to create many images during that period. But we also housed all the collections of furniture out on the furniture floor. And we tried to create unusual vignettes, using all the accessories--lamps and rugs--that we had found all over the world.

That, then, progressed over a period of years. We were very successful....

Q. And very well publicized.

A. ...and the business grew and grew and grew.

Q. And it was really the traffic building card that you had. I mean, it was talked about, celebrated. And, I must say, as...And it was during your period, more than it has ever been, even since...It has never manifested itself the same, it hasn't had the same imprint since you've left. And I can tell you that. Whether or not you feel it...

A. Well, the thing is that...One of the reasons I keep saying it was such an exciting time was that although there were times when we would design a piece of furniture that
wasn't as successful as we may have wished, for the most part, the business kept growing and growing and growing. And the excitement came from the fact that, as a team, we were selecting things and doing things that worked. And there was a certain exhilaration that came out of that success.

Q. Well, room settings, as a traffic building concept, was not new. But it was the way you approached it, and it was developing the storyboard about people, and breaking up this business of a room coming in as a set from High Point, that was the difference.

A. Yes.

Q. And what I'd like to have you come to, as quickly as you can, for us, is at what point did Marvin, and was he the one, who said, "I want you to do it for the store."

A. Well, this is not for the tape, even though it will end up on the tape. But I reached a point where I had done the model rooms for 16 years, and I will have to get around to how we get to a smooth transition...I thought, "If I do one more model room, I'm going to go crazy!" Because, they were the same spaces and I did them four times a year for 16 years, and I reached my limit. And I discussed this with him, and I said, "If you can ever...It's hard for me to think where I can go from here, after all these years of experience, but I would think I could be of value to the store. If in your wisdom you can find a spot for me, I'd love to get out of the model rooms and do something different."
Now, how do we get gracefully from...That's what really happened. He called up one day and said, "I have something for you. I'm not sure about it. I want you to discuss it with your husband. This is an enormous transition for you. I want you to think about it over the weekend, but I'd like you to head up store design." And I said, "I'd like to do it." And he said, "I won't accept that. I want you to think about it. Because it's too dramatic a transition."

But I knew I wanted to do it, and I knew I had a lot to learn. Now, what do we say about that?

Q. Well, we say that that was a great career recommendation that he was making. Because we all know that retailers live more often in gridlock position, and new concepts for not just merchandise but for the movement of people don't happen. And the whole idea of seeing the validity of someone who understood the way people lived, and translating that into the right environment in which they should shop for the things with which they live, was a very important breakthrough management decision. Don't you think?

A. ....Yes...I have a feeling it was done with a little...you know, that it was done...

Q. It doesn't matter. Even if it was intuitive, the point is, he did it. It took courage. First of all, it took the ability to move out of the box. I don't know of any store that has done this for anyone in your field. Do you know of anyone who has moved into store design, or store planning?
A. Oh, I'm sure it must have happened, but I can't think of anyone.

Q. I don't know of any. I don't know of any. As far as I'm concerned you were the first, and I don't know...I'm a pretty close reader of...I don't know of anyone who has moved into it. The problem right now is that the visual merchandise people have taken over the store planning operations. I mean, they're moving the store planners out of position because visual merchandising is more sizzle and faster, and the people who are growing up in it are more...

A. Much more professional.

Q. Well, much more New Wave in their thinking. The store planning is still in the Dark Ages in many areas, the people in them.

A. Oh, definitely.

Q. So, I think this was, from the point of view of management decision making, a powerful difference. And I don't care how it happened. Whether he only came to it because you charged him with telling him, but it was a big switch.

How else do you see him as having made a difference in retailing?

A. Well...

Q. He certainly has made a difference in your life.

A. Oh, absolutely.

Q. How does he lead? How does he lead?

A. He's constantly reaching out. When you think that
you've just about gotten to the point where you've figured out the right way to do something, it's time to move on. He's never...

Q. He's restless.
A. Well, he's never static. It isn't so much that he's restless as it is that... Let me think... He is the grand orchestrator of this business, regardless of what anyone has to say. He is the one who is constantly challenging us all to reach further, never satisfied with the fact that it's nearly a job well done, and I mean that in the best way possible. He is constantly challenging us to reach ever higher, and to reach out and to be constantly looking for new directions, to be...

Q. Risk taking.
A. Oh, obviously to be risk taking. But, it isn't only a matter of constantly being on the lookout for new merchandise. That doesn't affect my life as much now, other than the fact that I have to be constantly aware of any new merchandise. But he is reaching out into the world of architecture, art, music, fashion--any of the things that influence the lives of the people who visit our stores. In display--in store design--we are trying to create environments that are, that reflect what's going on in the world in all the fields of art and architecture and literature. For instance, whenever we have a major country event or store promotion, there are always cultural exhibits that represent the best of what the country involved in the promotion has to offer.

Q. Therefore, education for retailing today, from his
point of view, is what?
A. Well, he is...He's constantly trying to educate the customer, and he's constantly always trying to educate all of us.
Q. To...?
A. To be aware of the cultural signals that are around in New York and all over the world.

Let me...You know, it's one of those things that's difficult...When you are just part of it, and it's part of everyday life, you have to....
Q. Well, let's put it on a very personal basis: What's the most important thing he's done for you? As a professional?
A. Well, over...He...I guess...He recognized me as a talented person and gave me every opportunity that I have had in this store to grow. And that has been going on for many, many years, because it was in...25 years ago or more that he gave me the opportunity to design the model rooms and to work with him on the development of merchandise. All right? And he has encouraged and developed me and given me the opportunity to develop over a period of years, and given me enormous responsibility.
Q. What, if you were talking about him to a group of Europeans or Orientals, who didn't know about him, how would you describe him? As a man?
A. In one simple sentence?
Q. Two...Three...A paragraph. I don't care....You know...
You're sitting around, we're having drinks, and somebody says, "What's he like? What is he like?"

A. He's an extraordinarily energetic person. Deeply involved in the business. Knowledgeable about the most minute details of the business. He has grown in this business from the bottom up, and truly understands all of the various processes of even the lower levels of....Oh, dear...This is where I'm not good...I'm not a good verbalizer...

Q. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. We're just talking in the living room, and...You know...I'd like to know him, through your feelings about him...Does he touch you in a human way?

A. Oh, yes. He is an enormously human person. The important thing would be...And certainly starting from the beginning, that he has an insatiable curiosity. He doesn't ever just skim the surface of any given problem. He is constantly delving into...

Q. He himself is a student then, you're saying?

A. He is a student of this business...

Q. He is a self-educated person, in terms of not only the business, but...

A. He loves this business with a passion that is unmeasurable. And he is involved in, particularly in...He's certainly involved...We've grown to be such an enormous business now that there are areas that he's not as involved in. But, I'll tell you...When you ask me about Marvin Traub, although
know lots about what he's doing now, if you truly ask me about Marvin Traub, I think of the early days of the development; how this whole business has grown. And I happen to be in a position where I have been a part of it and I have seen it grow. And the most important part of it was that he investigated every facet of every single business in Bloomingdale's. It started out with home furnishings. Every part of it: Gifts, china, glassware, investigating markets all over the world...

Q. He knows those classifications.
A. He thoroughly understands those classifications and the people in it. He then moved on to the whole world of fashion and ready-to-wear.

Q. Same thing.
A. He got to know all of the American manufacturers, traveled all over Europe, all over the world, meeting designers, talking with them, working with our buyers, working with the fashion coordinators in developing the fashion end of our business in ready-to-wear. And that he worked on for many, many years. Probably, Mr. Krensky was his mentor in that area. In fact, he was.

But, what is it that makes him...It's the fact that he's involved in every aspect of the business. It's the fact that...

Q. Not cloistered. Not cloistered....Is he accessible?
A. Oh, he's very accessible. Very accessible. For instance, in store design, he is involved in...He would probably
like not to be but he can't help himself... He's involved in every detail of what we do.

Q. But he loves architecture.

A. Well, he loves architecture, but he's also involved in creating an atmosphere that is exciting, daring, and makes it fun for customers to shop in.

Q. All right. Let's stop and think for a minute, and then you tell me what distinguishes Bloomingdale's for you today? Where does it stand in what we call this complex marketing time, where department stores are under siege, and are being written off by many, many sectors. Why do you think that Bloomingdale's has not only achieved the position it has, but what has made it an internationally known institution in the world? Why hasn't it fallen into the same trap as so many others? What do you think is the difference here?

A. Well... Part of the things that I've already stated, in the sense that we have never sat complacently back and just thought, well, you know, we've done that very well, and stopped at that point. Marvin Traub has always encouraged each and every one of us to reach, to be constantly reaching, for new resources.

For instance, for the people who are involved in merchandising, he is constantly reaching for new designers, looking for young people who aren't really well known but who show potential; that we will show their clothes in order to make them become... to give them an audience. We're constantly
...We've never just sat still.

I know that none of this sounds good for this thing...

Q. It's fine, it's fine. You're not the only one who's talking, so it'll be fine.

A. The main thing is that we are constantly reaching for new ideas. The...

You know, one of the things that I haven't said is the fact that there is an extraordinary amount of teamwork. It was no one person who does it all.

Q. Yet teams are supposed to make camels, not horses.

A. Well, the teams...There are...

Q. How do you have a creative process with teams? What's the secret there, since consensus often dilutes the creative process?

A. Usually people think that people like myself just dream up creative, architectural designs, put them on paper, and they're used. Nothing that we do is done for aesthetic reasons. It is all driven by the business.

Q. All right. This is exciting now. Tell me how store planning...What about the store planning process at Bloomingdale's makes it...adds to its uniqueness?

A. Any major renovation, or any change in the design of a department, is something that has come about as a result of changes in the business, or the need to make a change in the business. It is driven by the fact that we either need to
enlarge our ready-to-wear... I don't know how detailed...

Excuse me for a second (interruption)...

Q. Store design, today, is very different from what it was even five years ago. You made history, throwing away the mold, with your cosmetic approach to color. Department color.

What now? What drives it now? What's making the difference now at Bloomingdale's as far as design? What's the different philosophical point that has come down from management, specifically, from Marvin? How has he affected store design thinking?

A. There's always a need to grow the business. Let's face it: Retailing is built on thinking of ways to increase square foot revenue. That's...

Marvin and the other merchants are constantly looking for ways to grow the business. Now, in the process of doing that, there are certain businesses that are destined that they recognize are the ones that are ready to grow, or can be grown, and usually...

I can't do it this way. I have trouble with this kind of thing...

Q. All right, let me ask you one question...

A. In other words... For instance, probably when you speak to him and when you speak to someone else, we have just... Last year we opened a new fourth floor.

Q. Yes. Let's talk about that.
A. The reason for doing a new fourth floor was the fact that we knew—"we" collectively—new that we needed to grow the fashion, ready-to-wear business. We needed to have individual shops for the important fashion collections and fashion designers. There was no way that we could do it in the space that we had allocated. So it meant Marvin and the merchants and all of us involved in discussions over a period of maybe two or three years, that involved how were were going to reallocate all of the square footage in Bloomingdale's in order to free the entire fourth floor of all the businesses that existed there, in order to be able to have all of the designer merchandise together—the fashion design merchandise. And that was a very long and involved project, that involved doing detailed block plans for every floor in the store. It involved taking almost the entire buying organization and moving it into a headquarters which is a couple of blocks from Bloomingdale's in order to recapture important space that was, as we call it, behind the scenes. So there was an enormous master plan.

Anything that we do is planned on paper, in addition to...For instance, it isn't just for aesthetic reasons that we decide that a certain fashion designer should be in a shop of a certain size...

Q. That I understand. But you do have an aesthetic, decision-making talent and it is your eye and it is your taste that he is counting on. So whatever happened on that floor, you were very much a part of that. Is that true?
A. That is true.
Q. And you led the way. And really what I'm saying right now is, what is the aesthetic of Bloomingdale's? Can you capture that for me before we leave? What is the aesthetic? What is the Bloomingdale aesthetic? What are the guidelines? What's the criteria?
A. Do you know, I've been asked that question so many times, and we've never really come up with an answer. We've never really... Do you know what I really believe it is? I am asked that question so frequently, and I have a difficult time coming up with the answer, and I always revert back to the fact that there is a team effort. Because... Although "B-way" grew out of the fact that...
Q. Well, you certainly didn't see it in "pink and blue."
A. Something like "B-way" grew out of the fact that when you have...

Bloomingdale's had no main floor at all. Bloomingdale's had no historic image. And when the time came to create an image for the main floor of Bloomingdale's, I kind of looked to the one thing that had some historical background, which was the fact that the exterior of the building on Lexington Avenue was art deco. Well, I didn't feel that I could all of a sudden make the entire inside of Bloomingdale's art deco, but at least it gave us some reason for carrying some of that inside.
Now, most main floors of stores across the country are either white, or they're off-white, or they're beige, or there might be some that are peach colored. And none of those seemed to fit what we wanted to do here. We wanted to be a little bit more dramatic and a little bit more daring. And many years ago, when Marvin and I and a group of other Bloomingdale merchants were in India, I was in a room with a black-and-white marble floor. And we were still groping for some direction to turn to, and I asked Marvin if he--the whole group--would to see my room, which happened to be extraordinarily beautiful, in the "Lake Palace Hotel in 'Yudaiport.'" And I felt that it was a neutral; that any color would go with it, but that it also offered some excitement and some drama. And I did...At the time, Marvin felt it was an interesting idea but we should just think on it; we'll sit on that and see what else comes along, but that that's not a bad idea. But, you know, that's how that started, and it kind of grew from there, and ...

Q. And what was the aesthetic there?
A. Well, Boca......This is my office, my Boca office that has just come back with me...

We knew that because it was a store in Florida that we wanted it to be a very open plan, very airy, light colors, very pleasant, something that would fall into the atmosphere of a tropical climate. And...

You know why this is so difficult? This is never
going to...I hope I'm satisfying you a little bit...

Q. You are, you are.
A. ....but it's all a long story. None of it is ever simple. It has really grown and evolved. It all evolves.

For instance, there are certain things that we know work. Once again, it's the team effort. There are certain things...For instance (and this isn't something to be broadcast over dinner), but it's all these little things that add up. Everyone is putting their input into it. Let's say this: The vice president who is in charge of fashion accessories has very definite ideas about how she feels certain things should be shown. We listen to everything that she has to say, and then use our aesthetic abilities to select the right materials in order to give her what she wants. She has really come up with exactly what it is that she wants, and we apply our aesthetic...

Q. You translate it.
A. We translate it. And we really do that throughout the entire store. So that it isn't as though you just say, okay, now we're going to do a certain kind of look. It all works together. It is while you are sitting listening to what it is we need to do, in order to accomplish the merchandising objectives at the store, you then--based on what all of these people are telling you--hopefully absorb all of that and re-cast it.

Q. Reast it. I understand the creative process. But then what you're saying to me is that it is because the people
here are, to begin with, selected for their ability to be ready for change and just catch the winds of change, and they're open to it. And that whatever happens here, collectively, in this team process--does, in the end give you the difference here at Bloomingdale's.

A. You said it. I wish I could have said it as well.

Q. I also would observe that the fact that this particular structure, that this particular building, because it is not a simple shape, has created many more interesting shopping environments. Because it isn't a box. It wasn't built as a box. Because it is multi-leveled, and because it is a little bit of a cul de sac here and a cul de sac there...

A. Yes, well, we wish we could get rid of some of that...

Q. I know you do. But it's one of the things that creates not only a challenge for you, but also makes it a more interesting, although difficult to maneuver, store. But it does make it a more interesting store than one where you walk in and are absolutely certain of where it all goes.

A. There's...That's the catch-22 part of it.

Q. Anyway, thank you.

A. Anyway, I'm sure there's lots...
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