ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, F.I.T.

THE FASHION INDUSTRY LEADERS

ED NEWMAN

Vice President,
Creative Director & Director of Advertising

Dan River, Inc.

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Interviewed by
Mildred Finger
Q: For the Fashion Institute of Technology's Oral History Collections, and specifically for the history of F.I.T. itself, this will be an interview with Ed Newman, Vice President, Creative Director & Director of Advertising for Dan River, Inc. Ed Newman is a graduate of F.I.T. and he is also an instructor at F.I.T.

Ed, would you start off by telling us what it was that got you interested in this whole field, because you knew very young that you were interested.

A: Well, my grandfather was a hand weaver. He did a lot of designing of fabrics for interiors for churches, a lot of the work that went into St. Patrick's...

Q: That was in this country?

A: It was in this country. He was trained in Austria. But at the age of four, he used to take me to work with him and I would sit on his lap and help him warp a loom. This resulted in my being able to warp a loom as an adult and not being able to fix a car. Because I was taught aesthetics at a young age. I remember liking the packaging for my mother's makeup—not the makeup but the packaging—for Chenu. Those were my toys.

Q: Was your father involved in business?

A: I never knew my father. He died when I was two. So I lived with my grandfather, and he was the male influence. As he was a designer, I looked up to him and went toward design. It was second nature.

Q: What year was it that you were four years old and following him around

A: About 1937.
Q: Which means that you were born in 1933...
A: 1933...
Q: And so this really got you interested at a very early age...
A: I never thought I would do anything else but design fabric.
Q: Isn't that interesting.
A: And it seemed like a very natural thing that I got out of high school...
Q: Where were you living?
A: In Brooklyn.
Q: And what high school...
A: I went to James Madison High School, mainly because I didn't know Music & Art existed. I would like to have gone there when I learned about it later. And I asked the guidance counselors what schools there were for textile design. I never thought of going through the school to get a scholarship at the time, but I went right to F.I.T., applied to the school, and went on total scholarship, as most students did in those days.
Q: What year was it that you entered F.I.T.?
A: 1951. And do you remember what it was like at that time?
How many students, approximately....?
A: Well, it was attached to the School of Needle Trade. We had the top two floors of Needle Trade High School, on 24th Street. There were about eleven people in my class; only nine graduated. So the class became a little family. And the courses were extremely interesting then because
it wasn't limited to textile design. We did illustration, life drawing, and textile technology. So we really made use of everything the school had to offer. It seems to be the direction the school is now going in again so that the students learn a little bit about everything the fashion industry has to offer. I probably was not one of the best students in school. Far from it. But I loved what I was doing, and always knew I would be a success.

Q: How long were you in those upper floors of Central Needle Trades?

A: When I was there... I was in the first graduating class that was part of the State University, and it was a number of years afterwards that the school built the new facilities and moved...

Q: So you spent your entire Institute years in that place.

A: Yes, I did. And...

Q: You say there were eleven students in your...

A: In my textile design class.

Q: What other majors were there?

A: The other majors were management majors, fashion design, and a very strict millinery major.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And people went to school dressed properly, the way most people did in the '50s, and...

Q: You wore a jacket and pants and tie...

A: Yes, and girls who were taking millinery class had to wear hats. . . I remember there was a big scandal because a bunch of the fellows, including myself, wore bermuda shorts one day in the summer...
Q: You went to school in the summer too...
A: No, the spring. And the school tried to outlaw that but they really couldn't...

Q: I assume there was no air conditioning...
A: I don't believe there was. But that wasn't the reason. It was like a big deal to make a big fashion statement. At the time we also felt very special and very fashion-like and, you know, lunch hours would be used discovering things like Sutton Place and Greenwich Village. We took a lot of classes in the Brooklyn Museum, when Michele Morgan was alive, and we did the research of fabrics there, the history of fabrics.

Q: I assume in those days there were no facilities for out of town people to live at the school.
A: No. None at all.

Q: Were there out of towners in the class?
A: None. They were all New Yorkers, all from the boroughs.

Q: Do you have any idea how many students there were all together, not just in your class in textile design.
A: I vaguely remember 75. That seems to come to my mind, that might have been my graduating class. It might have been 75 students.

Q: How many males, how many females?
A: Actually the ratio of the class at the time was four boys and seven girls, and it seemed like . . In my particular class, in textile design. And in comparison, the ratio seemed to be better balanced at the time. There were more girls taking the course today than men. A bigger percentage, we women; much bigger.
Q: In textile design. What about textile production? Is there a distinction?

A: No, there wasn't a textile technology major at the time; it which was just a course that I took, given by George Lippman who wrote a book which we used as a bible for the course...

Q: Did you really? Why?

A: It was boring at the time, and I still...went back to the book years later, and it was a very valuable course to me, in my whole life...

Q: I'm sorry. You went back to...?

A: The book. And my notes. Years after I graduated. And I realized it was a very valuable course. Very. I don't believe that without that course I could have become a successful textile designer or could have risen to the position I have.

Q: Do you think of yourself as having creative work to do or technologic work to do, or a combination...

A: Creative. Creative, but without knowing the technical parts, I don't think I'd create as well. Even though sometimes you try and dust it out of your head, and just go ahead and say that the technical people will take care of this. I find what I know technically very helpful. When I worked at Lowenstein's as a print stylist I spent many weeks down in the mill, actually working at the machine, checking colors and learning how to set blades and understanding the principals of printing. And I don't believe you can separate the creativity from the tools and machinery you're working with.

Q: And, of course, you probably benefit from the fact that you know what can and what cannot be done.

A: Yes. And know how. But always try to expand what the
machines can do.

Q: Right. Now, how did you get started in the industry itself, once you were out of school? Or did you start while you were in school?

A: While I was in school, I was doing some work at the school for a small textile company, doing color combinations, and then in school they had a co-op program, and I worked for Cohn Hall Marks and I lasted four days; I was fired. I expected to come out and do nothing but create, and the reality of an industry that has to produce and make money suddenly hit me. And I became numb. I couldn't work. I wanted to do nothing but wonderful patterns and wonderful colors and I couldn't understand it when they said, "Do this in chartreuse." and I'd lay this chartreuse next to the cerise and say "It's ugly." And they'd say "No matter." And I just couldn't do it. And I lasted four whole days, and I went back to school and said, "What did I get myself into?" Here was my grandfather, who did nothing but original designs, creating beaded bags that were used by the President's wife at the Inauguration. Wonderful wall hangings for churches and temples, and here am I doing a copy in bad colors, for a very ugly show. And I realized that I was going to find the best color combinations when I get out of school and the best patterns possible. And I had a few small jobs working for studios...

Q: While you were still in school?

A: Right after graduation. And I remember asking for a $20 raise...I think I was making $35 at the "Cerumi" Studios on Broadway...

Q: How do you spell "Cerumi"?

A: I don't know. S-e-r-o-n-i...I remember it was not air conditioned and it was a half hour for lunch. I went until...

Q: What year was this?
A: '53. And I said to Mer Seroni that I would like a $20 increase and he said, "When?" and I said in two weeks. And he said, "Better yet, leave today."

Q: How much were you earing?

A: $35. And I was doing nothing but original designs. And I asked the bookkeeper who was buying my originals, and I went up to Stiffel Fabrics, 40 Worth Street, and said, "I'm the young man who has created a lot of the patterns you have bought." And they said, "Which ones?" and I said, "Show me your line." And they showed it and I was picking the patterns, and they said, "What did you want to begin on salary?" And I began working there for $50 a week.

Q: At that time most of the firms were downtown.

A: Yes. Lowenstein was still downtown and Dan River was I believe. And I worked there for about a year and a half or two years, and being brazen as only a 20 year old can be, when my stylist snapped his fingers at me a few times, I said to myself that if he ever did that again, I would leave. He did it again, and I went to lunch and never came back. I decided to get a summer job. It was summer time. I wanted something that I wouldn't have to think about until I did what I really wanted. I was offered a few jobs...I remember one of them was Maxwell Fabrics, one was Mr. Lowenstein. And I thought, "Oh, this will be an easy thing." and stayed there for 13 and a half years; my first summer job.

Q: At Lowenstein.

A: At Lowenstein.
Q: Doing print fabrics.

A: Doing print fabrics. I went in as a colorist. I was Assistant Stylist in six months. I was styling not that far afterwards. And I looked around at that time and said, "Well, I don't know if I'm very good and those people are no good." And I still don't know the answer. But I enjoyed it. I always felt I was being paid for having a good time. We all have some bad days, but by and large it's very seldom I don't want to go to work.

Q: How much of an effect on your employability do you think was your being a graduate of F.I.T.?

A: I think without F.I.T. I wouldn't have had a future.

Q: Really?

A: I really think so. The same as I related back to a course that I didn't like at the time, and thought how much it meant to me later on. I am still in contact with some of the people who taught me like the head of the department, Professor Morse, who began the textile design department at F.I.T. I still write to her, because I still believe that she's the reason ...She alone was the reason for my success. And one other teacher that I had, Henrietta Rice, who was a wild, creative, wonderful woman. And I think my affiliation with the school now is like giving back a little for all that I got.

Q: Well, before we get into your association with the school now, were the instructors that you had people who had academic or technical background or industry...?

A: Industry. They were all industry people. And they were, of course, much more brazen in the teaching than I am or teachers are today. You know, they would rip up your drawings if they thought they were terrible, or
come over and correct them. When you thought someone was marring your work of art, and wondered how could they do it? It was very hard, because you went almost the same hours that industry works. And you had tons of homework...

Q: That you could do at home without machinery or..?
A: Yes. But it was all great fun. I remember that in order to finish drapery patterns for a project, I had to rent a room at McBurney's Y and bring my art supplies there and put paper on the wall and do the patterns, because there was no place in my mother's home that I could have that much space to work, or work uninterrupted.

Q: Where did you get the fabrics to work on when you worked on a project for school, or did you work in fabric?
A: You didn't work in fabric. It was all painting. We had a hand weaving class but that was using yarn. But I think...The industry respected the F.I.T. training. It opened doors. It still does. But especially did then because it was newer.

Q: At that point was F.I.T. the only school that was teaching the technical part of the business, or...
A: I think it was the only one that was doing reality. You know, you had Parsons...It wasn't part of New School then but it was really a rich girls' school, and you had some other schools, like Phoenix, but it didn't get down to the real nitty gritty of it. Although Phoenix did have some of the same instructors.

Q: On a free lance basis.
A: Yes. But I remember wanting to change at Lowenstein one day. I had been there 13½ years, and I walked down the hall and someone said,
"Ed Newman is a lifer, like I am." And I said, "My God, I'm not even young anymore." And that week I picked up a newspaper—the Daily News Record—and went for an interview with Wallberger Fabrics who owned William Anderson Fabrics. And I wanted to do more fashionable fabrics. And I paid half the agency fee and went from having my own office, a corner office with windows and my own studio to work in at Lowenstein's to go back on the drawing board as well as styling, working in a room with no windows and two other stylists. And it was the best move I ever made. I told a terrible lie to Lowenstein that I was going....that my father-in-law was ill and I had to take over his business, to break my contract.

Q: You had contracts in those days?
A: All stylists had contracts. I'm positive now, looking back, that they didn't care that I was leaving, but I thought it was sort of like the President of General Motors leaving. And once at Wallberger Fabrics I began sitting, creating, doing what I wanted again, but doing higher fashion. I put patterns of my own under my arm and had the freedom to go to people like Bill Blass and Anne Klein, and sell my own work, through the firm. And the bigger they were, the nicer they were to work with. I remember Bill Blass sitting on the floor with me to go through my portfolio, and working...I met Bill through Tom Fallon, who had come to Wallberger to review our lines. We started getting into the era of the hot young designer, and I began doing a lot of prints for people like Cathy Hardwick, Diane and Pinky, I did all of the prints for Betsy Johnson during the period.

Q: This is all for Wallberger?
A: All for Wallberger.

Q: How do you spell Wallberger?
A: W-a-l-d-b-e-r-g-e-r. And I started printing on knits, not
realizing that I was the first person to put underwear knits into sportswear, and had to find a print plant in upstate New York, in Perry, New York, the Perry Print Plant who did infant's knitwear, and by holding pink rollers under the rollers of the machine, we struck off the patterns.

It was during this period that I began getting press, and different people that I worked for, did prints for, were telling the magazines who did them...I remember Diane and Pinkey was the first to give me name credit in Seventeen Magazine. Most fashion designers at the time would say, "I bought this design abroad," or "I had it worked up." They wouldn't say, "This human being, who is also a creative being, actually created this for me." So it was quite a thrilling thing for me to start seeing my name in print, and having my work covered by Women's Wear and Daily News Record.

At that point, it was a bad time in the industry.

Q: About what year was this now?
A: This must have been '60s. Early '60s. The factors pulled out from Waldburgers and Waldburgers went out of business, and...

Q: It was very typical then, that factors were the ones who financed the textile business...
A: Yes, it was. And I went then to work for Lory Fabrics, a small firm.

Q: L-o-r-y?
A: It was a low end firm that I shouldn't have been with, but I needed a job and I did just what I wanted. They didn't know how to sell it. But I had so much publicity, it just about made my career. I did things for, again, funny people like "Bouncing Bertha's Banana Blanket." Hot little firms.
Gentleman John. I did an awful lot of things for Willi Smith. And saw great loyalty from the designers. Unbelievable...When I was fired at Lory Fabrics--they really did not know how to sell what I had done--I remember Willi Smith calling up and saying if they didn't know enough to keep me he was cancelling his order. And I just felt it was wonderful to have this kind of comradeship, and to realize these people were working hand in hand with me and were not enemies, as I had felt at one point before.

Q: Now...I don't want to interrupt you but I don't want to lose a thought...At what point did you begin to become involved with F.I.T. as an instructor...

A: I became involved with F.I.T. as an instructor when I was at Lowenstein, so it really goes back...I would go and teach on my lunch hour.

Q: But not at night.

A: No, during the day. I would teach on my lunch hour...

Q: And you started that when?

A: I must have been out of school six years. Which would have made it..


Q: Now, how had the school changed in those years.

A: It was starting to grow...

Q: They weren't any longer in the Needle Trades Building.

A: They had one building on 27th Street, and starting to take on a real college feeling. You were getting almost a campus feeling. And the students seemed to be of even a higher calibre.
Q: I was going to ask you about comparing students...What had brought most of your classmates and these young people to the school? I mean, were they, like you, people who really had known for a long time they were going to go into the textiles?

A: All of them in my class were from the high school of Industrial Art. They came from odd high schools, and knew very well what they wanted to do. They knew what they were getting into. I think you find a more varied student body--and, of course, varied from all parts of the country and the world, today and have for quite a while. The school has changed; the instructors have changed. When I first went to F.I.T. it was almost like a private little jewel that became this great big, important part of the industry. I remember when I was let go from Rory Fabrics, I had always thought, "Some day I'll be fired at 5:00 on a Friday," and there it happened. It was my first big rejection. It was very hard to swallow. And I think the next four days I must have gone on 100 interviews. Like a madman, with his work ethic--you can't be out of work. I never got to collect unemployment insurance I was working in a week. I had been making $20,000 and I took a job for $15,000, because I could not stand being out of work.

Q: I'm sorry. This was when?

A: This must have been the early '70s. Late '60s.

Q: And throughout this period you had gone to F.I.T. You had begun to teach at F.I.T., and to lecture at F.I.T. And worked at Galleon fabrics...

Q: I'm sorry. Would you spell that?

A: G-a-l-l-e-o-n...To go back a little...At Waldburger fabrics,
I had become a Vice President of the firm, and I was a Vice President for Lory Fabrics also. And at Galleon Fabrics, I went in as Styling Director; I sat in a room with the President, and was learning about running the firm, and learning more of the workings of a textile organization. I found that very valuable. I realized I liked business. I began doing a lot of special things for Van Heusen, for people who have become famous now who were then working as assistant shirt designers, like Allan Flusser. I worked there for about a year.

During the period there, and when I was at Waldburger Fabrics, I had been interviewed by Dan River, about six times, and turned down every job they offered me.

Q: Why?
A: It wasn't big enough or exciting enough.

Q: Were they...Did they make only a limited number of fabrics?
A: I just found them a staid organization, and not creative enough. And when Jerry Sager became president in the early '70s, he was interested in getting a creative director or fashion director for the firm and he had heard about me through the press and different people, and found out from personnel that they had interviewed me a number of times. I got a call from the personnel director, who said, "Ed, would you do me a favor? Would you come back one more time? Because the new president would like to meet you?"

I remember coming in for the interview being cocky as you can be only when you don't really want a job. He said, "Why don't you want to work here, Ed?" I said, "The place bores me." And he said, "What bores you?" And I said, "Let's start with your carpet." And I said, "You walk in and there's no reception room. You walk in and you see bowling trophies. It looks like a men's club, not a fashion house!" And we went...I showed him some of my work
and we chatted a little. I left, and... This was on a Wednesday, and it seems he called the personnel director after I left and said, "I don't really think Ed Newman is for us." But when he called up a few other people in the industry... And I found out that later that the remarks he had received were, "If Ed Newman tells you to do something, wait a year and then do it." Jerry Sager said, "It takes us a year at Dan River to do anything. Let's hire him now." And I got a call saying... On Thursday, saying we'd like to show you the facilities." I wasn't sure if he meant the men's room or what... But I came back over, and he said, "Would you like to be in charge of men's or women's wear?" And I said, "Both." And they said, "Are you serious?" And I said, "I'll do both for what you'd offer me for one, because if you're going to get two people you're looking for a problem." And I was hired on that day, as Creative Director of the firm, with all the artists on my payroll...

Q: How many artists? Because you work so differently from the apparel field. I mean, there might be one sketcher per designer, or...

A: At that point we must have had about 22 artists, about...

Q: Working on a free lance basis?

A: Working in-house. Yeah. And three on dyes and about four doing prints for apparel, and two doing prints for home fashions. And I came into the firm and the first two weeks I just wrote notes about changes I felt should be done. Most of them have been done. The first thing I did was insist they raise all the artists' salaries, which made the artists work better.

Dan River was always a pleasant place to work, but didn't pay enough and didn't have enough pressure. It didn't have the excitement of the garment industry. We now have stylists... Each stylist in the firm, and there
are about nine, had accounts like salesmen; they all work with customers. The studio has fourteen of us now, an Assistant Art Director and an Art Director and we work with about ten free lance artists.

Hunt Fashions has become a company unto itself.

Q: Were you involved with that too?
A: And now I have a carpet company.

Q: So now you must have added enormously to your staff.
A: Oh, yes, we have. And also, better people and a better way of working and better compensation.

Q: Dan River, I assume, is a public company.
A: No, Dan River became a private company a year and a half ago, employee owned. An "ESOP" company...

Q: I see. It had been originally....
A: A public company. It's a 102 year old firm with about $600 million capacity.

Q: What does 600 million mean?
A: That's our volume.

Q: Where are your mills?
A: Mainly in Danville, Virginia. We're the second biggest employer in Virginia, the first being the Navy yard. We have about 9,000 people on staff in Virginia.

Q: Where do those people get their training?
A: Most of them get jobs in the mill and work their way up a lot, and there are technical schools in the South.

Q: The South has a lot of them, I suppose.
A: Yes. Because of the industry being there so long. And through
the years my job at Dan River changed drastically. I became involved working closely with the advertising department. And about six years ago I became Advertising Director as well. I took over the advertising and for two years did it in-house so I would learn it, directly. I did all the ads by myself, helped do the layouts, speced the type, did the shooting.

Q: Did you go back to school...?

A: No. I find that a lot of the training that I got at F.I.T. in fashion helped me understand all of this. And different free lance jobs I had through the years, like designing some of the displays for Revlon many years ago, helping a friend of mine work on naming colors for Revlon's color line...A free lance thing. But it helped me understand what copy was. And how to writ copy. I don't consider myself a great copywriter, but I understand it. And I understood enough about photography to go on the shoots and lie on the floor with the photographer to get the right angle and shoot. I would pick my own models, styled my own ads very often, and accessorized them. Put on fashion shows...Major ones, like at the Rainbow Room or New York, New York for an audience of 300 people; $60,000 productions. I think a lot of it was done with just chutzpah. And being exposed, seeing how other people put on fashion shows. Traveling to Europe and seeing the European shows.

Q: I meant to ask you that earlier. When did you start going to Europe?

A: I didn't start going to Europe until I was at Dan River because...I was busy raising a daughter. About '72, '71.

Q: Yes, we really haven't touched very much on your private life during this period. You had been married...
A: I was married, had a daughter. I was married right after school. I was 20 years old, when I was a father. That was the first of three marriages.

Q: Really.

A: Yes. And my wife used to help me doing free lance work...

Q: Your first wife...

A: First wife. And ended up being a textile designer, working for Burlington. We're in direct competition. My second wife I met when I was taking dancing class, and did some amateur productions in the Village, like The Boyfriend, Off-Broadway, and my third wife...was a girl in advertising. And right now I'm unmarried and a grandfather to a three month old little boy.

Q: Yes, right. Now, let's go back to your teaching at F.I.T. You started a long time ago....And how did that change...

A: I started a long time ago, and then I didn't for a number of years. I don't remember what that year was, really. But I went on to teach in the evening and came back and taught in the evening....

Q: Now, were these courses that you set up yourself, or were they courses...

A: There were some courses that were there, but then I restructured them from industry knowledge, with industry knowledge, and through F.I.T. I did end up teaching seminars and workshops in Tokyo, through the Asahi people. And then I was invited to Taiwan to teach there by the Taiwan government, because of the press that I had received in the Orient, which, of course, I was unaware of. And enjoyed that experience, very much. So F.I.T. has really helped me again by giving me this entree into other countries
and to a satisfying experience and...

Q: How do those students differ from American students?

A: Very different, completely different. I have found that American students, if asked to redo something, ask them to do it again, and they'll do it. The third time they'll really be angry but they'll do it. And forever, they'll be able to do a pattern like that. I find that you can ask the Oriental student to redo something 400 times; he'll be equally polite and grateful the 399th time, but the next time he has a similar problem, it's step one again.

Q: Really.

A: Yes. I find that they don't connect textile design to fashion, they'll just do hundreds of wonderful patterns and you'll look through them and see what will work for the season. Here, textile designers realize it's fashion and begin with a whole story and a whole look for the season. They understand what type patterns will go according to the silhouette into fabrication. I don't find that happens in the Orient at all.

Q: So it's really a totally different culture.

A: Yes, it is. And, I know that Western clothing is new to them. It's really after reconstruction after the Second World War, but I don't think they understand it. They enjoy it and they wear it well; in fact they enjoy it more than we do. But I don't find that the students I had there could offer as much as an American student, because the whole concept of ready-to-wear and sportswear is American. It's part of our life, as couture is part of Europe's.
Q: Anyway, to talk a little bit more about the F.I.T. courses, what courses were you teaching at night, when you started teaching at night?

A: Color courses and yarn dye course and elementary textile design. I taught...I've also taught one semester at Parson's in the evening and found that the facilities for teaching weren't as keen as they were at F.I.T., and I guess my loyalty pushed me back to F.I.T., and also a protest from Miss Janover.

Q: Are you a tenured person at F.I.T,?

A: I'm tenured. I'm tenured. I'm also on the Board of Directors of the Foundation.

Q: How have the courses changed over the years, or how has the curriculum changed? Just for your area, or for any other area that you're familiar with?

A: I think it's changing as the industry changes. When we first began chatting, I spoke about the millinery designs, which was a major. Well, it disappeared, just to be a course. And now it's coming back to be an expanded part of the accessory curriculum. So it's coming back in the industry, and it's coming back in the school curriculum.

Q: In other words, you think that the school is really responsive to the changing...

A: I think it tries to be. And it makes every effort...

Q: What kind of input do you give to it? What kind of input are you looked to for?

A: Really to see to the upgrading of the textile design curriculum, as textile design has changed in the industry. There are fewer
jobs in a textile company than textile design graduates.

Q: There was a point at which the unemployment in this industry was 18%, and that was not very long ago.

A: But it's changed, and it's changed because the same graduates no longer need come just to a Lowenstein or a Dan River or a Burlington. Liz Claiborne employs her own textile designer. Willie Smith does. Anne Klein does. And Manhattan Shirts. So that many of the fashion design houses now have textile design studios working directly for them. There are more opportunities for textile designers to do freelance work. A lot of firms don't want the overhead of an in-house designer. So I don't think there are fewer jobs; I think the jobs are just different. And I think that the textile design graduate has to be more fashion attuned, more than ever, if they're going to work for a high fashion house like Willie Smith or Liz Claiborne.

Q: Now, when they work for Willie Smith or Liz Claiborne, they do the design, and who does the execution?

A: Very often it might be done in the Orient.

Q: I was about to say....How much offshore production...?

A: An awful lot...An awful lot. But that doesn't mean that design students won't have a job...I mean, it's just that...It just means that mills like Dan River have to reorganize and offer different things to the customers.

Q: That is very interesting. I did the oral history of the garment industry, and, of course, the offshore production was gigantic, is gigantic in that industry. I think as much as 60% of the women's ready-to-wear is done overseas, except for the most expensive lines. It's generally true, so it does amount to a lot. And I'm curious to see if there is a
parallel in this industry.

A: Well, there's even another parallel that's stronger. Dan River and West Point Pepperell were the first two to go into #807 programs.

Q: In the Caribbean.

A: In the Caribbean basin. We must be producing garments in about nine different countries and locations for manufacturers who use Dan River fabrics.

Q: You said garments. You produce garments?

A: Oh, yes. The #807 program means that a customer would buy a Dan River fabric, we would have it cut for them into their specifications in Miami, then it would be...

Q: So that in a sense you're doing apparel manufacturing...

A: Yes. Exactly. But we're saving the textile business, as they're using our fabrics but they don't have to worry about an offshore production...where they have no guarantee it's going to be done. We're taking that responsibility off their hands. But we're not in competition with any garment manufacturer, because we don't do a Dan River line.

Q: You don't do a Dan River line. But then how does it get into the channel...the distribution channel? Are you doing private label in a sense, for the stores?

A: No. We do it like for Manhattan Shirts. And it will just be for Manhattan Shirts. And we've done it for Ship 'n Shore blouses. And it will be their label, their merchandise. We're just overseeing the manufacturing.

Q: But why would you be doing the overseeing of the manufacturing instead of Manhattan Shirts itself.
A: Because they don't want to get involved. They have no responsibility with it, the same as they wouldn't in offshore production. But here we're taking the responsibility and giving them the knowhow. We're saving our sales to get the American yardage sold and guiding the fabric through the cutting and the manufacturing and the packaging.

Q: So what you're saying is this doesn't mean there are fewer design jobs; it may mean there are fewer manufacturing jobs.

A: But it's not really taking away production jobs, or the government would not have allowed it or the garment union would never have allowed it. What it's doing is probably moving some offshore production from the Orient to the Caribbean basin.

Q: And you really think that is happening. That that's a reason for it to be encouraged by the government, as it obviously has been...

A: Yes.

Q: Have you, in your career, done anything like selling. I know you said you were able to be a salesperson in a business where you worked. But did you do anything like going on the road?

A: I go on the road constantly. I did since I was at Lowenstein. I go to the coast to work with big customers. I go to California...

Q: When you do that, do you take a salesmen with you?

A: Sometimes. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I'll do a fashion presentation, if I have the line with me. Sometimes a sketch I'll have done will be taken right off a board and worked up for a customer, like Levi. When the American dollar was not as strong overseas as it is now, I went with our export department and showed the lines at Interstoff and worked with
European customers.

Q: Do you go to Interstoff as a regular thing to see their...
...to see such lines as you can see over there?
A: No.
Q: You don't. Only if you're selling your own product.
A: I don't like to see what's been done. I'd rather go to pret-a-porter and get the guidelines of silhouettes. Also I like the excitement of fashion that Paris or Italy has in the air, and London at the time...
Q: So do you go to see the pret-a-porte shows nowadays.
A: Yes, I do. I've been going to the pret shows for the last eleven years. Thirteen years.
Q: Right. Let's talk about private label a little bit. I don't know what the significance of private label would be in this market, but I'm sure you can tell me.
A: Well, I think that private label--like a department store private label--I think eventually department stores, who are now quietly hiring designers to do the garments--will be hiring textile designers to do the fabric. I think that is going to be another outlet for creative textile designers.
Q: Do you have such a thing as a division that sells to the discounters; to stores...Of course, nowadays, I know over the counter isn't what it used to be. But do you still sell to organizations that sell over the counter?
A: Yes. We have an over the counter department. Since we do yarn dyes better than anyone else, we still do well with basic gingham checks...
and that sort of thing.

Q: Is it a different collection from what you sell to manufacturers?

A: Sometimes more fashionable, because 70% of the work we do for manufacturers are confined patterns.

Q: Which you would not sell over the counter.

A: We don't sell them to anyone except that one customer. But for over the counter, we have actually designed a line... We do a J.G. Hook line, for home selling. We do a Lynn Holland line of prints. We're going to do a Florence Eisman line of children's wear prints and plaids. And we're looking into the possibility of using a celebrity for a kitchen accessory line for home selling.

(Side 2)

Q: So you were saying that the kitchen area has become a meaningful one for designers.

A: Yes. We find that most people who are doing home sewing do crafts or sew for the home, and do lots of children's clothes. A woman who is working would rather go to a department store or discount store and buy a garment, which can be quite lovely, even if it's from K-Mart. But she still cannot find the quality of drapes or bedspreads that she wants, or would like making place mats, so the emphasis is going into the kitchen, with people enjoying cooking so much as a pastime. But they enjoy special things, be it aprons or place mats or whatever. And we see that crafts is a growth area in home selling.

Q: Tell me... Has your firm done any licensing. Have you been
involved in licensing, either of the name of the firm or licensing of the firm in Europe, or anything of that sort?

A: We haven't done it with our own firm. We've talked about it but we haven't done it. We are licensing other people, of course; the people we mentioned. We do have Marimekko licensee for home fashions, which is our most moneymaking area; most successful. We also carry the Porthault sheets. We're doing some Nina Campbell things now, and also Terence Conrad for the Millennium line...It's a white on white line; it's sort of the look of the future. But with each of these names that we are using for our sheets, it's not a designer name that's borrowed; it's actually a design concept that comes out of a design studio. Marimekko is really painted in Finland; designed there.

Q: You had talked before about advertising. Now, you said that at the beginning, you did your own advertising.

A: When I first became advertising director I thought, "My God, what a nervy thing for me to accept. And management said, "Well, you really have been guiding it anyway, as Creative Director of the firm (which is true)," not realizing that when the agency was talking to me about attitudes, I was really writing their copy. And I was having...selecting the fabrics, the garments. I was having the garments made. I was okaying the garments. I okayed the models. And it ended up that, "Well, I'm doing the advertising." After working a while with the advertising agency, Altman, Stoller, Weiss for apparel, I began thinking, "You know, I'd really like to get down to it and do it myself." I went to the President of the firm and he said, "Well, fine. Hire a mechanical artist and whatever else you need. Let me know what costs
you're going to need." Well, I saved a few hundred thousand dollars for
the company, and began an advertising campaign of my own.

Q: Now, we're talking about Dan River.

A: Dan River. And not only were the ads pleasant, but we
got people calling and buying yardage, sample yardage.

Q: So you were getting very direct response.

A: We were getting direct response from an advertising
campaign that the company asked nothing more from than an image campaign.
So that was very satisfying to me. Then after we became a private company
again we felt we had to do a different campaign, so that everybody would
know we're still here and important. So we used Bozell & Jacobs for the
last year, and did sort of testimonial campaigns. We hired Irving Penn to
do the photography, which was great and a great opportunity for me to work
with a genius, and had tops of industry like the President and Chairman of
the Board of J.G. Hook or Manhattan Industries sat what they thought about
Dan River fabrics; that they're still using it; they've been using it for
a long time. And it was sort of like telling the industry that we're still
here and we're healthy, even though we're not on the stock exchange anymore.
Now we're going back...We feel we made that point, not we're going back into
an image campaign with more of a fashion thrust.

I also have the publicity office reporting to me and am in
charge of the publicity...

Q: You have a PR office here on the premises...?

A: No. My assistant does publicity and is in charge of it,
plus I have Rea Lubar doing publicity for apparel and Jackie Burton doing
it for the home fashion area. And Rea Lubar also does it for our carpet division.

Q: You know, as we talk, it's so clear that you've gone into areas way beyond areas you might have studied at F.I.T. Now, of course, I'm sure part of this is just that you're a very...a person who has a great many interests and a great many capabilities...How do you think the curriculum at a school like F.I.T. should respond to what must be some sort of need in the market, if you have found this kind of place...

A: I think that...I was trained at F.I.T. to understand the school, and the fashion industry was very small. So that the fashion design students were next to you, as the management students were next to you, as the millinery students were next to you. But now the school is so large that you might not come into contact with someone in another division.

Q: Well, there is, for example, now an advertising division and there didn't used to be...

A: Yes. But I think it's necessary for the textile design students in the upper division to be exposed to advertising.

Q: Yes, that's what I was going to ask you. What sorts of courses do you think students of textile design in the upper division should be exposed to, or encouraged to...

A: I think they should understand fashion completely, which they didn't for years because textile designers thought of themselves as craftsmen. I think, in order to exist, they have to stop it, and realize that they're the first step in fashion. Understanding color, color theory classes, how to feel color, not to use a color wheel; understand the different
type of fabrics for different silhouettes. I think you must learn a certain
amount of interior decorating in order to know what kind of drapery or sheet
design to do to go with a certain mode of the time, whether it be William &
Mary or Art Deco. I think you need courses in...

Q: So you're saying you also need Art History.

A: Oh, yes. You need Art History; you need speech courses... I
think you need interview courses.

Q: Yes. Say that some more. That is important. Obviously
you've had to make a lot of presentations along the way.

A: I had a wonderful English course with a teacher who, the
last semester, turned it into nothing but psychodrama interviews. So we were
ready for it. And I think you need that type of training. I think it would
be important to have people see themselves on video, to see how they present
themselves, the way I just reacted to my own voice on a tape. Had I had
that opportunity in school, I probably would have gone for some voice training,
to lower my voice. I think you learn about your own body language by seeing
yourself on video. You might even learn about... My God, I shouldn't ever wear
that color shirt, ever again in my life. Or a lady say to herself, I should
only wear a dress, never a skirt or slacks, when I'm going for an interview,
going to a special thing.

Business courses, I think, are vital. In the beginning of my
career, I did free lance work I was never paid for. I didn't realize that I
should not leave polaroids of all my work without getting a receipt or getting
a business intent signed when somebody asked me to do some work. Knowing the
current price scale. So I think business courses are important.
Learning copyright laws. Learning how to incorporate yourself into being a business. And I think upper division students have the opportunity to become little free lance entrepreneurs and have to learn all of this. Even if they're just getting a taste of it and come back later and get more.

Q: Is there enough of this kind of thing being taught at F.I.T.?
A: I think there are enough of those courses, but I don't think that...I can only talk to my own division...They're not mixed into our upper division. So I think...I was part of writing...I brought to the attention of the division, I rewrote the upper division curriculum. It was started on by the other chairman.

Q: I must say, you're going to have to explain a little bit to me about this thing of upper division and lower division, because I really don't understand it.
A: Well, lower division is the two year associate course, which makes it part of Community College.

Q: And that's largely technical, regardless of what area you're in?
A: Well, it's largely basic.

Q: I mean, it's not English and history and French...
A: It's some of that also. Yes it is. It's a little bit of that. But it's community college level. With the upper division we're giving the Bachelor degree, and then you're getting people ready for Junior Executive positions. No one can go out of school, I don't believe, and become "a designer." You can't go to become a company buyer or a textile stylist, but you can be an assistant with right training. And I think we're
putting people into that second level, to the Bachelor...baccalaureate
divisions. But we have to be offering them more. We have to make them
more well rounded in the fashion industry, so that a textile designer, a
graduate of the upper division, can also go and be an assistant buyer. And
how wonderful if they can go and really work up special patterns for them­
selves with the manufacturer in the cloth. They'd understand more about
fabric; how we could be turning out people to work in the pattern companies;
to work for D.J. White at Mademoiselle. There are so many areas that our
graduates can go into that they don't have to be...They can be textile wise
but not necessarily the best artists.

Q: Do you see any great potential for students to become
executives on the management level in textile firms. For example, in the
apparel industry, the problem of succession...Where companies have so often
been totally entrepreneurial, the problems of succession are tremendous be­
cause they need young people, and there are not that many children of the
family...Does that same thing apply to the textile industry, or is it very
different?

A: Not with children of the family, because you're usually
dealing with bigger firms. But as far as people going into the higher positions,
yes it does. There aren't that many well rounded younger people because they
haven't knocked around.

Q: Yes. I guess what I'm really trying to ask is, is it more
likely that an MBA from NYU or wherever can make his or her way into the
upper executive structure...

A: No. I think that we've tried it. All the textile firms
have tried it and it really hasn't worked. We have a new merchandise manager for our light weight apparel goods. The young lady was a senior stylist; she was a textile designer. She began in the firm as a file clerk a long time ago, went to Phoenix and took textile design courses, studied in Florence for six months, and has moved into top management.

Q: So you're saying that the move into top management can easily come from the creative area.

A: Yes it can. The gentleman who is her direct equal in the men's area (she's in womenswear) came to us from Oxford Industries; he was a shirt designer. And he worked into being a merchandise manager. So you're getting this leanover of creative talent.

The Creative Director of our Home Fashion Division isn't an F.I.T. person, but he began years ago as the window display person, the department store display person. Dan Arje I'm sure you know. He worked with Gene Moore at Tiffany's. So you're getting all this creative talent being put together. Going into top management of the company, you'll find presidents of our Home Fashion Division--Jerry came from magazines. Originally. And the president of the firm who just quit and went to Burlington, Arthur Weiner, began his life as a stylist at Burlington. So I do think creative people are being taken seriously. If they tend to want to be taken seriously, they can go into management positions and be creative management, which is the future of our industry. I mean, the amount of garment manufacturers that are run by the designers themselves--whether it be Perry Ellis or Calvin Klein, although they do have a business person there..

Q: I was just about to say, Calvin Klein has Barry Schwartz...
A: But they all have become business people themselves. I don't think you will find fashion designers living in ivy towers. Pauline Trigere is a good business person and so is Bill Blass. John Weitz is a corporation, as Cardin is. And I think that we're learning finally that creative people may have their heads in the sky, but they can have their feet firmly planted on the ground.

Q: If they wish to.

A: If they wish to. And if given the opportunity in school to learn the other parts of the industry.

Q: Well, do you think enough people at F.I.T. are being directed to the kind of thing you're talking about?

A: I think it's starting. I think President Feldman has started that wave, I really do. But I think some of the departments are moving more slowly than others. You feel the tenure problem, and...But I think there is that change happening. I think everyone is realizing the need of expanding one's mind and that if a technology person learns design, he or she might be a bad designer but they're understanding the process; that a textile design person can learn advertising. Learning illustration taught me that this wonderful masterpiece that I did looked like hell when actually reduced to put on a blouse. It was only good on a little piece of paper.

Q: Yes. Anyway...To summarize your present activities at F.I.T.--do you teach one course there?

A: I teach one course there in the evening, two nights a week...

Q: And that's the technical...

A: That's an art course. And I will be teaching a one day
course in the spring of color fundamentals, which I will be teaching to technology students, not design students.

Q: I see. Well, that's very interesting. And you do have an opportunity to convey how you feel about such changes in the market as you and I have been talking about, whether in a structured committee meeting way, or unstructured. Is that...

A: Yes.

Q: Because I know there are meetings of the departments from time to time and do they encompass new curricula ideas?

A: They do...But also I find that anyone in the industry who has a suggestion, criticism, or applause can go to the deans of the school or Marvin Feldman himself, or Shirley Goodman. Any of the people...

Q: So they are still responding to ideas.

A: Very open. I think they are completely aware that they were created by a need in the industry, and in order to exist, they have to keep filling that need as the need changes.

Q: Well, thank you very much. It was wonderful. I appreciate it a lot.