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JERRY SHAW

ORAL HISTORY

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Q. Tell me, Jerry, if you will, when it was that you started working with your father and what you recall about all those days and then bring it up to the present.

A. Okay, I started working in the summertime when I was about seventeen which is...

Q. About what year was that?

A. About 1947. I wasn't particularly interested in it, but it was something to do for the summer, and I got into it a little bit at Elfreda. At that time he had Pierre Balmain as well as Elfreda, and to the best of my recollection, Elfreda was more of a matronly type dress firm but it had a pretty good lock on the market. Their price structure was around thirty nine dollars, forty nine dollars which, in those days...

Q. Wholesale?

A. Wholesale. Which in those days was probably considered the high end of the market. I did that for a couple of summers; then I went into the service. I went into the Navy for four years. When I came out, which was in 1955, my father had just returned from a trip around the world, where he was in retirement. He had gotten out of Elfreda or they liquidated Elfreda and both he and his partners retired. He took about a year, a year and a half...

Q. About how old was he then?
A. Let's see, in 1954, he must have been about fifty-six or fifty-five years old. When he came back, he decided he'd like to get back into business again. He could not stay retired. He's the kind of a person that really cannot retire. He's not even retired now and he's going to be eighty four; he's semi-retired. His hobby was always his business. So he decided to get back in: at that point, he wanted me to go in with him. There was an opportunity to get involved with a company by the name of Jane Derby. There was a woman by the name of Jane Derby who was a designer. Hers was an uptown operation which was sort of a custom type thing up on Fifty Seventh Street; but, like most of the custom houses, they had to come down to Seventh Avenue which is where the commercial end of the business was. Jane came down for about a year, a year and a half and, where she always had a good name and always had good publicity, her business was not very good. When we got involved there, which was in 1956, my father bought in as a partner, I was like a junior partner. She, Jane, had done about $280,000 worth of volume, at wholesale, for the year but always with an excellent name: nobody knew what the volume was because people thought it was much greater than that. We built it up to about a million seven which, in those days, was fairly good volume, a million seven, close to two million dollars, which, in those days
was considered fairly good volume for what was considered, I guess, a couture type dress house. Our price structure in those days was sixty-nine dollars up to about two hundred dollars at wholesale. At that point, which took about three years, four years, we couldn't seem to get it going any further than that. In the interim, my father got very bored with what he was doing because it became very simple to operate that kind of business. He started branching out and getting involved with other designers or other firms at the same time which is where Geoffrey Beene came about, Donald Brooks; and at the same time we were looking for a designer to bring into Jane Derby. Jane actually didn't do the designing herself. She did the styling and the editing. She designed through someone. She would tell him what to do, we did the sketches and then she would edit the collection. We spent quite a bit of time in the market looking for somebody else and we just couldn't seem to find anyone. Then around 1965 I believe, sixty-four or sixty-five, Oscar de la Renta had been in the United States for approximately two years working for Elizabeth Arden. He, through a stroke of good fortune, was looking to get onto Seventh Avenue: Elizabeth Arden was strictly custom. He was looking to get on Seventh Avenue and become a commercial designer, and we were looking for someone to help our business get past the stage that it was at (and by the way, at that stage it was a very lucrative business.) But what was happening is like
everything else, when your volume doesn't continue to increase and your overhead does, sooner or later you've reached the point of no return. We had several meetings with Oscar. We loved his personality: apparently he got along with us and we made a merger and the company became Oscar de la Renta for Jane Derby. And as Jane really wasn't a designer herself but an editor and a stylist, she agreed to go along with that and she was in her later years at the time anyway. With Oscar, we struggled for a couple of years until he became commercial enough to be successful on Seventh Avenue. We always had the audience, but it was a question of putting the whole act together which also included getting the right sampleroom and the right assistant designer so that Oscar developed his own look. He had his own look, but with the older people that we had working here, whatever he made came out looking like Jane Derby. And until we severed that, we had lots of problems. Once that was severed, and Oscar was on his own, totally, the business started to move. In 1969 we started to negotiate for the sale of the corporation to public companies. We were approached by Bob Kenmore of Kenton Corporation who made us a very lucrative offer - for some strange reason we turned him down, and quite frankly, I don't know the reason, but we did, yet we wanted to sell our company. We were all interested in that. At that point, no one had ever done that before.
We had opened the first, really the first of the boutique type operations from a designer standpoint. We had an Oscar de la Renta boutique which we started in about 1967. After that a lot of designers, Donald Brooks opened a Donald Brooks boutique, Geoffrey Beene opened Beene Bag. Actually, originally it was a Geoffrey Beene boutique. These were second divisions of less expensive clothing.

Q. At that time, Ben Shaw was still, had still...

A. He was still involved with the Jane Derby, Oscar de la Renta operation but he also was involved with Geoffrey Beene, Donald Brooks, Sarmi and a few lesser firms where the designers just weren't known at all. But he was always the type of individual that got very bored very quickly. His forte, really, was to spot talent, get it going, get a firm so that it was all worked up and everybody started to move around like crazy, and things started to happen. When they started to happen and they happened, then he would get bored and he would look elsewhere again.

Q. But he still maintained some financial relationship?

A. Oh, he was always involved financially with these companies.

In those days you had the good fortune of being able to have people in each firm that were strong yet not necessarily owners of the firm: sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't, but who can run a firm for you with your guidance and with your help.
Today that's almost impossible. That's really the big difference between today's market and the market then. The designers were just coming to the front at that particular time, and prior to that you had the names of either people or the names of firms such as my father's firm which was called Elfreda. That was someone's name, but it had nothing to do with the fashion business. You had firms like Maurice Rentner, and Anna Miller. None of them were designers but they owned dress firms: they didn't feature designers in those days. It was, I guess, in the early sixties, middle sixties, where the designer names themselves started to come to the front. This, of course, is outside of a Pauline Trigere who was a designer, or Norman Norell who was a designer, Mollie Parnis, Adele Simpson. But the majority of the firms were just names either of owners or just names. We negotiated with a company called Richton International and we finally sold the corporation. We bought my father out. Oscar and I went along with the company, and we remained public for about five years and then we bought the company back. My father always wanted to amass companies and get them public either on their own or through a sale. We always felt that selling a company to an existing corporation would be the best way to do that. His involvement with Geoffrey grew, his involvement with Donald grew, but then he got to the point again where he got bored with these companies
because most of these corporations could only reach a certain level as far as sales and volume were concerned. Then you had to look elsewhere. Licensing was a thing that was just starting to come into its own at about the same time, in this country anyway.

Q. It began to explode in about 1970 or somewhere around there?
A. Yes, yes. It was there before. We did some licensing but licensing went up and down. It wasn't the trend that it is today where it's just on an upswing and it just keeps going up because now the stores are totally committed to licensed products and name brands. If you took brand names out of a store, you don't have anything left. So, now they're totally committed. In those days stores were kind of hesitant. You take stores like Sak's Fifth Avenue: they had their own label. They wouldn't even use designers' labels; they took them out or the label was the "designer for Sak's Fifth Avenue." He eventually sold out of Geoffrey Beene, where they bought him out. He eventually did the same thing with Donald Brooks; but he continued to get involved with other firms and other designer names. There were only a handful of people in this country, as there still are, that have big names. He tried to promote, on some occasions names where it worked and in other cases it just didn't.

Q. That included Adri and Giorgio St. Angelo...?
A. Exactly, exactly.
Q. Who else was there? Charlotte Ford?
A. He was involved with Gloria Vanderbilt when she first came on the dress scene. These companies, in some cases, didn't work for not unknown reasons because, obviously, they are known. Most of the problems with these things are that people are getting into an area where they shouldn't be. Gloria Vanderbilt was a very successful name in her licensing arrangement with Murjani, but that doesn't require design. When she was on her own with Ben Shaw and with the other three or four people that were involved with the company, she made a fashion line and it didn't work - very difficult to make a fashion line especially four times a year and make a statement. Which is why, really, there are only a handful of people that do it. There are only a handful in Europe. You've got maybe six or eight big names in this country in women's clothing; and in sportswear you have maybe four or five big names. That does not mean that there aren't other people doing business because there are companies that do tons and tons of business but not in a designer or fashion field. He got involved with Leo Narducci, he was involved with Lanvin, he was involved with John Bates from England, he was involved with Eric Lund at one point, oh it's, it's a string...

Q. When you say involved it means generally that he...
A. He...
Q. ...Provided the administration, he...
A. ...The administration, finances...
Q. ...And the production arrangements.
A. Right, right.
Q. And then he himself had something of a financial interest in each company?
A. Uh, huh. When you get involved with designers, the designer contributes his name, his talent, very rarely finances because when they're starting, most of them don't have it. It's up to somebody to provide the administrative and business end of it, and that's what he did. He had to get the people together to make the situation work. It either worked or it didn't work. But a designer provides his talent and his name if he has one, if he doesn't, then you're talking about strictly talent and it would be up to somebody like a Ben Shaw or a... Who else did it?
Q. I think Ben Shaw's unique. I don't think you can talk about...
A. Yes, there really aren't many people that did it...
Q. No.
A. Because I must tell you that by the same token, it's a very, very costly type of an operation. A designer operation compared to a regular dress firm is probably ten to fifteen times more costly. So you're gambling on the strength of someone's name: if they have the name than you're not doing so much gambling, if they don't have the name, you're doing all the gambling because it
cost X amount of dollars to operate a company. In the sixties you could probably take a designer name and maybe with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars you could get into business. If you tried to do the same thing today on the same type of scale, you'd be talking in excess of a million dollars. If the man doesn't produce in the first season, you're out because it takes at least three months to develop a collection. It takes a month to show it, and it takes probably another two months before you start shipping so now you're up to five or six months of overhead without anything coming in. You've already paid for your people, you've paid for the sample line, you've paid the designer, you've bought fabric and paid for it, and you haven't shipped.

Q. And have you paid your contractors? Do you work with contractors in designer...

A. Absolutely, you have to pay contractors to make the merchandise.

Q. In this firm do you work mostly with contractors?

A. We work only with contractors.

Q. Only with contractors. Does anybody have an inside shop?

A. We don't: There are people that have them. I think whoever has them would wish that they didn't. We had one once many years ago and I would never do it again. That's my personal opinion. I believe strictly in contracting. Our contractors only work for us at Oscar de la Renta, but I would never own my own shop. People who have inside shops have inside cutting: we don't do that.
Q. So what you do on these premises is design, show, and ship?

A. Exactly, exactly. Everything comes from here, goes to the factories, comes back here, is examined and then is shipped from here.

Q. And is that the way most of the firms Ben has been identified with work too?

A. Pretty much so. When he was involved with Sarmi, Sarmi had two or three inside factories but they're very, very costly.

Q. And that didn't last terribly long did it?

A. And it didn't work. It didn't work very long. When he turned Sarmi around, he was able to turn it around through manipulations and financing and so forth and when they showed a profit ultimately they had to buy fabric; and they gave it back because they had to produce and they had three factories sitting there. Well you don't produce twelve months a year, it's impossible. The best you could hope for is ten months a year, and some firms can only do that maybe eight months a year, but you have an overhead for twelve. You can't lay people off and hire them back and then that doesn't work. Years ago people only made two lines. They made a fall and a spring line. We now make four. We make fall, resort, spring and summer. We're probably one of the few designer houses today, Oscar de la Renta is anyway, that makes a summer line but we do very well with it.
Q. Jerry, let's go back a little bit. First, you know an awful lot about this business, now obviously you've been here a long time, and I'm sure you've learned a lot of it here but did you know something about it beforehand?

A. Well I knew the little bit that I learned when I started working at Elfreda in the summertime. That's not because of anything other than the fact that I wasn't as interested in it as I suppose I should have been; but I did learn some things there. I was primarily in the back, in the shipping area and making cutting tickets and so forth. As I got more and more into that, I decided that I wanted to get into this business and I wanted to be into the production end of it, in the business end of it. I do not like selling: I never did and I still don't. So I am in the business in the financial end, and more or less in the production end of our business. But you learn something everyday. I mean, we're involved now with licensing. Licensing is a very big and important area of this whole industry. Any designer, fashion designer that's not licensing today is not in business. You can open one division, then you can open a second division; the chances of a designer having three divisions on their own are almost nil. The rest of your business would come from licensing. No designer today could sustain a couture dress operation by itself without supplementing it by other means. We would probably come closer than anybody at Oscar de la Renta but we have a very unusual
situation here. When we bought our company, we had three divisions. We merged the three divisions into one; and we were able to use...

Q. What were the three?

A. We had Oscar de la Renta, which was couture: we had Oscar de la Renta boutique, and we opened a sportswear firm called Something by Oscar de la Renta. I personally was against that, but the public corporation wanted it: they wanted volume. We're not volume oriented in this industry, or we weren't at the time anyway. And I felt that the reason you can't have three with one name is that sooner or later you would trade off. A fashion designer has to design what's fashionable at the time. If sportswear is in, he will have sportswear in everything he does. If dresses are in, he will have dresses in everything he does. So when you have a boutique line and a sportswear line, they're going to conflict with each other sooner or later. The couture would not conflict nor would anything conflict with that. But in those days an average couture business was somewhere around three or four million dollars in volume. Probably the best ever was Geoffrey, when he got involved; but Geoffrey came out of making twenty-two dollar dresses when he was with Teal Traina so he had a built in audience. Now, all of a sudden, at the end of a year, I'd say Geoffrey's price structure was probably seventy-nine to eighty nine. So he went from twenty-two to eighty nine in one year with a huge audience, and they built up a volume of somewhere around five or six million. But as prices went up and as the rest of the market caught up, it was very hard to sustain that kind of a business. Today's standards are different.
The whole operation of a dress business today is different. We do a lot of shows with stores: in-store shows. Our company here does about a hundred of them a year.

Q. A hundred trunk shows?
A. Trunk shows. We have over forty-five licensees at Oscar de la Renta now. We're an international company. We license in Mexico: all over the Orient: we're in Europe: we're in South America. We probably in numbers do more licensing than anybody. When I say numbers, I mean numbers of licensees. Calvin, [Klein] I would imagine is the most successful in the United States with the jeans situation. Halston has probably the number one selling perfume although we are pushing that right now. I'd say it was very nip and tuck. In the Orient we're number one by far. We've been at it for seven years: we reproduce all of our product lines for the Orient to stay there. They're all produced in the Orient.

Q. For consumption there?
A. Strictly for consumption there. Most of our licensing is country by country. We don't allow it to shift around nor do we want it coming back into the United States unless we do it. We have a second division called Miss O by Oscar de la Renta; that's produced mainly in Hong Kong.

Q. And sold here?
A. And sold in the United States

Q. When was that started?
A. We started that about four years ago.
Q. Actually your father has not been involved in any of this, of the licensing part of the business?
A. No, no.
Q. Right.
A. He was involved with licensing in its early stages. I think he had the foresight to see it before anybody else. However, it's the same old story: it's whether you're too early or too late. He wasn't too early because people weren't doing it, it was just starting, but it was certainly the right concept. Licensing today is, I don't think they'd be a designer in business without licensing, they just couldn't sustain their businesses. As I said, we might be the one possible exception to that but that's because we were able to use a less expensive labor setup and our volume just shot through what other people were doing.
Q. How did you use, how, explain that less expensive labor setup a little?
A. Well again I got side tracked a little bit. When we bought our company back, we had had three divisions. I merged the three into one knowing that there would be a loss of business. I wanted to get out of the sportwear business because we were competing with ourselves. When I merged the three into one, we were able to use the boutique labor setup as opposed to using the couture. Sportwear was out of the question. So in 1974 when Oscar and I started our new company which became Oscar de la Renta Limited...
Q. After severing from...
A. The public corporation. We purchased the company back fully. We used the boutique setup, and our real design purpose was like a couture firm except we were making clothes, starting at about seventy nine dollars wholesale and probably our most expensive would be around two fifty. All the couture designers, at that time, were much more expensive because they were locked in with their couture setups. That would have been Halston, Geoffrey Beene, Bill Blass, Donald Brooks, Pauline Trigere. Those were pretty much the couture fashion names and again, I don't mean to slight Mollie Parnis or Adele Simpson or Jerry Silverman, but it was a different kind of a ball game there. With that setup, we started to do considerable volume because we were almost doing the kind of volume that our boutique would have done, which was considerably more than most couturiers were doing. A sizable boutique business in those days would do between six and seven million. At that time probably the average couture firm was doing between three and four. I was shooting to ultimately do about five million with couture. I felt we could do that within two or three years if we set our sights on that, and we just kept going higher and higher and higher. Again, we, even to this day, we're still less expensive than our competition. We're very expensive, but the other ones are out of sight. We're almost there. We're crazy, but they're crazier, you can put it whichever way you want. Our average price right now is six hundred dollars a unit wholesale. So you could see we've come a long way from the seventy nine and eighty nine dollar dress, but so has our volume; and we now do an excess of ten million, just in couture. Miss O will do a little bit better than seven million this year.
Q. How old did you say Miss O is?
A. Miss O is almost four years.

Q. Do you sell it in different departments from the couture?
A. For the most parts it's in different departments, yes.

It's dress departments but on a different level. It's a less expensive line. The Miss O line right now is averaging about one twenty five at wholesale.

Q. So that, for example, at Sak's it would be in Janet Reese's department?
A. Well it would have been except Janet doesn't buy that kind of a thing now.

Q. Yea, right, right.
A. And it's on the same floor as the couture but it would be in a different section.

Q. Right, right.
A. We have our own boutique at Sak's for couture.

Q. Uh, huh, right, I know you do have, yes.
A. But then again that's just an exception.

Q. Jerry, could we go back a little bit and talk about some of the things that happened when you were a child. I mean you lived in a household with a father who was very much involved in this industry. Did you get to, was there much dinner talk about it?
A. There was almost none actually because of problems. My mother took ill when I was two and she was very, very ill. In fact, she wasn't at home at all. So, we started going away from home. We went to boarding school. I think I started when I was six. And I didn't stop
until I was twenty. We used to go to camp in the summer, and we went
to boarding school in the wintertime so that the home life was really
not there that much. My father always wanted to provide us with
things that he didn't have. You see, he never had a formal education.
Whatever he did, he was definitely self-educated. And he did work at
that. To this day, I would say that I think that I think he's still
embarrassed at times to get up and speak because he always felt that he
was lacking in that kind of an education. But he wanted us to have the
best in whatever it is that he did not have and that was almost
everything. If I am not mistaken, he started working when he was seven
or eight years old to support a family so it was a totally different
situation. When I got out of school the Korean War was on. I went
into the service, supposedly for two years and that was extended and it
lasted a little over four years. So by the time I got out, we were
back in business again. There was not much of a homelife. However, I
didn't miss it, because I didn't know what it was. Some people have
had a smattering of that, and they might have gone through a public
school system and obviously that would, it could create problems. I
think in our particular case, I have a brother who went to school with
me...

Q. Oh, is that the brother you, have, Robert? Is he in this business?

A. No.

Q. No.
A. No. I think had we been home more, I think it would have been a great problem. Because I think being in a household where one parent is missing, makes it very difficult.

Q. So you and your father never really had the kind of relationship in which he might have told you stories about this business or his own involvement in it?

A. Not, not at home so much, no. But I saw a lot of it and of course I heard a great deal of it from all the people that he knows.

Q. When did you hear a lot of it?

A. Well as we, when we would be home on vacations, at Christmastime or at Eastertime or sometimes in the summertime, we met an awful lot of his friends, and he certainly had many of them in the industry. If he would take people to dinner, and we were home, he'd ask us to go along and we would. In those days, nightclubs were a very big part of the New York scene and it was a lot of fun, whether we knew the people or we didn't know, you'd go to places like the Copacabana, you went to El Morrocco, you went to wherever.

Q. Did you...

A. ...the Latin Quarter.

Q. Did you get any sense of the people that he knew. On what level he knew people at stores for example?

A. It was always on a high level. It was always, it was either, well of course you had the buyers, but, in those days you also dealt, I think, with a different commodity then you deal with today, and that's a thing that was called friendship. Businesses were much smaller.
The retail end of it was on a smaller scale and it seemed to me that friendship played a much, much greater part. Today you're talking about big companies, you're talking about conglomerates, every big store is owned by a bigger corporation, manufacturers are owned by bigger manufacturers, and there is a thing called bottom line. Bottom line has nothing at all to do with friendship, or anything other than bottom line. One and one equals two. These kinds of businesses, one and one could be three, could be five or it could be zero.

Q. What about, I think what I am really trying to establish here is, the level of person, that is to say, was it the buyer, was it the merchandiser...
A. It was, it was...

Q. ...was it the fashion director, was it the store owner?
A. The fashion directors, in those days, really were not important because stores were, as I say, much smaller. It was done on a buyer level,... merchandise managers, I don't even recall merchandise managers. I recall either store presidents...

Q. You're talking about the days of Elfreda?
A. Right. And even past that, I think even into the late fifties, early sixties. I know they were there, but the people that I saw and the people that he really dealt with would be someone like, let's say, a Laura Goldman who was at Neiman Marcus, Laura, or Laura Lucas. Laura was the dress buyer for Neiman Marcus and the only word or name you ever heard was Laura. I don't know who she had to own up to, I'm sure there was someone, but that really didn't enter into the question
the way it does today. Today merchandise managers have a tremendous role in the stores, and the fashion people have a tremendous role in the stores. The fashion departments, the publicity departments have as much of a role as a buyer has, because they do a lot of directing. They might set the pace for a store where years ago that didn't exist. It existed on sheer merchandise. You just, you made clothing; if it was the right thing at the right price, it sold. Uh, but again you weren't involved with the name situation that you're involved with today. So stores were selling themselves, A store like Neiman Marcus, very, very rarely would put a label into the store other than Neiman Marcus. And Neiman Marcus sold merchandise on the strength that they knew how to sell it and promote it, and they could sell and promote whatever they wanted, whether it was good or bad really didn't have too much to do with it; it was Neiman Marcus. When you start promoting names of people, that phase goes out. Now it's the person and his product or her product that's all important. The store is secondary. The store is only housing and Gucci will sell, anywhere, because it's Gucci. Nobody opens it up inside to see whether it's made well or it isn't made well; it's Gucci, period. And Gucci means good, I guess.

Q. So, in one generation, because really, uh, you're, you're spanning one generation, maybe a little bit longer. You, yourself, have seen a whole big change over.
A. Oh, it's a tremendous change, tremendous change, you're now at a much higher level than a buyer level today. Companies like this...

Obviously our rapport is with the buyer because that's the person who does the purchasing. But the buyer can do whatever he wants or think whatever he or she wants. It comes down from management and management is very, very well known in the market today. And their feelings are made known uh, you're aware of everything that's, that's happening and it comes down from the top. It's no more a buyer saying well gee whiz, there's some nice people over here, I think I'll go in and get a few things. They might scout the various houses, various firms, but it's management who makes the first, second and last decision, and that's ultimate. That goes for Europe, that goes for anything that they do.

These stores are totally controlled today. They are pretty well automated except that there are certain things that you can't automate. The buyer is all important. The problem that you have today, is that there are very few good buyers. There are very few people that understand the fashion business because they've gotten so geared up to figures. When you are involved with figures, you can't be involved with fashion. IBM does not tell you what color sold or what, it can tell you, maybe a category of a dress, but it doesn't tell you size, it doesn't tell you why, it doesn't tell you how again it's back to basic numbers.

I think the whole nature of the business is changed. In my fathers' time, I think the personality was much, much more prevalent than it is today. The personality not necessarily of a designer, the personality
of the people running the business, a Maurice Rentner, an Anna Miller, uh, a Jane Derby, a Jerry Silverman. I mean Jerry was a very successful operation. Jerry really was not a designer, per se, but he was Jerry Silverman. Abe Schrader is not a designer, but it's Abe Schrader. These personalities are the people that made the industry. They were before the designers. The designers were just another arm but it came through companies like that to the point where now the designer is all important because the designer.... Trends are being set where they weren't set so much in the old days. Yes, Dior did a little bit of it at a given point but the fashion trends weren't really as important as making pretty clothes, or clothes that people liked, and as I say, the stores could have promoted anything or anything, everything, or anything or nothing. Whatever it is that they wanted, they could do.

Q. Apart from the trunk shows, which were apparently very important to you, is there any other aspect to the business of promotion that you think had special meaning or has special meaning?

A. Well, I think that, that where somebody like Ben Shaw was, was highly involved, was that when he got involved with these designers, the fashion designers, he pretty much gave them their head. Most people in the business world would never let somebody come in, in this fashion world anywhere the dress business, per se, they govern all the design rooms. At Elfreda, I don't care who was designing for him, he sat on top of that design room. They wanted six black dresses, you called in, "I want six black dresses" and you got them. When you got designers, the fashion designers involved, you didn't tell them you needed six black
dresses, because they're the fashion people; if they don't know what to make then you don't have anything. However, to establish that, and to get those names where they finally arrived at, you had to let them do things that you would not let most people do, that became very costly. For example, maybe a company spent ten thousand dollars on sample fabric, they might have spent ten thousand dollars on sample fabric. Today with a designer, you could spend two hundred thousand dollars on sample fabric, which is giving them a lot of leeway, but they need the leeway because they are creating fashion and fashion does change. You probably couldn't use more than ten thousand dollars worth of that fabric to make a collection. Of course, what we do today, we do a lot of exclusives, we manage to get rid of all that fabric anyway, but it's just giving people more leeway which is very costly. Our last fall line, which is 1981 Fall, in this firm, cost somewhere in the neighborhood of five hundred thousand dollars. That's one line, one sample of each, no duplicates, no patterns, or nothing. That's accessories, sample fabric, the line and the cost of the line, eighteen models to show it at about fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars a day per model. So the costs of running a business are much, much higher than they were.

Q. What about your advertising and uh, related sales promotion activities?

A. Well, in the, in the designer end of it, with fashion designers we do very little in proportion to our business because designers get publicity. Magazines and newspapers and whatever write about fashion.
It is one of the things that they want to fill the pages with. We do a certain amount of it, but in proportion to what other industries do, it's very small. But fashion designers are making fashion, they are creating some things and that's things that people write about because that's things that people want to read about.

Q. Do you maintain a PR person on staff?

A. We have an assistant, someone that works with Oscar; but we don't go out and seek it, it happens. And I think in the design houses like Bill Blass, or Geoffrey Beene or Halston or in Europe, Yves St. Laurent, Givenchy, they come to the designer, the designer does not go to the fashion people. They're constantly writing about fashion. We show many, many times a year, and as I say, it's publicity because these designers today are world personalities. They are known everywhere, all over the world. I mean if Yves St. Laurent came to the United States, people know who he is. He is as much a personality as a movie star or an actor, or a politician or what have you...

Q. But a lot of what happens is still programmed.

A. It's still programmed, yes, it has to be. Designers tried, I guess, in the early seventies, to force their will on the public, and it didn't work -- a la the midi.

Q. Uh, huh.

A. I think that that was the first sort of, if you could call it a slap in the face, for designers. They, up to that point, they created a trend and that was all there was to it; nobody questioned it, they did it. Whether the skirts got shorter or the skirts got longer,
whatever they made, people bought. At that particular moment, the public balked, and they wouldn't buy it. That was the advent of sportswear. In the fashion business, sportswear had been around forever. But the fashion designers, to cover up for the midi, got involved with sportswear. The year right after the midi, Bill Blass opened up Blass Sport. Kasper opened up, uh, uh, what is it?

Q. J. L. Sport.

A. J. L. Sport which became very successful. Anne Klein had been in the business but she became more successful. Calvin Klein was just coming on the scene. Obviously, we know how successful he became. We got involved with a company called Something by Oscar de la Renta, which was sportswear. So it became a different trend not to cover up for, but to get into a different aspect of the business, because the people balked at what they were doing. And it worked. However, I think that was the last time fashion designers were ever able to dictate to the public so it became a little give and take. You had to find out what the public wanted, and then you had to go back and you could get a trend to change but it had to change gradually. You couldn't open up on a Monday morning and say okay, we're going to have short skirts, or long skirts, or no skirts, or whatever. You are seeing gradual changes in the industry right now. There's a trend to shorter skirts, but it's been going on for a year now. And they are still not here. It's happening, but it's still not here a hundred percent. It's here maybe fifty percent. Well that didn't happen years ago. Years ago it happened in a month, or a week or whatever it was.
Q. Um, to talk about your father for one last minute, because I think we're just about through, how much time does he spend here, or does he spend any?
A. Oh, no, he does some consulting with us. He, practically every day, he will spend a certain amount of time here and we converse and we go over things.

Q. Does he talk, does he spend sometime with any of the other firms any longer?
A. Yes, he's still involved, but very, very slightly now; he's not involved with any designer names per se, he's just involved with a little business here or there so that he's kept busy.

Q. Right.
A. A man at his stage of life would have retired at this particular point. And that is something that he could never do. I think if he retired, he really would retire. He's very active, his mind is active, he still thinks young, he likes to be around young people. He hates old people; he doesn't want any part of it. I think that's what makes the difference in the person. Some, some of us I guess could retire at a given point and others cannot. Again, his hobby is his business. That's his eating, his reading, his television, his everything. That's his business and I think that's what's kept him young. And he is a young man. As I said he's approaching 84 and with the exception of a little problem here or there, he's terrific.

Q. I thank you very much Jerry, that's really been a big help...
A. I thank you, I hope it's a help.

Q. It is, thank you.
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