# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Customers and her designing creed  
  
- Traveling around the world  
  
- Childhood, education and first job  
  
- Her love of designing  
  
- Working for Ben Gershel and William Bass  
  
- Meeting her husband, marriage and his textile business  
  
- Emergence of the "Adele Simpson" label  
  
- Children  
  
- Designing for comfort, and changes in the industry  
  
- Traveling and its influence on her designing  
  
- The process of designing and manufacturing  
  
- Traveling in China  
  
- The process of designing and manufacturing  
  
- Customers  
  
- Index
I: We don't find your sort of continuity very often in any profession. Designers come and designers go but you are enduring. For well over five decades now you have had an immensely successful career on Seventh Avenue, often ahead of the times, garnering every award in the book - a whole wall full of awards in your office. But above all pleasing thousands of customers who look forward to wearing your clothes year after year. You have a very devoted following. Why is it that women and buyers can count on you to deliver unfailingly current, yet concerned styles of high quality? Why do you think it is that you have this loyal following? Did you plan it this way?

N: Well, I have been dressing women for many years and I know that they appreciate quality first. We have a dedicated devoted audience, I'm happy to say, and I've traveled throughout the country visiting the stores. So I have learned to meet and know all of my customers and the way they live, and the kind of things that they like. It's very helpful. It's not like sitting on Seventh Avenue
in a design room and working from sketches, because I don't do that. I like to choose a material, feel it, and cut it in a way that's flattering and easy to wear. That's an important thing. Also easy to take care of and with a sense of quality and fit, for the right thing at the right place at the right time.

I: So you know many of your customers individually?

N: I do. I don't say that I know all of them.

I: You might even be thinking of a Mrs. So-and-so in New Orleans when you're thinking about your new collection?

N: I've learned a lot from meeting my customers. Particularly Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, I've dressed her for quite some time. She is very careful, I've learned a lot from her. She would keep a record book, so that when she bought a coat she would have a swatch of that material and always had it with her when she was shopping so that she could pick dresses she could wear under it. Plus the fact that she would ask, "Will this look good when I come off the plane to receive the governor's roses?" So she always set the scene, which I think is very important for most customers to do.

I: I don't think that people realize that there are designers on Seventh Avenue who do keep in such personal touch with their customers, and who keep their customers in mind. One thinks of the old time couturier, who had his individual customers and made things to order for them. In a sense you are making things to order but on a larger scale.
N: Yes, they relate to an American way of life, which is completely different from any other way of life. I've been around the world three times and have watched people. I'm a great people watcher. The thing that I think is so marvelous for Chicago, for instance, won't do at all for New Orleans. Even on the West Coast, the seasons, the climate, the weather is different. In fact when I buy fabrics in Europe I have them brought over to New York so that I can see the color in the light because the light is different in this country than anywhere else. I've had women tell me that when they just don't know what to wear they reach into their closet and pull out an "Adele Simpson" and are very happy with it.

I: That's terrific. I've heard it said that your clothes are cut so marvelously that they take off ten pounds. Certainly that would be one reason for the flattery.

N: I try not to make anything too exaggerated, or it would be outdated in one season. Our clothes cost too much today to have women discard them or hang them in their closets. Besides, closets in this country are not big enough today to hold too many mistakes. So as a woman I try to think very clearly. I make clothes that require a minimum of care, clothes that hang right from the shoulder, clothes that aren't too exaggerated, and that a woman would really enjoy wearing.
I: Has your typical customer always been the same person? Has she changed?

N: Oh no. They change with the fashion. We keep getting a younger group always. It has a lot to do with the economy of the country. I've had young students ask me, "Where do you get your ideas?", and sometimes I've said, "I read the Wall Street Journal". Then they're in shock.

I: What do you read the Wall Street Journal for? What kind of information helps you?

N: To find out what the stock market is doing. To find out new developments. We are living in a scientific age and there are many new developments in fabrics and factories and the way people live. I learn it all from the Wall Street Journal.

I: You once said that your own design creed was, 'Three Freedoms'. Do you remember saying this? "Freedom from fussiness, freedom from restraint, and freedom from alterations."

N: That still goes.

I: You've always set pretty high standards for yourself, haven't you?

N: Yes. That's why we've been able to stay in business so long. We keep trying to improve our product all the time. I personally supervise a good many of our fashion people and we discuss the designs. For instance I was among the first to make dresses that you step into, that you don't
pull on over your head.

I: I guess we hear so much about ease and comfort these days, and lack of inner construction. But it seems to me that you were doing that a long time ago.

N: I started out that way, because I knew that if you go to a hair dresser you can't pull your dress over your head, or have to struggle into it, and that's no good. Women today do their make-up and hair first, and then put their dress on, and you just don't want anything to happen to spoil their hair or make up.

I: So that's still true. You think of that when you're designing?

N: Yes, of course we don't have personal maids now, like there used to be. Years ago you could bring home a dress and have it pressed or cleaned very easily. Things have changed. So I try to make everything so that it requires a minimum of care. A woman shouldn't have to tie things around her, or struggle to get into them, or worry about taking care of her clothes.

I: Do you ever do back zippers?

N: Yes, but I find that over many years, because of the change in silhouette, back zippers are alright if things are loose, but if they're the least bit fitted they're no good. We've changed now, we make things using better zippers in the front, or in two piece dresses like a shirt and a skirt, or an over blouse and a skirt.
I: And the coat dress is something that you have consistently done?

N: Yes.

I: We were talking about ease and comfort. Back in 1955, that's more than twenty years ago - people think that they've just discovered clothes that give you ease and comfort - you said, "At Adele Simpson we never make a dress that has to be put on over the head." And you tell me that you're still doing that. "Nor one that will be difficult to walk in, or board a bus or drive a car." That's continued?

N: That's been my creed. And I'll tell you something else, having traveled through this country and around the world, I have to make things that are packable and foldable. I learned that from the Japanese. You know they all fold their kimonos. The first time I went to Tokyo was the year of the petticoats. I really didn't take any with me because I was only allowed two suitcases, one for my clothes and the other for my accessories. I found out that I was intrigued with the way they folded clothes in the Orient. So, when I came back it took me three months to get over the fact that I'd never thought of that before. Now I'm very careful. I try to choose fabrics that are packable, foldable and light weight and easy to take care of. They'll come out of a suitcase so that you just have to hang them up and they're wrinkle free.
I: They don't have any hangers do they? They put everything in those lacquer boxes, or on shelves?

N: That's in India. In Japan they have these big, big handkerchiefs, and they tie them up. I went on the fast train from Tokyo to Osaka and my suitcases were the only ones on the platform, because they had no room on the fast train for suitcases. The Japanese take a big bundle folded like a huge handkerchief and put it up on a rack over their seats, which is very practical. Then in India I traveled with a girl that had a box, just about two by four, and she had six saris folded up in the box, and a petticoat, and a choli. I was still struggling with the two suitcases. I couldn't get over it, because I thought I had such a carefully planned wardrobe, but it was all wrong traveling that way.

I: Of course, Japan is one of the countries that has many, many people and not enough space, and in certain areas in India I expect it's the same way. Perhaps it will all come to that as there are more and more people in the world and we're pinched for the space.

N: Yes, our closets are never big enough, but they find if they fold things and put them on the shelf it works very well.

I: Can we go back in time now to your childhood? Your father was a tailor?
N: Yes, a men's tailor, and a marvelous one. I was the youngest of five girls. My mother used to get a dressmaker in the house those days, and with a bolt of blue serge material we all had pleated skirts and niddy blouses, for a two piece dress. Being the youngest, and I guess the "hippy" of that time, I revolted and started to try to do my "own thing". I used to cut my own fabric on the floor, to make a circular skirt. I did embroidery too. We all had embroidery lessons, because the idea was that when we got ready for our trousseaus we'd have to embroider our linens with our initials. So we learned all kinds of embroidery stitches and all kinds of ways of doing it.

I: Was that in school?

N: No, we had a teacher at home. My mother thought it was just as important as taking music lessons.

I: What was the family's European origins?

N: They were from Riga, Latvia. I was born right in New York City, on 69th Street.

I: Is the building still there?

N: No. It's a big apartment house now. It used to be a brownstone, a private house between 2nd and 3rd Avenues. I went to school on 68th Street, and I think the school was there until two years ago. It was on Lexington Avenue. Then we moved up to 94th Street, and I went to P.S. 6. I was taught French and how to sew some more.
I: You took sewing in school?
N: Yes, and cooking lessons.
I: You mother didn't sew, though?
N: No, she didn't.
I: But your sisters did?
N: Yes, my sisters did. We were all taught together.
I: Who taught you embroidery and sewing if your mother didn't?
N: We had a private teacher. One of my sisters was very talented. She knew how to draw very well. She went to art school and learned how to sketch. I was envious of her because I really couldn't sketch, and to this day I just make some funny little marks which only I understand. You see, I love to feel the material. To me designing is like sculpture. I understood grain, I knew about all the different kinds of stitches, I knew how to do buttonholes, all the things you should know when you learn to sew. I used to make my older sisters' dresses.
I: Do you remember the very first completed garment that you ever made?
N: Yes, I made a whole wardrobe for my sister and embroidered it. She went to Europe the year that the Tutankhamen caves were discovered in Egypt. I did a lot of research on it, and embroidered an Egyptian border in grey and gold on a wine colored wool dress that she took to Europe. Her boss asked her where she got her wardrobe, he was so intrigued. She said, "My kid sister made my clothes," and so he wanted
to meet me. When he did, he offered me a job, which I could not accept as I was still in school. He invited me to go down on Saturdays and work in the factory sorting buttons, and that's how I started. I used to put six or eight buttons in a bag and pin it onto a jacket or a coat. I was intrigued by all the fabrics and all the sewing that was going on. I was just very anxious to sew and design.

I: This was Ben Gershel?

N: Yes, that's right. I learned a lot just from observing what was going on, the pattern makers and the whole bit. Then they started to make dresses to go under their coats and jackets, because originally they were strictly a coat and suit house. I decided that I wanted to know more about draping and cutting, and I went back to school, to Pratt Institute after I had graduated high school. I was fortunate enough to get a teacher, a Frenchwoman, who taught me how to do a muslin.

I: What they call a toile.

N: Yes, and how to drape fabric on a dummy. I wasn't too interested in the actual sewing of it, but just choosing material and seeing what would happen with it, like sculpting in clay.

I: You've continued to work that way, by draping?

N: Yes. Everybody has a third dimension that you just can't express in a sketch. Clothes have a shape and a roundness, and come alive on a body. That's what fabrics do now, and
I get very excited when I see any kind of fabric.

I: So instead of thinking of it as on the straight, falling like so, you think of it in terms of the whole body.

N: Yes, and having it work so that one can move and sit and stand. In fact, to this day when I work on duplicates, once the original collection is made, the duplicates are made in our factories, I make the fitting model raise her arms, sit down, move and turn around, step up and step down, so that we're sure there are no problems when we deliver our dresses.

I: Therefore the loyal customers.

N: I think so.

I: Yes, that certainly has a lot to do with it. Did you feel, even then when you first started at Ben Gershel a great drive for success?

N: Oh yes.

I: Where did that come from? When do you think it started?

N: I just loved fabrics and draping and sewing and I had to get it out of my system. I still do that, For instance on a trip to Turkey with my husband I brought back those beautiful embroidered robes. I was doing a summer line and re-embroidered one of the linen dresses that I was making in Turkish embroidery. Of course it didn't sell, but I didn't care because I had gotten it out of my system. I wanted passionately to do that, and so I did it.

I: Did you have that same feeling, that you loved what you were doing when you made that dress for your sister with
the Egyptian border?

N: Yes, I did. You know, you're sort of pent up and it's just got to come out. I still have that feeling the minute I see a beautiful piece of material, I can't wait until it's put together and to see somebody move in it. You can't imagine the thrill I get when I walk down the street and see somebody in an "Adele Simpson". Somebody, not a mannequin, but a real private customer - there's a big difference. My clothes relate to women, and their way of life.

I: So there's a real sense of creativity being fulfilled?

N: Yes, to passionately want to do something with a fabric and I'm not happy until that's done.

I: Being tiny must have limited your own selection of clothes when you were younger. Even today there isn't all that much of a selection for a small woman.

N: I'm only four foot nine, and they don't come any smaller.

I: Are you smaller than Anita Loos?

N: No, we're about the same size.

I: She bought most of her clothes in the boys' department didn't she?

N: Yes, I think she did. You know my grandchildren look at me and say, "Grandma, why are you so little? You're not as big as some of the girls in the third grade." I have to agree with them and say, "That's because I didn't drink my milk when I was your age."
I: Did you always make your own clothes?
N: Yes, I did. Even though I'm only four foot nine, I think tall. I'm always trying to make myself look taller, by not cutting myself off and being careful that the proportion is right. That's helped me. One of my sales ladies that used to be in the showroom was a big size 14, very tall and broad shouldered. When I was out doing a show one time, she was with me and we both chose the same dress from the stock. So many ladies when they first meet me would say, "Well now I understand why you make clothes for little people because you're so little yourself," and I would call over my tall sales lady and show them that she was wearing the same dress. So actually it's a sense of proportion and a sense of hang from the shoulders that I'm very careful about.
I: Were other sisters of yours in ready-to-wear?
N: No, just the one that was sketching, and she had great taste. She married Cyril Magnin and went to live in California - San Francisco.
I: What sort of thing was available in the department stores to buy at that point?
N: Just "Middy shirts" and skirts, and believe it or not the first time I got the job I was asked to do a "Bramley" dress for Franklin Simon.
I: Oh, did you do the famous Bramley dress? And how many...
N: Oh, they sold about 6,000 which was many, many years ago. Well, they had many designers do them, but when they asked me to do the Bramley, manufacturers were making clothes on Seventh Avenue that were very lined and heavy in Poiret twill, something that they call a very heavy woven fabric, like a serge. The skirts were always put on a bodice and the sleeves were always set in on a fitted bodice, and then you put a sleeveless top over the bodice.

I: That must have been very heavy to wear.

N: Yes.

I: And you put a top over that?

N: Yes. I eliminated that.

I: You eliminated the bodice?

N: The under bodice, and set the sleeve into the dress and made the skirts not so heavy, and didn't put any of those boned bodices underneath them. So it was a complete change, and that's what had people talking. We're doing the same thing now, eliminating all the innards so the clothes fold well and go with your body. There's a great cult that's developed of taking care of your body. Women are exercising more and eating better food and watching their diet. So naturally they want to show their figures, and they don't want anything stiff or padded, that isn't natural or real.

I: There were even bones, weren't there? Whale bones.
N: Yes there were bones, and petticoats too, and linings, all kinds of linings, and shoulder pads.
I: Of course the shoulder pad is about to come back isn't it?
N: I'm not too sure.
I: You're not too sure?
N: No, because you can get a wide effect without padding shoulders, because I think that means another thing to take care of, and we don't have too many fitters in the stores who know how to alter things. These are very tricky sleeves, if they can't alter them properly a woman is lost. You know, there aren't many dressmakers anymore and they're so expensive.
I: You then became a top paid designer on Seventh Avenue. Now, what was top pay?
N: Well, it was $35,000. I didn't even realize how much money that was.
I: That's an enormous amount for the time.
N: Yes, it was in the good old "Jack Benny" dollars, you know, the great big dollars.
I: Those dollars that were really dollars. That was still at Gershel was it?
N: No, no.
I: It was William Bass after that?
N: Gershel would never pay me that. William Bass offered me that to take me away from Gershel.
I: He stole you?

N: When my sister had left to go to San Francisco to be married, I wasn't too interested in working for Gershel so I took the big jump and went to William Bass. He used to show me off because everybody talked about his $35,000 a year designer. It's peanuts today. In those days it was a lot of money. He'd always call me and I'd come out from behind a "dummy" to meet his friends and customers. One thing that I was always very careful about, was using good fabrics and good workmanship. That I understood.

I: Did he...did William Bass do a higher quality?

N: Well, it wasn't a question of higher quality. It was a question of whether you used pure silk, or crepe de chine, or pure wool.

I: He used better fabrics?

N: Yes, well ersatz fabrics didn't really exist. In those days there was no such thing as polyester.

I: There was rayon wasn't there?

N: Yes, rayon, but it was horrible. I wouldn't use it.

I: And Celanese, when did that come in?

N: I really don't know. I used to handle all the textile men. They'd come and show me the new developments that they were developing at the time, and say, "Isn't this marvelous?" and I'd say, "Does it wrinkle?". They weren't interested, they just wanted me to say that what they were doing was beautiful, and I really couldn't because it was ersatz, with
some sort of rayon yarn. Eventually I learned to love it, because when we couldn't get any silk, or pure anything... I always said I was a pure girl. I loved pure linen and pure wool, and pure silk.

I: Of course rayon is a natural man-made fiber, it's one of the wood pulp ones.

N: Well, that's very unsatisfactory. It doesn't breath you know.

I: It doesn't?

N: No, it's heavy.

I: They're doing quite a lot with it now, and I think...you haven't been one of the designers who's done a rayon number.

N: Well, the point is that...I don't know whether...sometimes the fabrics I use do have rayon but we're living in a scientific age today. There are so many marvelous things that go on that I never thought I would even use a polyester or a rayon fabric. But they keep improving yarns all the time. If they can go to the moon they certainly can make new synthetic fabrics.

I: Now, was one of the salesman Wesley Simpson?

N: My husband was in the textile business.

I: He was...how did you meet him?

N: He came up to show me some fabric, and asked me to go out. I said, "I never go out with any salesmen."

I: He asked you to go out the first time?

N: No, about two or three times after that, and then I said,
"No, I don't go out with anybody in the business." He found a friend of mine who arranged a dinner and invited me to dinner and invited Wesley, and that's how we met. He said he knew the first time he saw me, he'd marry me. We had a whirlwind courtship of three weeks and we went off to Europe together. He was in textiles, so naturally we had a lot in common when it came to fabrics and working in the dress business.

I: Do you think you learned more about fabrics from him?
N: Yes. I went with him to mills in Czechoslovakia and all over Europe, and went to choose designs for prints and woven fabrics. He had excellent taste and was very avant garde about fabrics. He was the first to do co-ordinated fabrics, where you had plain and printed, or plain and woven to match. He did very, very well.

I: What was the name of his company?
N: Wesley Simpson Inc., Custom Fabrics.

I: Simpson Fabrics. Does that company still exist?
N: No, it doesn't exist. He went from that into the banking business, and he became Simpson Factors because he was factoring other people that needed money to do textiles, because in the textile business it takes a long time before you get a return on your capital. So he would factor them, sort of a banking business. A business very important in the textile field.
I: His company, and his fabrics were certainly very well known at the time as great fabrics?

N: He had a wonderful eye for color and fabrics and design, and he was an amateur photographer...a great, great talent. I have a whole collection of pictures that he took of mills and designs and fabrics, and museums that we went to that he would photograph with permission. I still have them.

I: That would be a fascinating archive, I would think.

N: It is fabulous.

I: Have you been to the museum at Lyon, in France? You were Adele Smithline up to the point...and your name... wasn't your name actually on the label? Which was a little unusual for the time.

N: No. I did not have my name on the label, "Adele Simpson", until I had taken over the company that I was working for. My husband eventually went into the dress business on his own, and I went to work with a man called Mr. Alfred Lasher, who was the head of a company called Mary Lee Frocks. I was the designer. Then he decided that he would feature an "Adele Simpson" label. When he passed on I was given the opportunity of taking over the business, which I did.

I: In featuring you, did this mean that your name appeared in the ads, and also in...editorially in the fashion magazines and so on?

N: Yes.
I: Were you perhaps one of the first, or maybe even the first Seventh Avenue designer to have that kind of recognition?

N: More or less, yes.

I: You think perhaps you were?

N: Yes. It was Adele Simpson designing for Mary Lee Frocks, and then we dropped the Mary Lee Frocks and it became "Adele Simpson."

I: Can you think of anyone else during that period...that was the late Twenties, early Thirties?

N: Early Thirties.

I: Nettie Rosenstein?

N: She was Nettie Rosenstein right from the beginning.

I: In any case there were very few, certainly.

N: Maybe.

I: Wasn't she a bit later?

N: She was the only one I could think of that was featured I mean another company featured her.

I: It certainly was rather rare at the time for a woman to be as busy as you were with your work, and have a family at the same time. How did you manage that?

N: Well, it really wasn't easy. I had "two" of everything. I had two children, a house in the country, a house in the city. Everything except two mink coats. (Laughter) I was happy to have one. It was sort of blood, sweat and tears, but I managed. I had...fortunately in those days I could get a German.fraulein to sort of look after the children,
but I managed to take time off and spend time with them. My husband too was a great sailor. Jeffrey and Joan learned to sail at a very early age. They went sailing with their father at every opportunity. At one point when Joan was about 12, and Jeffrey was about 16 they ganged up on us and said that they thought we were too busy to take care of them...to spend more time with them. So I took the whole summer off and went to St. Tropez and lived with them for four months to try to straighten out our relationship.

I: How old were they then? Were they in their teens?

N: Well, Joan was 12, and Jeffrey was 16.

I: You had a rule though, didn't you? No business talk at the dinner table, and so on?

N: Yes, that's right. We decided that we would never discuss any of our business affairs when the children were with us, and we didn't. Then of course, later on when they joined me in the business we couldn't shut them up. My husband was the one that was left out, and so we had to stop that too.

I: Besides running two households and having two children and having this very extensive business, you traveled all the time...a great deal. You were what Eleanor Lambert described as, "an effective crusader for the recognition of American fashion, one of the founders of the Fashion Group, and the Council of the Fashion Designers of America." You serve on the board of F.I.T., you certainly weren't wasting any time
or energy in there.

N: Well, I loved what I was doing, and to me it was very exciting. It kept me young and it kept me spirited, and I still love what I'm doing.

I: Do you think that loving what you're doing makes more sense than organizing and planning, and so on. You must do that don't you?

N: I do today, yes, because as the business got larger it required more attention and more responsibility, and my energies were directed into different directions. However, I still love the excitement of preparing a collection, choosing the fabrics, presenting it, going out and showing it. It's a thing that's thrilling and then to see women happily dressed in my clothes as "fait accompli."

I: I want to hear about that in a minute, but first I want to ask you about writing. Didn't you write a column in the 1960's?

N: I did as a form of advertising. In the New Yorker, every other month we used to have a column, "Adele Simpson Says," and suggest to women what to wear, and what colors to choose, and all the little tidbits that women like to hear about.

I: Practical advice?

N: Yes. How to pack everything if you're going on a trip, and then leave half of it home, or never to wear certain colors, or...what can I say...So many women that have white hair will come up to me and say, "I can't wear gray," or "I can't
wear beige", and it's wrong, and we'd talk about that. Things that I had gleaned from my trips around the country, that were puzzling them. "Can I wear white in the winter?" That was always an old fashion question. Any color is right, if it's right on you. Then too, I realized about seasonless clothes.

I: Yes, you were very early with that.

N: I realized that so many women were traveling by airplanes, and they made it so easy to travel, that you could pick yourself up and overnight be in the South, or in a warm climate. You didn't want to spend a lot of money on heavy clothes. I found that women bought their clothes by weight. If it was too heavy, they couldn't pack it, because it would be overweight, and when they got to where they were going it might be too heavy. So little by little, I think we're all realizing that there's such a thing as year-round clothes. And closets got too small to keep your mistakes, or your winter clothes in the summer.

I: So you saw that coming?

N: Yes.

I: You also...it seems to me you also had the vision of separate pieces that could be changed around and serve various purposes.

N: Long before anybody else had any separates...I used to show a group of clothes in my collection with a big bag...a big tote bag, and I'd have a model come out and show that she
could wear a pair of pants, or a skirt and an overblouse, and a shirt, and a reversible coat. You turn it on one side for the day and another side for the evening. But, I think I was just too soon, there were no departments set up in stores the way they are today for that kind of interchangeable thing. But, I felt it coming, and you can't be all things to everybody, and so we stuck to just what we were doing and not so-called separates.

I: Didn't you also write the Encyclopaedia Britannica entry on fashion, for their 1953 edition?

N: No.

I: You don't remember doing that?

N: No.

I: Someone I read credited you with doing that. Well...you must have see some very big changes in factory operations...

N: Oh, yes.

I: ...along the line.

N: The machinery.

I: What was it like in the early years?

N: Of course in the early years we had girls who were just making slips with fine lace lingerie, as slips underneath the dresses, and of course we can't find people like that to do that kind of work anymore. We can't afford it actually.

I: You mean a dress would come with its own slip?

N: Yes, or a lining that had lace and all kinds of stitching in it, so it gave you a shape. We had marvelous embroiderers
which unfortunately we don't have today. Well, the world has changed and you have to keep up with it. We live differently, we think differently. There's no place remote, and there's no place unknown today. The first time...about the second time I went around the world I found that the Beatles were the biggest influence at that moment.

I: The Beatles?

N: Yes. Everyone knows that the youth in any country is the future of the country. The Beatles were the biggest influence I would say, even more so than the Paris collections or anything. The rhythm, the music, the way they cut their hair, the suits that they wore, the colors...even in Taiwan...going to Taiwan and Taipei and visiting some of the schools, the youngsters all looked that way, you know the teenagers, all of them wanted to look like the Beatles.

I: That was a sort of a watershed...they were in some way or other...in music...

N: Yes, particularly in music, the rhythm and beat, and clothes too. That's what's so interesting about the business that we're in is that everything influences fashions. You are what you eat, some people say. Food has to do with a woman's figure, her skin, and her complexion and her make-up. You can't separate clothes from art, or living...everyday living. You just can't, it all is just sort of mixed up together.

I: What would you say have been the art influences on your clothes?
N: I went to Europe in 1925 for the first time and there was a Colonial Exposition in Paris at that time. France did have all her colonies, you see. I remember meeting and being very impressed by Paul Poiret.

I: Oh, you did meet Poiret?

N: Yes.

I: Did you see his houseboats on the Seine?

N: Yes, and we used to have dinner almost every other night, on the Seine.

I: What did he serve?

N: Very good French food! I had the good opportunity of visiting the studio where he worked, and he autographed one of his books and gave it to me. I still have it in my collection of fashion books.

I: Did you go to the Ecole Martine, where the little girls were designing, they were drawing naive renditions of flowers and so on?

N: When you say, "What period, or...", even at that early age I always felt that everything influenced clothes, music, art, the way people live, architecture. You just can't separate the two, you see it would be silly for us to wear a bustle, or something that was complicated in a very modern house today. So the whole picture must hang together.

I: So your sources are partly from your travels though, aren't they?
N: Yes they are. Well, the collection that they're having at F.I.T. of things that I have gleaned from all of my trips, and the point that I would try to make in this presentation is showing the original dress, or costume that I maybe bought in a flea market, or a shop. I picked up a piece of embroidery to show the student what I did with it. I think that no matter where you go, if your eyes are open and your ears are open, you're bound to get ideas.

I: In other words, you've given the costumes to F.I.T. and the clothes that were inspired by this costume, or piece of embroidery, or whatever.

N: Yes, I thought that the students would get an idea, or learn how to use those things with any research they did. For example, I have a heavy piece of woven reboza that I bought in Mexico, and when I came back from Mexico, I translated that into a printed silk chiffon, a printed chiffon, that looked textured, not woven, but no definite pattern. Besides a dress for the collection, I made a dress for my daughter Joan to wear to her brother's wedding. That's one of the things that I presented to F.I.T. I must tell you that I had some wonderful experiences on my last trip to China. When I went to the Friendship store in Shanghai, I was taken by a guide actually, they had some magnificent Chinese costumes that were worn by the concubines, or the performers in the theater before the revolution, and I wanted to buy a few robes and they said that they would send them home for
me. But they couldn't understand why I was so "bourgeois" and wanted to buy these things. I said, "I want our young students in America to see the beautiful culture that you have had for many years in China." This guide said to me, "Why don't you buy a Mao suit?" These Mao suits were being sold in polyester and cotton, if you can imagine, in denim blue, and everybody wearing them looked like ants crawling all over in China.

I: Was it that indigo dye? I bought one of those in Paris the year...there's a Frenchman who set up a group of stores in Paris and he was importing from China. For some reason everybody wanted to buy one of these Mao suits, and the dye came off. You're told that you had to rinse them in salt water six or seven times, but even then you were blue from the dye, and I guess they still do that.

N: No, they don't. I think they buy German dyes now. They've learned. However, I said that I would buy one of the Mao suits, and I did, and as they were packing it up I turned to them and I said, "You know what I'm going to do with that jacket when I get home? I'm going to make it in pure silk satin and line it in mink." My guide almost fainted.

I: That can't have gone down well there.

N: No, it was very bourgeois.

I: There's no one who's doing the fantastic embroidery on Mainland China is there?
N: They still have their workshops and they have their older people doing ridiculous kinds of embroidery, for instance they do pictures of fish, or panda bears, in all different colors and all that kind of thing that nobody needs in the world today, but they have to keep the old people busy and they want to keep that kind of culture. The way they do all these carved ivory things, I don't know who needs those anymore, do you? I never realized, but there are old people that they have to keep busy, and they want to continue showing the world the different things they can do.

I: I was told by the Frenchman who sold the Mao suits that the Chinese had very wisely encouraged their people, especially the country people, to continue with their crafts in making the bamboo furniture that's made without any nails, and the pottery and so on...because it made them happy, and kept them contented. He said that was very smart, that the Russians had not done enough of that.

N: That could be. But you see, the future of China is in the young people, and the young people are learning all new technology. They've imported people from the States and people from all over the world to teach them medicine, new medicine, new weaving, new yarns. You know they have very little silk left.

I: Do you think...we just have a little time left, do you think we can go from your Smithsonian Institution that you have...
Simps...Simpson...Simpsonian, that's it, Institution that you have, your collection of wonderful things that you've acquired in your travels, to perhaps a day, a quick run-through of a day in the life of Adele Simpson today. First, could you tell me what articles, what things in the Simpsonian collection have inspired you, and have been sources for various...

N: Well...

(END OF TAPE 1)

I: This Smithsonian Institution, what's in it? What is there? Simpsonian - I insist on saying Smithsonian because I'm thinking of Smithline, so the Smithline...Adele Smithline Simpsonian Institution, what is in it?

N: It is a collection I have housed in one of the apartments of the house that I live in. I had collected all kinds of artifacts and clothes and books and samples, from all over the world. I've been around the world three times, so you can imagine I was like the "Collier Brothers" living in this house, with this apartment above mine, that had all kinds of things that...it was just bursting at the seams. So, I thought it's about time I gave it to F.I.T., so they could let the students really use the things, and handle them and see different ideas from other parts of the world. It got to be too much. I really couldn't take care of it all.
I had it cataloged at one point but then I couldn't keep that up so it was a question of hanging them and housing them.

I: Now these are costumes and fabrics and all sorts of things?
N: Everything is very precious to me. Even post cards.
I: Post cards?
N: Yes, of costumes and things and pictures that my husband had taken. I tell you I have a system about traveling. I would do a lot of research, for example if we were going to Turkey, I was invited by the Turkish government to visit their embroidery school because I was interested in their embroidery, and I would do quite a bit of research about the geography of the country and museums and markets, etc. I would start off by going to museums in other cities that I went to. Really the first thing I did was to find out how I could get out, if I didn't like it. Then I would go to the museums and flea markets. I was interested in the way people lived and cooked, and what they ate. I would see all the interesting touristic things and at the end of the day go to the "best bar", because that's where you saw the "best" people, well the best looking men anyway.

I: To see how they dressed, how they were?
N: That was the important plan that I had. Another idea that I had was, I thought I would need everything and I would pack two or three suitcases and then leave one of them home,
and never missed it.

I: And that's what you advise your customers to do?

N: Yes.

I: Have you found that you've seen color ideas in the food markets?

N: Yes.

I: Sometimes...

N: Yes.

I: ...as well as the vegetable. You couldn't give F.I.T. a stand of beautiful vegetables though, very well. That would be recorded by your husband I suppose?

N: We have pictures of them. I think you have to be very careful in packing when you're traveling. You take things that are foldable and not too heavy and easy. I usually try to put my clothes on a hanger, my clothes all on a hanger so that when I get to a place I can just take them out and hang them up in the closet. This business of folding and having to take time to hang them on hangers is terrible, but luckily my clothes are short, so that I can lay them flat on hangers and put celephane covers over them all. My accessories were in celephane bags so that I could see through, and I never covered anything up.

I: Were they arranged according to...

N: Yes, I had a bag, a see-through bag, and the belt, or the pin, or the scarf was right on that hanger with that dress
or coat. Then I try to work out shoes and bags that would go with all of my clothes.

I: You are a very organized lady.

N: Well, you have to be. I have to be organized in business too. There's a certain discipline that you have to have about your life and your working habits.

I: How do you start your day now? If it's a Monday I suppose you're coming in from the country.

N: Yes, that's true. On every other day I'm up, well even when I come in from the country I'm up at six o'clock. I usually do exercises at seven and have a massage. Then by eight-thirty or nine o'clock I'm in the place.

I: What's the first thing you do when you come in?

N: Well, I usually go to the back, to the pattern-maker's room, and I like to see just what they're doing with the proportions of the clothes, and then I go to the shipping department. Of course that place is organized that way, and then I like to see the way the things are coming through in the stock-room, and then I go to the piece goods department because I want to know what's come in and I want to know if the colors and fabrics are right or wrong, or if the scarves match the fabrics. Then I go into both designing rooms. I have someone working with me, and we talk to the girls about what they're working on, and then I go into the showroom. They tell me that Mr. So-and-So was in, or Miss So-and-So was in, and they liked this, or they didn't like
that, or stores are re-ordering numbers so-and-so.

I: How many lines do you do a year?
N: We do about four.
I: That would be...?
N: Spring, Summer...
I: Resort?
N: Resort and Fall.
I: So there isn't properly a Winter line? It's Fall/Winter?
N: Yes. Then sometimes we do a small collection in between if we feel that the stores may need some pepping up, when it comes to around Christmas they want new clothes.
I: You said you have probably 450 to 500 customers...
N: 500 stores, yes.
I: What then is your production? How many models for example are going to be in your Resort line?
N: We show about 90 pieces. We usually wind up by cutting 70. Not in the Summer or Resort line because the delivery has to be quicker. But the Spring, big Spring and big Fall, are usually 70 or 75 models that we do. Our customers don't really come in and buy one or two styles, they buy a range of different styles. As I said, we try to dress women in a complete wardrobe. That is everything but active-sports. She has something to wear for daytime and something to go to business in, if she goes to business, or a supermarket if she goes shopping, and an afternoon dress if they play Bridge,
and a cocktail dress to go to cocktails, and an evening
dress if they belong to a country club or go to big balls.

I: So this is a customer who still wants a cocktail dress?

N: Oh yes.

I: She likes...

N: Not so much in big cities, but in smaller cities where one
of their great pleasures is to get dressed up, and wear
new clothes at a party. It's good for their soul.

I: Where were you in checking through as you came here. You
were in the designing room.

N: No, we work with the sample mannequin.

I: Oh yes.

N: Then we have fittings every other day on live models.

I: How many models do you have in the house?

N: We don't have any steady models excepting at showtime, and
then we have ten or twelve to show a collection.

I: There isn't a house model?

N: No. We have a girl we make the collection on, and maybe a
substitute if she's not available, but we don't have any
house models. I like to take the clothes and put them on
anybody around the place to see how they look.

I: Oh, really?

N: Yes. We're doing that constantly.

I: And they test them and do the sitting down and the raising
of the arms, and so on?

N: Yes, and we have a duplicate model that comes in every day,
and we correct our patterns on her, or correct our clothes on her. She's an average size, a 10 or 12, depending. Then the pattern is graded and cut. But, for me it's a full time job because I get up in the morning, do the exercises and have to run and worry about business and running a household.

I: You sort of skipped over that, what do you do...

N: Yes, I know. I'm telling you now. I have a different hat that I put on every hour, and then I get on the phone and find out what's happening in Greenwich, Connecticut, whether the swimming pool was painted and whether the water was put in and whether the trees were sprayed, or whether the roof was fixed, whether the plumbing works. I mean there is plenty to do. Then I go downtown and walk all through the place, and when anybody comes up to me with a complaint I tell them, "Tell me something good first", because I want to start the day that way. Usually if there's any problem I never get myself too upset about it until the end of the day and if there's anything wrong we discuss it then. I will say to somebody, "Now look, you did so-and-so today. That's wrong. Come in tomorrow and see that it doesn't happen again". Otherwise I'd be a nervous wreck.

I: When you're creating a collection, how do you start? You start with the fabrics?

N: With the fabric, yes.

I: So it's really the choice of the fabric in the first place that is going to determine the design. Is that correct?
N: That's right. I always say it's like baking a cake, it depends on the ingredients you put into it whether it's a success or not. Naturally everything is fabric today. Women and their undergarments have changed so naturally the silhouette has to change, and you are what you wear underneath. It was very funny this last time when I was in China. I got a respiratory infection and went to a hospital in Shanghai and the nurses were very interested in what I was wearing when I got dressed to leave. I put pantyhose on, of course I was wearing slacks, they'd never seen panty hose before. They showed me that they wore long-johns and socks, little short socks and flat shoes. Then of course I had a pair of jersey pants that I zipped up the front, and they got very upset about that, knowing that I was a designer, why do I make pants that zip up the front. They showed me they had button plackets on the sides, because they weren't into zippers yet. I said, I tried to think quickly, "It makes you stand up straighter and you pull your stomach in. If you have round hips you'll just exagerate that." Well, I couldn't sell them that idea. Front zippers were very foreign. They were absolutely intrigued by my make-up because none of them use make-up. They don't even wear lipstick.

I: Did they want to try it?

N: Yes they did.

I: Did they like it?
N: I had some extra lipsticks that I wanted to give them but, well the younger nurses took them but the point is nobody does one thing in China. One of my nurses on her days off, or some weeks, she worked in a ball-bearing factory. The girls in the ball-bearing factory were nurses. Other times the children of the city go to the country, and the children of the country go to the city. There is constant interchange so that nobody is a specialist, and I like that. They learn a little bit of everything.

I: Now, when you were in China did you come across a piece of fabric that talked to you, that said, "I'm a dress"?

N: I went to the Fabric Fair that you can see at the Canton Fair, and I went to the fair for one day. I tried to do a little business, but it's very strange because it's all controlled by the government. I was trying to buy some cotton, pure cotton, because we don't have much pure cotton in this country, it's always mixed with something. Pure cotton, so I said, "How much is it?" and the man said, "Well, how much do you want to buy?", and I said, "I don't know how much I'm going to buy until you tell me how much it is." We argued back and forth that way until, well I really couldn't get a price out of him. He would not definitely commit himself.

I: Did you finally succeed in buying some of it?

N: Yes, I did, and I've never seen a cotton so beautiful. I didn't have the time at the Canton Fair to look at some
silks because I was on a different kind of tour, I was on an archeological one, and we only spent two days in Canton at the Fair. I wasn't too happy with the designs, or the coloring because it's very difficult unless you have experience and know, to buy fabrics in a foreign country. The light is different, and the people's complexions are different. I know I did that in India and found it very difficult.

I: Found that you were surprised when you brought the fabric here?

N: Yes, when I brought it here. Even in England, the light is different there. When I would buy a woolen color, it looks different in England than it does in the U.S.A. So you really have to have the experience and even then you make mistakes.

I: Then when you do have the fabric back here, a pattern is cut, but do you drape in fabric?

N: Well you see, I try the fabric on myself, hold it up to myself or to a model and look at it in a mirror because you can always see the defects in a mirror. When a woman buys a dress she looks at it in a mirror, and that's the kind of effect that I want to have, a reaction I want to have.

I: You mean the defects as to the consistency of the material?

N: Yes, and what it does and the design, or whether it repeats, or whether it hangs right. You can always see that in a mirror, it never lies. Then, after I get an idea of what
the fabric does I will try to drape it, and I have an assistant who does a muslin, a toile, a sketch is made, and then it's cut and fitted and then I see it at the first fitting.

I: You were there after it's been cut...

N: And fitted, after it's been put together.

I: Is it done on a dressmaker's...

N: Dummy?

I: Umhum.

N: Yes. We have our dummies that are naturally made in proportion to the models that we're fitting. So you see very quickly. I'm very carefully about grain and the way clothes hang from the shoulder.

I: Do you ever scrap the whole thing when you decide that it just isn't going to work?

N: Oh yes, many times. Many times. Even when it's finished I'll look at it and won't show it unless I think the design will behave and perform well, and fit into somebody's life. I think that as a woman I understand a woman's body and it's easy for me. I can always sense, I mean I've been working in this business long enough to know if the grain is wrong, or if the fabric will not work right. Then of course, the engineering of how to get into it, and how to put it together so it looks like no human hand touched it. That's what we try to do.

I: Do you ever let it hang the way Jersey is supposed to stretch?
N: Yes. You weight it and let it stretch, so it is on grain.
I: Yes.

N: Well, I don't cut too many things on the bias because the factories don't know how to make them. You need a very small factory with concentrated, or very experienced dress-makers to do that, and that's gone out of the world.
I: How many factories do you use, different factories?
N: We have about 13 or 14 different factories and they each do different things, different kinds of things.
I: So the model of the dress is made here?
N: Yes.
I: And then it's sent...
N: And then a pattern is made.
I: A pattern is made, I see.
N: And then it's cut and sent to a factory who brings it for a correction, or an approval. Then it's graded, and a "lot" is cut.
I: Graded as to size, is that what grading means?
N: Yes. Then every dress that comes in from the factory is put on a form to be sure that it's sized properly and that it doesn't have any flaws.
I: Every single one?
N: Every dress, every dress gets examined on a form.
I: And how many factories did you say you...
N: Thirteen.
I: Thirteen. Whereabouts are they?
N: They're all on the sidestreets.
I: Close by?
N: Yes, because the rent is not as expensive as Seventh Avenue.
They all have experienced workers. We've been with these same factories for many, many years and they get to know how we work and what we expect, and how to press. All the goods that come in are examined before they are shipped.
I: Now what is your annual production in numbers of garments?
N: We make about 30,000.
I: Do you really?
N: Yes.
I: So these 450, 500 ladies buy many, many pieces.
N: Now, when I said 450, that's stores, not ladies.
I: Stores, stores.
N: Not ladies.
I: Ahhh. I wondered, that seemed like...450 stores.
N: Yes, specialty shops, and they in turn have their customers.
We have customers that buy four and five, ten and twelve.
They used to when the prices were less expensive, but now that the prices are higher.
I: What is your price range?
N: Our average price range in the store, retail, is about $150 to about $750 or $1,000 depending on the fabric, or if we use fur, or embroidery. They are more expensive.
I: That would be a coat and dress ensemble.
N: Yes, yes.
I: And $150 would be a dress probably.
N: Yes, that's right.
I: And what is your annual gross?
N: What do you mean our annual gross?
I: Well, your annual turnover.
N: Well, it's about $6,000,000.
I: Wow! That's a lot.
N: That's nothing in comparison with manufacturers that are in the sportswear field, or in the lower priced lines. You know I read in the papers where they're doing $14,000,000 or $16,000,000. We never expanded too much, with the result that we have more control over our business.
I: You feel you can't keep control?
N: No, I can't be all things to everybody, or keep the standard of quality that we stand for. But our customers, our stores are very pleased. I mean, they seem to make money on the clothes and we fill a certain niche in their store in the so-called, "better dress department". Better than what I don't know, but out of the very popular priced clothes.
I: Are they better than the dresses, as far as the quality and the finish and so on, and what you can do with a garment today, are they better than the dresses that you made when you first started out?
N: Oh, yes they are. The quality of the fabrics I think, are better. Of course we pay more money for labor too. Now let me say they are better, they are the same seamstress.
stitches but it's the way it's done, the way it's handled and the little details, buttonholes, finishing, etc.

I: Do you still have the hand finished details?

N: Yes, button holes, and the seams, and the linings, everything that goes into making a good garment. Our customers are very pleased. The women who finally buy the clothes get a great deal of satisfaction. They've told me that they never wear out. I don't know if that's good or bad.

I: Is there a particular dress that has stayed in your mind, or a particular outfit, that you found yourself going back to and doing in a new form all through your career?

N: That's a difficult thing to say because I always have to feel that I'm doing something new. It may turn out to be like something I've done before, but while I'm doing it I've got to feel that the proportion is different, or the shoulder line may be different, maybe it's a little lower or higher, or the shurring is put in by hand, or...you know something different about it. I keep trying to improve all the time, and make it today's dress rather than yesterday's or the year before. Not that there was anything wrong, the lengths may change, you know the problem we've had with skirts going up and down, and lengths changing, and women being very confused. But, that too shall pass like everything else.

I: Well, certainly some of the things that you've continued to make, it seems to me, are perhaps only done by yourself
and a few other designers. Pauline Trigere, who is a very
good friend of yours...

N: A very good friend of mine.
I: Has similar aims.

N: She has, as a woman, she understands workmanship, and she
understands quality, and she's a fabulous designer. In
fact I took Pauline to her first Patou show that she ever
saw. She wasn't even working. She was in Paris, you see
I knew her parents and her brother for many years. In
fact, I was at her wedding in Paris. She has a great
talent, great talent.

I: Haven't you continued to make certain styles that were
considered by some to be "out" as they say, despite what
was supposed to be out? I think of the jacket dresses, which
is really a...it makes a great deal of sense and there
are many women who would want to continue wearing a dress
and a jacket.

N: Well, I try to give variations to every line that we do, and
it's wonderful having a young daughter who is my boss, who
says, "Mother, don't do that. It looks old fashioned".
and she keeps me on my toes.

I: Joan?

N: Yes. She has great taste and she has great flair. She
really knows, and I can tell you that for many years I
didn't think she'd ever work here with me. When she first
started she wore Ann Fogarty dresses, and I was ecstatic the
day she decided to wear an "Adele Simpson," and I'm very
happy when she does. She keeps me on my toes and keeps me
alert. I think if you're "in things," and attuned to what's
going on in the world you wouldn't want to make a dress and
jacket which nobody wants because people are wearing shirts
and skirts. We always have to be "with it," that's all.

I: Isn't it funny, it sometimes happens that a thing like the
dress and the jacket will go away for awhile, and some flash
in the pan type will suddenly discover this great new idea
of the dress, especially the sun dress with the jacket, that
sort of goes with it.

N: Well, the construction of it is different by the time we
change, and the approach to it is different. We used to
put hip pads in the jackets.

I: Hip pads?

N: Yes, to make them stand out.

I: Shoulder pads and hip pads, sounds very "Mae Westy."

N: And they must have "hiplets" in the front of the jacket
there. They don't do that anymore, even though it's a
dress and jacket. The whole approach is different. There
are some women who find it very practical, particularly
with air conditioning in the summer. They don't want to
wear a sweater, and they don't want to wear a short sleeve,
or sleeveless dress. The minute you make a sleeveless dress,
or a short sleeve dress you have to put a jacket on it,
because when you go into an air conditioned restaurant, or an air conditioned theater, or movie and you have to have something over you. Now, some women can manage with a shawl, wear it and hold it, but lots of women don't. They don't want to be bothered, and they don't want to wear a sweater, so you have to make them a jacket. There's always a reason for things happening in fashion that makes for good fashion.

I: Very, very profound statement I would say. I think you've been on the whole more innovative than people sometimes realize, because your forte of course has been doing a sophisticated yet traditional kind of...

N: Not traditional I would say.

I: Well, not traditional, but not anything that cries out.

BL I try to figure out...I don't make clothes for actresses that make an entrance if that's what you mean, but my customers always tell me that they feel very well dressed and they are greatly admired when they wear an "Adele Simpson", and that makes me very happy, and makes me want to do more and more. Things that are attractive and pleasing to their husbands. I had a woman tell me that the first time she could afford to buy an "Adele Simpson" dress her husband proposed to her. She's very happily married and she'll never forget me, as long as she buys clothes, she'll buy an "Adele Simpson". That's nice to hear isn't it?
I: Of course it is. Of course it is. Well, I think that explains why you've outlasted many who have come and gone, and you're still doing wonderful work.

N: I love, and I'm always happy to see women well dressed. There's a certain sense of quality and fitness of things that I insist upon, and I think women appreciate it. That's why I've been working all these years.

I: Can you think of anything we haven't touched on that you'd like to add?

N: I don't think so. I think that my sole purpose is to see that women are dressed well, and the reason I'm in business is to see that women are happy and feel secure in their clothes, and that the stores make money on them. Otherwise I have no reason for being. It's all deliberately thought out, and deliberately planned, and I'm disciplined to thinking that way.

I: And you always have been.

N: Yes. Always. We always have a plot in the plan about the way the collection is going to be put together, what direction we're going to go, what we think is right. Do or die. Then we follow through. We have to have a plan.

I: And the best plan is the kind that doesn't show.

N: Yes, and it has to relate to a woman's way of life. I've found that we have a limited number of customers in a town. We usually sell to a department store and to specialty stores. I understand and know that a woman who goes into
a department store is usually a different kind of customer from the one that goes into a specialty store to buy clothes particularly. Of course that's changing gradually because everything is getting all mixed up. I try not to be all things to everybody, you know I'm not doing way-out sport clothes because people don't expect that of me. I know my customers and they want to be comfortable and not have too many ideas on one dress or costume, because that makes them nervous. It makes me nervous too.

I: So they're never clothes that are gussied up?

N: No. I have found that you can't show a woman a dress or costume in the intimacy of a fitting room at the point of sale, a new color, a new fabric, a new silhouette, a new neckline all at once. They think, "Will my husband like it, will my children like it?", and they don't feel comfortable. The whole point in dressing is to have a security and a "savoir faire" in what you're doing. You can't combine too many ideas at once. I'm talking about the majority of women. There's always one or two that will have a slit up to the navel or something, and want to be dramatic. There are designers who do that kind of thing too.

I: That really sums it up Mrs. Simpson, and as I said and I think you've said yourself, you've explained why you have been so enduring and so wonderfully enduring for such a long time.
N: You take Mme. Chanel, she never really changed her style in all the years that she was designing. There's always that Chanel suit, and it was marvelous. How much better can you be than good?

I: True. I think we're coming to the end...

N: Good.

I: End of the film? I certainly thank you very much.

N: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed talking to you.

I: I've learned a lot.

(END OF TAPE)
INDEX

"Adele Simpson Says" advice column 22-23
The Beatles 25
"Bramley" dress 13-14
Chanel, Coco 50
China 27-29, 37-39
Council of the Fashion Designers of America 21
customers 1,2,47,48-49
Ecole Martin 26
The Fashion Group, Inc. 21
Fashion Institute of Technology 21,27,30,32
Fogarty, Ann 46
Franklin Simon Company 13
Gershel, Ben 10-11, 15
Greenwich, Connecticut 36
India 7
Johnson, Mrs. Lyndon Baines 2
Lambert, Eleanor 21
Lasher, Alfred 19
Loos, Anita 12
Magnin, Carl 13
"Mao suit" 28
Mary Lee Frocks 20
New York City, New York 8
The New Yorker 22
packing clothes 6, 32-33
Patou 45
Poiret, Paul 26
Pratt Institute 10
Riga, Latvia 8
Rosenstein, Nettie 20
"separates" 23-24

51
Simpson, Adele
"Adele Simpson Says" advice column 22-23
annual production 42
childhood 7-8
designing for Ben Gershel 10-11
designing for Mary Lee Frocks 19
designing for William Bass 15-16
first job 9-10
meeting her husband 17-18
on being a working mother 20-21
on designing "new" looks 44-47
on traveling 31
on young people and fashion 25
price range of her clothes 42
process of creating and producing a line 35-37, 39-42
schooling 8-9
traveling in China 37-39
typical day at her workroom/showroom 33,36

Simpson, Jeffrey 20-21, 27
Simpson, Joan 20-21, 27, 45-46
Simpson, Wesley 17-19, 21, 31-32
Simpson Factors 18
"Simpsonian Institution" 29-31
synthetic fabrics 16-17

Tokyo, Japan 6, 7
Trigere, Pauline 45
Tutankhamen Tombs 9

Wall Street Journal 4
Wesley Simpson Inc., Custom Fabrics 18
William Bass Company 15, 16