

Kansas City Garment Industry Project

Transcript of Interview with Mary Lou Chalmers

John A. Dvorak: Welcome to another interview for the Kansas City garment industry project. Today is May 7, 2010. I'm John Dvorak and I'm interviewing Mary Lou Chalmers, who had a long career in the Kansas City garment industry in the '50s and '60s. The videographer is Mark Titus. Mary Lou, you were born in Cameron, MO. Tell me how you got from there to a career in the Kansas City garment industry.

Mary Lou Chalmers: Well, I was an only child, my mother died when I was four. So my aunt raised me on a farm. I had no one to play with. So I entertained myself with drawing, and I drew pretty dresses, pretty women, pretty dresses, and made little stories about them. So from the time I was a child, I knew that's what I wanted to do. My father saw that I went to the Kansas City Art Institute. At that time they had a fashion design department, for design and pattern making.

Q What types of things did you study there?

A Pattern making and design, and draping, and sketching, illustration. That was another big deal at that time. The ads in the newspapers, most of them had illustrations in, where now they had photographs. Harzfeld's, Wolff Brothers, the ads were beautiful illustrations, and of course that was part of our training too.

Q Did you graduate with a degree?

A No I did not. My father had a heart attack when I was in the middle of my junior year, and I went home to take care of him. After he recovered a little bit, I returned and went to Isabelle Boldin School of Fashion, which was pattern making. And I went there for two years. And then I went to, if you can believe it, Fanny Fern Fitzwater School of Fashion Illustration at 37th and Main. I went there for a year. So I really had almost six years of college but I have no degree.

Q When did you stop training and start working?

A Nineteen-fifty-seven. I went to work. I was getting married, and I wanted to get a job. So my first position was at Ricemore coat and suit, 7th and Broadway. I applied for jobs at different companies around Kansas City. Which was interesting at that time. Nelly Don, which was a prestigious place to work, and Gay-Gibson, the two biggies here. Nelly Don paid \$45 a week, Ricemore coat and suit paid 60, so I went with the \$60. And it was on the second floor of a building at 7th and Broadway, and I'm telling you—no air conditioning, the factory was on the same floor as the design department. And, my boss was Alex Catalano, who was a, he had had a business, which was world famous, beautiful Italian designed coats. And so he was the head designer, and I worked for him and I designed children's coats. It was fun, he was wonderful. The owners were lovely to me. But it was a horrendous place to work. It was so dirty. The floors in those old buildings, they'd come around all during the day and sweep and dust, and I was always coughing and sputtering. So, I don't remember how, but I think the lady that I'd gone to pattern school, Nancy Frock in Iola, KS, then asked me to design women's dresses. And this was in Iola, KS. So I took that immediately, because it was a real fussy place to work. I would have to catch the bus at five o'clock in the morning. And go to Iola, KS. And I would stay with the owner and his wife for two or three days during the week and then take the bus

back and do then my pattern making and sketching and everything the other two days in Kansas City. So then one day, my husband was at the art institute and the lady left a note in his box and said that Gay-Gibson was looking for a, an assistant fashion coordinator, and she thought of me, she remembered me from the art institute. And so I just flew down there and applied for the job. Evidently, I don't know for sure, but they said there were 75 girls that applied. I got there, and they put me in a little room, told me to undress and put this dress on me. And I thought "what in the world is going on?" Well, I fit the size eight and nine model dresses. So darned, I got the job. I was on top of the world. It was the best job. It was \$75 a week.

Q What year would that have been?

A Oh, about 1960. I didn't start in the garment industry until '57, and I left in '78.

Q Even before you worked for Gay-Gibson, did you have fun at those first jobs that you had?

A Oh yeah. The people, the operators, the designers, everybody, they were just fabulous. They were all doing things. They weren't grumpy. They were, we'd go to work on Monday morning and someone would have made something, or built something, or cooked something. Interesting people. They were always fun to be around. Yeah I liked it, I liked the people.

Q Gay-Gibson was one of the big well-known companies. It was an achievement on your part to work for them I imagine?

A Oh I was thrilled to death. And the designer, the head designer, Dick Dumas, he fitted his original dresses on me and they gave them to me. These pure silk gorgeous dresses that would never be duplicated. I had all these beautiful beautiful clothes. And it was so much fun going to work in the morning. You just couldn't wait to put, high heels and hose. I loved it. It was exciting. The people were fabulous. It was never dull. Never boring.

Q What did you do for Gay-Gibson?

A Well I started, well, of course, I had the background to do everything. But they hired me to be the assistant fashion coordinator. And so I assisted Gwen Green, who was the head lady, and I organized the fashion shows. I fitted the models with the original garment. I would follow it all the way through from the very design original sketch to the pattern department. I would make sure it looked like, the pattern looked like the dress that was intended from the designer. Through the samples. I did the sketches for each item. And there would be like 70 or 80 dresses in each line. We had five lines a year. We had a fashion show at the end of the spring and fall lines. And then I would arrange the fashion show and fit the models and put on the show. In fact, one year, boy I loved it, I just couldn't wait, had such a good and did such a good job that Paul Wilson, the first time I'd ever been to New York, he gave my husband and myself an all-paid-expense trip to New York for a week. It was fabulous.

Q The dresses that you worked on, where would they have been sold? Would they have gone all over the United States?

A All over the United States. Mostly small towns, but you know, at that time, people bought in their country towns. Gay-Gibson was a big stylish house. They did beautiful dresses that were in high-class magazines.

Q How did you feel as a young woman, you were in your late 20s by then I guess, how did you feel knowing that you were designing dresses that were going all over the United States?

A Oh, I loved it, I loved it. Smiled all the time. Loved it. Couldn't have been more exciting. Couldn't have been happier. The people were fabulous. You know, and, well, two women, when it all fell apart at the very end, all these fabulous people, they scattered all over the country. And so, as a result, I've got great friends from coast to coast. Most of the people left. Some of them came back, to retire. But most of the people left.

Q What was Gay-Gibson like to work with in terms of pay, benefits? For example, did you have health insurance at that time?

A Oh yeah.

Q So it was considered a good job in the context of Kansas City at that time?

A Oh yeah. Oh, all my friends just couldn't wait, because I could get dresses, beautiful dresses for half price, and more than that. It was on the fifth floor, 2716 Grand, that's, you know, Crown Center and all that business. That's where it was. And my office, where I had the sketches on the wall of all the designs, that was where we fitted everything, and where the conferences were held, and the big window looked over to the memorial, so that was all open there.

Q The Liberty Memorial?

A The Liberty Memorial, uh huh.

Q You mentioned how you enjoyed working with your other employees. How were the bosses? Did you know them? Were they good to work with?

A Oh yeah. At Gay-Gibson, they were wonderful. Paul Wilson was just as nice to me as he could be. They were all great. Ah, you know, okay, the design department then, they decided to grow. And so they elected to move most of the design and pattern making to New York. I was honored that he asked me to move with the department. I was just clicking my heels, I was so proud, and so, I felt so special. And then went to the country and told my aunt that raised me I was moving to New York and she started crying. I couldn't do it. So I came back and told Paul Wilson I didn't want to move to New York. And he "okay kid," he called me kid, "okay kid you can stay here." So I stayed in Kansas City, but it was boring after that. All the crazy people were in New York. I wanted to be where the crazies were. So I left after a while and then decided, to, I stayed home for a few months. That didn't go well. So then for the next job I went to Danny Dare, which made children's clothes, and Betty Rose Coats, then Nelly Don, finally went back to Nelly Don. They were all very lovely people. Then I went to Mendle Silverman, which was, that was the crazy place in Kansas City. They made upscale women's dresses, mostly half-size dresses. But the experience at that place I can't imagine ever could be repeated. He was feared by everybody. Even the salesmen that would come there from all over the country. Most of them would have a flask in their hind pocket they'd have to nip on before they'd have the courage to go upstairs to see him.

Q Was he gruff or was he truly kinda a nasty fellow?

A Does it have to be one or the other? He was both. And he would, he would fight, okay, he and his designer they would have these great monumental fights and scream and yell at each other. She'd go into the ladies room to get away from him. He'd stand outside, wait for her to come back out, Jenny Schmidt.

Q He'd stand outside the women's bathroom?

A And wait until she came out So she'd whisk past him and she'd go into her room. She had tranquilizers, and they'd still be screaming and yelling at each other. She'd get into her room and she'd swallow a few tranquilizers. "Give me some," he'd say. She'd give him tranquilizers, and then they'd start all over again.

Q Did you enjoy working there?

A Oh yeah. 'Cuz we all banded together. The most unbelievable, that man, he hired the best talent that he could find. I'm a little country girl from Cameron, MO. This man had a Japanese pattern maker, he had a black cutter, the head of the pattern department was Joe Costa who had liberated some concentration camp during World War II. We had Rosa Gold, who was an operator, she had the concentration stamp on her arm. A lady from Afghanistan. A couple gay guys. A German girl. One girl whose father had been in the SS in World War II. Another girl whose father had been in the service. And we, we had a wonderful time. We would all get together at noon, and everybody would bring their special ethnic dishes and we'd share it. We'd go to things after work together.

Q So you had a very diverse work force?

A Oh, it was great. Yes, very diverse.

Q You all got along?

A Yeah, we got along. He'd smoked a cigar, he had a cigar. And he'd try to sneak up on you and catch you not working. But we could all smell the cigar before he got there. We'd pass the word: "The smell is coming. Here comes the cigar." I worked there a couple times. The last time I had this big room all by myself, and I'd be in there working away, and then I'd hear the door open, and he'd try to catch you not working you know. I always was fortunately working. But if you didn't, if you were in his disfavor, he'd fire you. We were on the fifth floor. And he'd say "You're fired! You're out of here!" Get on the elevator, you'd go down. He'd be on the next elevator following them to hire them back.

Q Where was this, what was the address?

A Ah, right at 8th and Broadway, off 8th and Broadway, you know where the Phoenix is, across from where the Phoenix is now.

Q Now a lot of the companies in the garment industry were owned by Jewish men. But you're telling me the work force was not Jewish necessarily, it was all sorts of people, is that right?

A I never thought about it like that. Several of them, Betty Rose, Danny Dare, oh golly, I can't remember the one, they were all Jewish owners.

Q Were a lot of the workers immigrants from Europe or were some of them people like you who were from around here?

A Around here. They were smart enough to import a lot of the Germans who had the real talent for patterns and quality, a lot of them. Especially Mendle. A lot of the Germans, and they're still dear dear friends of mine.

Q Nelly Don is kind of the most famous garment company in Kansas City. Tell me what you did for them and how it was to work there.

A The first time it was wonderful. The first job I had at Nelly Don was designing. It was unbelievable. I had gone from Gay-Gibson, and then I stayed home for a while, and then went

to Nelly Don. And uh, they had a whole room for the nurse. If you had too much to drink the night before, you'd just go in and sleep it off. They had a beautiful cafeteria. The food was extraordinary. So did Gay-Gibson by the way. But they also had a little grocery store where you could go during the day and go down and buy you, they had the finest cuts of meat. Do your grocery shopping.

Q In the company?

A In the company. This was over here, that was the old beautiful building that's over here where Montgomery Wards, in that area, is now.

Q That's where Nelly Don was located?

A It was a beautiful old building over there, which they built. That's where it was the first time I went there to work. And then at the end of the day, when you were done with your work, you walked out the door and the door man was standing there with your groceries all sacked and ready to go home. And at Christmas, I'll never forget, as a designer, they had a limo, I guess it was a limo, anyway, we would go downtown to Harzfeld's or wherever and do our Christmas shopping. And then when we were done they'd take us back to work.

Q Huh.

A Yeah, really got spoiled.

Q What did you do for Nelly Don?

A At that time I designed.

Q So you designed some of the dresses that made them famous?

A Well no, they were famous before I got there. No, I didn't do anything that made them. It was just, I think those days, they were back off their glory days. But they were still big in the business.

Q There were a lot of workers there I take it?

A Uh huh. Uh huh. I couldn't tell you how many. But then after that they moved over to North Kansas City, 16th and Swift. And that's where I spent a few years. And then I left there, and then I think I went to Slimaker for a while, yeah I went to Slimaker, which was another business down near where the Phoenix is now. And, huh, did a couple, designed a couple lines there. And at the end of one of them, the guy said: "It's not good, you know, we don't like what you've done, good bye." So they fired me. I was so taken back by it. So then I went to work at Nelly Don. After I'd gone to work at Nelly Don, they called me back and the line had sold. Wanted to rehire me. It was too late. I had another job. But that's just kinda the way it was, or the way I was, I guess, if I didn't like it I left. Betty Rose, I went there, they hired me one time, and put me in a room and said just go through magazines and brochures and just look at what we do and then we'll get back and work with you. Well, they put me in this little room and I was there forever and ever and ever. I just about went nuts. And so finally, one day, I just walked in and told the other girls around there: "well goodbye, I'm leaving." So I went home. They never missed me. I never told anybody anything. And they said once the guy came back in another week or two later and said: "Well I need to work with Mary Lou now." Well, she's gone.

Q What happened, did they just not want you?

A Well, they did, but they just kept me on the back burner until they were ready to do something.

Q You felt forgotten about?

A Yeah, just in this little room all by myself.

Q You worked for a large number of companies. Why did you bounce around like that as opposed to trying to stay at one place?

A Well, I would have stayed at Gay-Gibson if they had stayed here. They chose to move to New York. I'd still be there, I would have retired there had I been there. And, I liked it at Nelly Don. There were just reasons for the other companies. Some of them were just pretty erratic. Nelly Don was good, but it was going downhill toward the end. They brought some new money manager people in that didn't know anything about design. I don't know, at the time it didn't seem a lot, but when I look at it, it does. Really, I was at Gay-Gibson like seven years. Nelly Don, probably six or seven total. I did freelance work, so it wasn't all just that I walked away. Some of it was.

Q Were you ever fired other than that one time?

A No. No. No, as a matter of fact just that one time, yeah.

Q Now I understand that some of your patterns got quite a bit of recognition. Can you tell me about that?

A Yeah, one dress made the cover of Cosmopolitan. I can still remember the make of it, the look of it. Another one made a national ad in Seventeen. Yeah, I was pretty proud of that.

Q Do you have those covers?

A No, I don't, I threw them all out.

Q What years were they?

A It would have been in the '60s.

Q Was your name on the cover, or just your dress?

A No. No. I remember Paul Wilson called me: "Hey kid I'm proud of you, look at this."

Q Why didn't you keep that?

A Well, I lived north of the river. We were moving over to Hyde Park. I had this stack of books like that in the closet, I had one little closet full of these dresses and magazines, and I hadn't looked at them for years. I didn't have any friends around that were interested in them. I just wasn't, it was in the past, I just tossed them. I don't know why.

Q Now, you said you left Nelly Don because it was starting to go downhill?

A Well, I came in to work one day, this was over in North Kansas City. They had gone in over the weekend and just moved everybody into one big room. We were all piled on top of each other. I don't know, I had other things I wanted to do with my life. So I just said "goodbye."

Q Did you have a sense that they were not doing well?

A Oh yeah. They were letting people go. Hal Hardin was the president. No, he had been, I'm not sure if he was the president at that time or not. But then he did start his own business, Hal Hardin, who had been the president of Nelly Don. So then I did work for him. I did freelance

work for several companies, Hal Hardin being one of them.

Q Were you a union member?

A No.

Q Were you ever a union member?

A No.

Q Why not, was that because of your position?

A Because of the design, yeah, I wasn't on the time clock, I didn't belong to the union.

Q Did a lot of workers belong to the unions?

A Yes. Very talented, very capable—they had a sample department at both Gay-Gibson and Nelly Don, with these extraordinarily talented women that would make the garments, and they'd belong to the union. I don't know if it's the truth or not, but I heard them say, that when those women retired, those women got like \$7 a month from the union. That I don't know if it's true or not. The factory, and the cutters, and the operators did belong to the union.

Q You got into the industry in the mid '50s, late '50s, was the union already beginning to sort of decline in its importance then as opposed to earlier in the century, or do you know?

A I don't know. I think it was important then, maybe, I don't know, I don't know that much about the union.

Q Did you ever have any problems because of the union, strikes or that sort of thing?

A No, no that was long before I came. No.

Q What was your last job in the industry?

A Well, it would have been at, no let's see, okay, Hal Hardin, he started his own apparel business, he had, in North Kansas City, and then he moved over near Southwest Trafficway. When they needed extra help, they would call me and I'd help out with patterns, making patterns.

Q What was the name of his company?

A Hal Hardin Apparel.

Q Approximately when was that, what years did you work there?

A Oh gosh, I don't know, '80, maybe '80, 1980 maybe, I'm not sure.

Q And then you left the industry?

A Yeah.

Q Why did you leave the industry?

A It wasn't any thing, it wasn't fun anymore. It wasn't, no more excitement. It was just going away.

Q When did you realize that the industry was in decline?

A Well, I guess at Nelly Don, in the '70s.

Q How did you feel about that, once you recognized there was a decline?

A I hated it. I remembered what it was like to be at Gay-Gibson during those fabulous, exciting, creative days, where you'd look at a garment and you'd spend hours making sure that

the sleeves were just right, that there were no puckers, that the hemlines were where they should be, that the lining was perfect. And then as time went on, it was just like "well, you know, let it go." The quality, the perfection, I didn't find that at any place but Gay-Gibson. I mean, it was like that at Nelly Don I guess before I got there. I was kinda surprised to see hems that puckered. They were so particular at Gay-Gibson. Everything had to be just perfect. And if it wasn't, it didn't get into the line.

Q Why do you think the industry deteriorated so much here?

A Well, the big stores, the world changed, from the country people in the small towns, and look at downtown Kansas City, look at how it changed. Used to have Harzfeld's and Wolff Brothers and Midlin's, and all the beautiful shops. Everything is the same everywhere. There's no more specialties.

Q Did the change have to happen, do you think, was it just sort of an inevitable part of evolution or could something have been done to continue the good times?

A Well, I guess the good times are still there in the upper scale garments, in New York, in the Bergdorfs, the nicer stores, they still have beautiful clothes. It's not that important anymore. The designs, the beautiful days are over. We wear pants. It's different. Like the world is so different. People are different. The cities are where we all go, you know, they go to Walmart now.

Q Do you shop at Walmart for clothes?

A No way.

Q What do you think of women's clothes today, or all clothes today?

A I'm comfortable. I'm with the world. I don't mind. I don't have to wear the high heels and the hose and squeeze into a girdle every day. I'm okay with that.

Q Where do you shop for clothes?

A Oh boy, I like Chico's. I like to make some of my own, not that much, I don't do that much shopping frankly.

Q Are there good quality clothes in Kansas City that women can buy today?

A Yeah, I mean you can go to Halls, you can go to Nordstrom's, yeah, they're expensive.

Q Did you ever think we would be in a position where a lot of our clothes are coming from China and wherever?

A No, I can't imagine. Look at all the little communities around here that employed craftsmen and supervisors, and all the machines and everything. But they're all gone now. No, I can't imagine. All the people, that's all in China, India. I have dear special friends, German friends, now that live in Maryland. And they're in the garment industry. And they are craftsmen. And they're in quality control. And they travel all over the world. He just got back from Hong Kong last week. You know, it's amazing the way they do now. And I visited a friend at Eddie Bauer in Chicago, Martin Bosch, he was showing me the way patterns are done now. You do it on the computer. You make a line on the computer. You push a button. It goes into a grading room. It's automatically graded. You push another button, it goes to Hong Kong where they spread it out and they cut it. You know, back in the ancient times, we did all this by hand. And if there was a little eighth of an inch off, like at Gay-Gibson, you made the correction. You fitted a little

pinch in and a pinch there, and you made the pattern correction. It's gone now. It's amazing. It's all computerized.

Q Do you like that?

A Well, I'm not part of it so I guess I like it. Yeah I guess. I tell you what, clothes are pretty cheap now compared to what they were then. Prices haven't gone up that much comparatively speaking with other items, furniture and cars and everything. You know, you don't spend that much.

Q Before computers when you were designing, let's say you were going to design a dress right now, you would do it all by hand?

A Yeah. You'd start with, you'd pick out the fabric. Well, you plan a line. You make a line. And here are the colors that you want to put in the line. So then you pick that and you decide what you need in the line, you need a costume, you need a dress, you need pants, you need a shirt, and you arrange it all, and then you take the fabric, and you'd have it on your table, like I have that table downstairs, and a sketch pad, and you sketch out the design, and present it or go ahead and drape it on the form if it needs to be draped. And then from the draping on the form, you put it on the table and you make a pattern from it. You have a block, a basic block that you start with.

Q What you hung was actually cloth, a depiction of what your line would look like?

A Uh huh.

Q And you did that all yourself? You would cut the cloth?

A Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q At what point would your line get approved?

A Well, that was the trick. You would, okay, you drape it, you make the pattern, then you take it out to the cutter and they spread out the fabric on the table, with your pattern that you've made, and they take a yardage of it, to see how much material it takes, and so they can figure the cost of it at the end of it, and then they take it to the operators, the wonderful operators that knew how to put everything together. So she's outside your room, she's at the machine over here sewing up this pattern. And you work with her while she's sewing it. If you forgot something, or a notch doesn't match, she brings it in and, you know, "what did you do this for?" and "okay that's wrong, I'll correct it." So you make corrections on that pattern while this operator—this is the original garment—while this operator is sewing up the original garment. So when it's completed, then comes the big moment when you submit your design. And you either show it on the form or you put it on the model, which was often the case. And then you go in to the president, and you show this model, and then they discuss it. They take the yardage, and how much labor they think goes into it. And then they figure the cost of it. So then, at the end, it's usually like five lines a year, so at the end then they put all these garments together and see which ones are feasible, which ones they can produce. Very often that first dress really gets ripped apart, because it's too expensive, you need to take the tuck out of here. Or too much fabric. Or if a collar is wrong. Then you may have to do a whole new pattern, maybe once or even twice, then back out to the cutter, new yardage, new operator sewing the garment, and then they put this whole group together at the end of the line and price it. It all has to be compatible, it all has to flow. And so then they make however many garments they need for the salesman's samples. I mean, it could be 20 to 30, 40, 50 salesmen that are on the

road that take these samples. And there were groups of samples. It wouldn't just be one dress out of one fabric. It would be a group of garments, out of coordinating fabrics, complementary fabrics. So then the salesmen go on the road with all these garments and they go around the country and they present these garments to the buyers. So they come back to the company with what sells and what doesn't sell. Where the trick came in for these people, they had to order fabric guessing on what they think would sell. And it isn't always what sold. See, they had to go ahead and order fabric. And I'm sure that's what they have to do now. Order the fabric before the salesmen take it on the road to know what's really going to sell. And then, when they do know, that's when they come back and they'd cut large amounts. Often we would have a fashion show. They'd call all the salesmen in and have a fashion show, where you'd show all the garments on models and give them the big pep talk about what's going to be great and this is the look of the season and these are the new colors and everything.

Q When the salesmen would come back then, you would find that if a line that you designed was very much favored, then they would tell you that they had a lot of sales?

A Well, you'd know, because you'd get the reports all the time.

Q Was there any rivalry between designers about you'd say "my items sold and yours didn't" and stuff like that?

A Well, not out in the open. Not so obvious. Oh yeah, sure, there was always a little competition. But mostly we all got along and enjoyed our work.

Q Do people you talk today, friends of yours, or relatives, realize that all of this went on in Kansas City?

A Probably not. Just think of it, my last day was in 78. Just look, I can't believe it now.

Q Because there's virtually none of this going on in Kansas City today.

A No. I don't know I think there may be some few places, little places. There's some young designers downtown that are doing some creative, wonderful, wild stuff, but, you know, nothing that would sell all over the country.

Q It's kind of a forgotten part of Kansas City's history in a way.

A I think about these multi-talented, these women, I'm telling you, well, my little friends, the Germans that are dear friends now, that live in Maryland, he just got back from Hong Kong. She came to this country and couldn't speak English. I'll never forget them saying what great hands she had. Mendle Silverman made very complicated, I mean, those jackets would have 40 or 50 pieces of patterns in them. Very intricate. And she could sit there at that machine and make a garment in one morning. She'd be sitting there. Whirrrrrr.

Q Do you still sew today?

A Yes, but not like I did. Lifestyle has changed. Not really the need for it.

Q Could you design a dress or a jacket today if you wanted to?

A Yeah. Oh Yeah.

Q Have you ever thought of doing it just for the heck of it?

A Well, I've made some clothing. Yeah, in the last few years. I've made quite a bit. I do occasionally.

Q Do your friends come to you and say "can you make me something for this party?" or something?

A No. No because I'd say no. But I think they did a while back. But I don't do it anymore.

Q What would you like future generations to know about the garment industry in Kansas City that you worked in?

A It was exciting. We worked together. It was multi-cultural. Those years were more fun than you could ever ever imagine. The five lines a year, to get one of those, you'd have like two weeks after a line to maybe take a deep breath and go to New York and look at new stuff. But it was fun, people were wonderful, it was just a great great time, exciting. I can't imagine not having been in it. I'm very happy that I was.

(transcript has been edited slightly for clarity)

guest: Mary Lou Chalmers (d.o.b. August 8, 1934), Independence, MO, retired designer