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INTERVIEW WITH
MARY KAY ASH
NOVEMBER 4, 1974

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: DALLAS, TEXAS

INTERVIEWER: DR. DONALD L. CARUTH

TERMS OF USE: See Attachment I

APPROVED: Mary Kay Ash

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Business Oral History Collection

Mary Kay Ash

Interviewer: Dr. Donald L. Caruth

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: November 4, 1974

Dr. Caruth: This is Dr. Donald Caruth recording for the North Texas State University University Business History Collection in another of our series of interviews with selected business leaders. Today I'm interviewing Mary Kay Ash, Chairman of the Board of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc. The interview is taking place in Dallas, Texas, on November 7, 1974. Let's start by asking you for a little background information on yourself. Just a kind of quick biographical sketch.

Mrs. Ash: Well, I had been in direct sales for twenty-five years. I spent the first few years with the Stanley Home Products Company selling chemicals, mops, brooms, etc. That's where you really learn how to sell, from the bottom up shall we say. I was promoted from a Stanley dealer to a Unit Manager, which means that you are the supervisor of a group of salespeople, whom you must also recruit and train. I became a Unit Manager, on the second year that I was with Stanley, and during that period of time I also became national

queen of sales and got a very good background in selling. That lasted some thirteen years. The management possibilities in Stanley Home Products Company were not too good in that you never were told exactly how you might progress up the ladder. It just happened that one day someone came in and said, "Lo, you are a manager," and you were. But there was no particular outlined manner. As a result of my experience with Stanley, not being able to know exactly how you could get a promotion, when we started this company, one of the major things I wanted to do was to lay out a definite one, two, three plan for women to be able to progress up the ladder of success, some method by which you know how to get where you want to go.

Caruth: How did you happen to go to work for Stanley in the first place?

Ash: My husband had been drafted, and I needed money. I had three small children, and I needed a method by which I could earn money and not be gone eight or nine hours a day. A Stanley party lasted approximately four hours, maybe five by the time you got there and got home again. That meant that I could be gone five hours or four hours and make equivalent amount that you might make in those days on a full eight-hour job. Because selling

does pay on commission, of course, and you are paid according to your ability and not on the number of hours that you work. However, those were the depression days, and I worked three Stanley parties a day, so they were very long hours, but it paid off in the long run.

Caruth: How long were you with Stanley?

Ash: Thirteen years.

Caruth: How far up the management ladder did you go?

Ash: Only one level, to Unit Manager. I was offered the branch managership three times, but there was a problem. When you became a branch manager with Stanley, it meant being transferred to another city, and merely having the opportunity to begin again. All the people you had already recruited stayed in the city that you left, and you were given no commission or override for all the work you had already done. All you were given was . . . branch managership and a new opportunity to start again. Well, in my case, with three small children, you can understand that I didn't want to move completely across the country and lose everything that I had spent years doing. And so when I was offered those three, one of them being Canada, I learned that you couldn't bring any earnings home in those days. The second place I

was offered was West Virginia, and West Virginia during the depression days was an absolutely poverty stricken area. So I certainly wasn't going to leave Dallas in exchange for West Virginia even if it did mean I had the title, Branch Manager. The third place was somewhere on the West Coast like Portland and again it meant a drastic change and moving my children away from their schools and away from their friends, and only to exchange it for an opportunity that might not happen!

Caruth: Not much incentive then to move.

Ash: Right. Now once again in this company, one of my aims was that we not have any territories at all. In other words, you can live in Dallas and recruit in Hawaii when you got there on vacation. You leave your recruit in Hawaii, and she is taken care of by our reciprocal agreement with the Director there. She takes care of her but she can recruit somebody in Dallas and you take care of the Hawaiian girls' recruit. That agreement works out very well. I contend that you could possibly recruit or sell my next door neighbor when maybe I couldn't. So we have left it completely open. When you become a manager in our business, and we call that position a Director, you are given an override on the

people you have recruited. You retain an override on them for as long as the two of you--you and your recruit --are both active with the company. So you never lose, therefore, if you move to West Virginia. You still continue to draw a commission on all your recruits.

Caruth: So this idea of the override really developed out of your experience with Stanley.

Ash: Yes, it did. Our whole company was developed around things that I wished other people had done for me that they didn't and the things that I would like to do for somebody else. So our whole company began on the concept of the Golden Rule; doing for other people what I wished someone had done for me.

Caruth: After thirteen years with Stanley you went to World Gifts.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: Would you explain that situation?

Ash: After about the thirteenth year, I moved to St. Louis. As I told you, there was no way that you could take with you what you had done in Dallas. So as a result, I was there and beginning again, and St. Louis was just not for me. So for about nine months I didn't work at all. Then I moved back to Houston--the Houston division was my home incidentally--and on my way through Dallas

I was recruited by a friend with World Gift. I liked it because it was a line of decorative accessories and gifts and very pretty things, and I was very intrigued by it. It certainly was more interesting than mops and brooms and brushes! So I went to Houston, and at the end of one year we were doing fifty-three per cent of World Gift's business in Houston.

Caruth: Just the two of you in Houston were doing fifty-three per cent . . .

Ash: No--no--no. The people that I had recruited and trained.

Caruth: Oh, the people that you had recruited. . .

Ash: Yes. By then I had perhaps 200 recruits.

Caruth: Did they operate on the party plan, also?

Ash: Yes. We used the hostess plan because this was my knowledgeable area. We called it "Show" because it was a little more interesting than "Party." Party had come to mean to the average person, "One of those terrible things that I have to go to and be bored to death and buy something on top of it." So we changed it to "Gift Show," and we used the "Gift Show" play where we showed people how to actually redecorate a room with accessories. It was most intriguing, and the people loved it. I liked it very much, and I was with them for eleven years.

Going into the second year we were doing so well in Houston that the president of that company decided that I should teach other people how to do what I was doing. So he made me an area manager, but he made me a rather risky deal. The area managership meant I would be paid a percentage of the increase in the cities that I went to. Well, it's pretty difficult to get an increase when you're going from city to city to city, and it had to override the decrease in Houston. Well, Houston went down so fast when there was nobody there to supervise it that my increases never overcame the Houston decrease, and the result was that I resigned as area manager and went back to Houston and began working with the people. Within nine months everything was going well. The next time I was national training director. That was a misnomer because we weren't national at that point. We had only Texas with about six or seven cities. I began spending my time with those cities. But this time it was on a salary basis, and I worked for the rest of my years with World Gift Company--eleven total--as national training director. In that period of time we developed that company into forty-three states, and our sales volume the year that I resigned from World Gift was four

million dollars.

Caruth: What are the circumstances surrounding your resignation from World Gift?

Ash: I was the only person out in the field in contact with the people. The company president decided to change his mode of operation. He decided to go on a franchise basis rather than the independent dealer concept. For example, if you had been in Pittsburgh for seven years and had developed Pittsburgh from scratch and had it doing, let's say, \$200,000 a year and were getting the commission on that, suddenly he would come in and say to you that for \$50,000 you could buy Pittsburgh. If you didn't have \$50,000, the least eligible person in your group could become your manager if he or she happened to have \$50,000. Or, they could bring in an outsider who had \$50,000 who knew nothing at all about the business and make that person your boss. This, I felt, was very unfair, and I didn't want to have anything to do with it. As a matter of fact, I was chosen to go out and tell the people that this was going to happen to them. So, on May the 13th, 1963, at two o'clock in the afternoon, I submitted my resignation. I simply could not conscience what they were going to do to what

I consider to be my people, really their people, but I had, in many cases, recruited these people, trained them, and had a very close relationship with them. I just could not see the rug pulled out from under them. So I resigned in protest, and went home and did the same thing that most other women would have done, I cried all night. And, I'm afraid had they called the next morning, I probably would have crawled back, but they didn't call. And for me that was lucky.

Caruth: Did their attempts to sell franchises actually succeed or not?

Ash: Yes. They really did it. However, the business volume dropped from four million to two, as I understand it, the very first year. At the present time . . . ten years later, we're doing 43 million dollars and they are barely doing a million. So I believe--we are back now to another one of my concepts, and that is that you are nothing without your people, and the communication between the top level echelon of management and the people has to be good. You must have their best interests at heart, and if you don't then I just don't think you can succeed. And I mean really at heart, not just from the mouth outward. You can't talk about it

and not implement it. You must have the interests of the people deeply ingrained in a successful business, and we do.

Caruth: So now after twenty-four years of experience in direct sales you find yourself suddenly at home. What did you do?

Ash: Well, I was a little bitter, as you can well imagine. Suddenly from not having enough hours in the day, I found I had no reason to get up in the morning. I lived across the street from a mortuary and I decided to call 'em, almost! (Laughter). I really felt pretty bad. I learned a long time ago that you simply cannot exist with bitterness in your heart, however. So I decided that the best thing I could do to rid myself of this bitterness that I felt toward this company was to sit down and make a list of all of the good things that company had done. So I found myself at my dining room table with a legal size pad at eight o'clock in the morning, every morning, because I was used to working, and I felt so useless. I wrote down every good thing that I could think of that that company had ever done. It started out to be my memoirs, but I wrote all those things down and looked at them very hard. After two weeks, I really feel that the bitterness had disappeared.

Then I began to write down all the problems we had encountered, not only in that business but also in the Stanley Home Products Co. And as I wrote down the problems, one day it suddenly occurred to me, "If you are so smart, how would you have solved those problems had you the responsibility and the opportunity?" So then I began to write down the solutions. The things I wished those companies had done for me and hadn't. One day in reading those massive notes I thought what a marvelous company this would be if somebody would really do these things! And so our company was born without my realizing it. I had had no intention when I sat down to write of starting any company. That was the farthest thing from my mind. I was simply writing my memoirs, and I thought, "This is so great. It's a shame to waste it." Now after you have a marketing plan, which, of course, was still not technical and complete at this point, for example, the commission schedules were not in there yet. The next thing you need is a product. So you see the product in our company actually was secondary.

Caruth: Let me back up for just a minute and ask you to kind of capsule what you feel are the key things you learned

from your experiences with Stanley and with World Gift.

Ash: I guess first the need for a definite plan for people to follow. I think if you'll show a person what they have to do, what plateaus they must reach in order to get to a certain given position, they will reach for them. A second thing was a sincere desire to help people. In my case the desire was to help women because I had found that no matter how well I did my job, no matter how smart I was, I still always seemed to reach a golden door marked, "Men Only." I could not get through the golden door no matter what I did simply because a woman had never done that job before. I had contacted many women in my twenty-five years that I felt were just super smart who certainly should be given an opportunity to do anything their god given talents would afford them and, yet, they, too, were stymied and stopped at certain plateaus and certain levels. So I wanted a company with an open end where you could do as much or as little as you wanted to do or were able to do from the standpoint of your ability. And that is how our system has evolved with women being able to earn beautiful money.

Caruth: You said when you sat down to write all of these ideas about the things that were good and the things that were bad, you had no real thought of going into business.

When did you first get this idea that perhaps out of this you could develop your own business?

Ash: After reading through this multitude of notes one day it suddenly occurred to me that this was an ideal company on paper, and as I said, then I needed to find a product. In starting a direct sales company you must have a superior product, one superior to that sold in stores, and one where the customers will come back to you for the product. If you have one that they use once and don't think enough of it to look you up again, you're out of business in a hurry. Therefore, it's necessary to have something so good that a woman will go to no end of trouble to get that product again. Since she can't just go down to a department store and pick it up, she has to keep in touch with a consultant. Sometimes the consultant moves away, and the customer must go to the trouble to look up your product. Do you see how fast a direct sales company can go out of business if the situation is such that they really do not want the product? Now you need to know, "Where did we find the product?"

Caruth: The company . . . the concept of the company now exists on paper.

Ash: Right.

Caruth: And you're searching for a product?

Ash: Right.

Caruth: How did you find that product?

Ash: Well, we looked into a half a dozen things. At the time there was a new concept of floral arrangements being rented or leased to large industrial companies. Having been in the gift business I knew something about doing that, and I thought of that for a while. It had a lot of numerous other possibilities, but one day it occurred to me that I had been using this particular cosmetic since 1953, and it had done phenomenal things for me personally and for my family and for friends. I had had difficulties during the past two years in getting any of the product because the woman who had owned the formulations had passed away in 1961, and in turn had given the formulas to a daughter. The daughter had more or less let them just go into oblivion, and she was no longer making them unless you placed a \$200 or \$300 order enabling her to go out and buy all the necessary ingredients. I wanted to keep on using the cosmetics, so one day I thought, "I wonder if she would sell the formulations." I went out to see her and was able to purchase the formulations from her.

Caruth: Was this in Dallas?

Ash: Yes. Right here in Dallas. Her mother had really never gotten the cosmetic off the ground, and my feeling was that it was because she simply did not have any kind of business sense at all. She made it up in the back room of her little beauty shop and she just had no sales plan, no sales organization, or way of distributing the product. I really felt that if somebody had the formulations who know how to market them that it could be done and could be a very successful thing. So it was on that basis that I bought the formulations from the daughter.

Caruth: I understand that you did have somewhat of a problem, a legal-type problem when you purchased the formulations?

Ash: I didn't realize it was a legal type problem at the time. Remember, I was dealing with a little housewife here who has been making the products at random for her few little friends who wanted to use it since her mother's death. The day that we were in my attorney's office drawing up the sales contract for the formulas she said to me, "Mary Kay, would you allow me to continue to make these for my little friends if I promise not to say that it is the same thing that you're going to use?" Of course, you understand now it had already been decided that I would give this product my name rather than the original name. And so I said, "Well, I really don't see why not?" I

felt rather sorry for her because she was in a pretty bad financial condition, and I thought this might help her to get on her feet. So I said, "Yes, that would be alright with me." Now three years go by, and suddenly one of my directors . . . we only had about two at the time. . . one that I had personally trained for two years and had literally poured my fund of knowledge into . . . got with the daughter or the daughter got with her. We still don't know how that came about. The two of them decided to start a company in competition with us. After all, one of them had knowledge of the formulas; if you sell me your recipe for Sara Lee cake you still know how to make it, you know, and the other one had knowledge of how our marketing plan worked. So between the two of them they certainly should have had some success, right? They decided to go into business and form a corporation. As time went on we got into court about this because they literally took all of my literature, everything, and just took my name off and replaced it with their's. They even tried to buy the same containers that we use for our cosmetics in order to have the same product with a different label. We got into some legal problems on this, of course. They were recruiting in the same way, using our manual, using our

literature, using everything with just their name inserted. When we went to court, their attorney said, "How can Mary Kay say how many friends she can have?" I had said she could make it for her friends, and therefore because of that little legal loophole, we were denied the opportunity of putting this other company out of business. So they're still in business, but nevertheless, as time has gone by, they have never even begun to equal our success even though they have our marketing plan, our product, everything except whatever the magic ingredient is that makes one company go and the other one not go.

Caruth: What is the name of this other firm?

Ash: The name is Beauty Control.

Caruth: I've not heard of them (laughter).

Ash: They're still in business. Can you imagine the difficulty in a city where we have approximately 1,000 people going out telling the hide tanner story, and they're out telling the hide tanner story, too, saying they're, quote, "Just like Mary Kay?" You can imagine the problem that they have in trying to combat this. We like to feel we're doing the honest thing, so when a woman finds out that some other company is copying us, we get lots of letters telling us that somebody is trying to "steal" our formulas.

Caruth: Needless to say, if you were doing this again you would close the loophole in the contract.

Ash: Of course, yes.

Caruth: At the time I suspect nobody really thought that you were going to turn it into anything anyway . . .

Ash: No. That's right.

Caruth: Is that possibly how it came . . .

Ash: My attorney was so encouraging, or should I say discouraging, that he sent to Washington for a bulletin telling how many cosmetic companies went broke every single morning. He said, "Mary Kay, for goodness sakes. Go into something you know. Go into gifts or go into household chemicals, but don't go into cosmetics; it's so competitive! Don't throw away your life's savings. This is foolhardy." And my accountant was saying that this couldn't be done because, "You're being far too generous with your people. You cannot give the kind of commissions that you are wanting to give and stay in business. There are just not enough cents in the dollar."

Caruth: So now you've got the concept of the company on paper, and you've got the product, and you've got everyone telling you not to do it, and you go ahead.

Ash: Yes. Early in the history of our company someone said that Mary Kay, Inc. was a divine accident looking for a

place to happen (laughter). At the time I thought, "Oh my, how presumptuous of anyone to say such a thing." But I must tell you that our company was founded with the very best of intentions, that of helping people. It was founded with the idea, not of getting rich ourselves because that thought never even occurred to me. It was merely that my whole drive was to give women that exceptional opportunity I thought they deserved, and I hoped that we would make a living. That was the extent of my thinking into the future from the standpoint of financial security. Only that we would make a living and give women an unlimited opportunity.

Caruth: Not by the wildest stretch of your imagination then did you see what's happened over the past eleven years.

Ash: I never thought we'd get out of Waxahachie (laughter).

Caruth: Is that where you started?

Ash: No (laughter). As a matter of fact, today here we are eleven years later and we're not even in Waxahachie, (laughter) strangely enough. I inquire about that every now and then to see if we have any consultants in Waxahachie (laughter) and invariably we do not. But I just use that because I really never felt we'd get out of Dallas. I intended for this to be something. . . to help people I could put my hand on, or let's say, that

I could personally help, not something that would be so far flung as Guam and Australia, for example. It amazes me that we have 100 people in Guam today.

Caruth: That is amazing.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: So now you have the product, the concept and your own money, right? And you're ready to go ahead.

Ash: Now it's a month to the day before the company is to begin, and my husband was to be the administrator. He had had quite a lot of sales experiences plus some administrative experience, and he was going to handle the administrative end of it. We are committed to the point that we have either spent or committed all the money that we have for bottles, labels, jars, literature, etc., etc., etc., all the multitude of things it takes to go into business. If this didn't work I would literally face the task of going to work for somebody else for the rest of my life. I didn't really worry about that though I must say. Then, one month to the day before we were to start, we were sitting at the breakfast table, and he had just gone over the accounting part of this with me, and he had a . . . an appointment with the accountant in twenty minutes. He was telling me of the last final commission loans. I must admit

that I was not even listening because I felt that was his area, and I was working on the literature, and the training and the manual. He died of a heart attack that morning, instantly, right at the table. So suddenly I was left with half a company. I knew nothing of the administrative end; I had not even bothered to listen and did not know really what all his plans were. When God closes a door, he always opens a window, and in the form of my twenty-year-old son came that window, although at the time I didn't realize it. My youngest son, Richard, had had two years at North Texas State in marketing, but with no plans for the future that would entail marketing. He didn't really know why, nor did I. So Richard became my business partner, mostly because Richard would work for \$250 a month, which was all I could afford to pay, and there was just not many people standing in line for that job. He moved from Houston, where he had just recently married, to Dallas the very next day to help me. Remember, we were scheduled to open in exactly one month. I must say this. You never know what kind of mind a young might possibly have. At the ripe old age of twenty-five, Richard was awarded the American Marketing Association "Man of the Year" award. I understand it's never been given to a man under fifty prior to that. He really had lots of innovative ideas.

Richard became our bookkeeper, chief order filler, and everything else I couldn't do. From there I began to teach him what I knew from the selling standpoint, and I handled all the sales, the new recruits, the training, and anything that went along that line. He kept the books, balanced them, and saw to it that everything was in good order.

Caruth: When did your other son, Ben, come into the business?

Ash: The day of the funeral. Ben was the only one of my three children who had ever learned to save. But Ben had always been the introvert in the family. He was the one who was always so slow, you couldn't get him up in the morning. You couldn't get him to school, and if you did they sent him home. He had never been the favorite child in our family, and he knew it, and we knew it. It was an accepted fact. The day of the funeral, as we sat there, Ben took from his breast pocket his savings book, which contained \$4,500, that somehow he had managed to save. Now bear in mind that he had a wife and two children and a modest little home that he was paying for. I don't know he had managed to save that much, but he had. He handed it to me, and said, "Mother, I would like you to have this. I think you could do anything in the world you want to do."

And then he added, "If the day ever comes when you can use me, I hope that you'll include me in the organization." And I thought, "Heaven forbid." But it turned out that six months later Richard and I had gotten to the point where filling the orders was becoming quite a chore. We needed somebody to manage our warehouse, such as it was. It was just really a very small, little room with product on the shelves. But we needed someone to fill those orders. So we called Ben and asked him if he would like to come as warehouse manager, again for that mighty sum of \$250 a month. After all, you couldn't pay one more than the other. And so Ben brought his family from Houston to Dallas, under much protest, I might add, from his in-laws who were saying, "You are ruining my daughter's life." But he came and became our warehouse manager. And the thing that just bored Richard to tears, filling hum-drum orders and keeping the warehouse straight, was Ben's cup of tea. Actually, it's a very needed part of a business. Somebody has to do this. And it was just perfect for him. He loved it, and he is still with us, and manages over 210,000 square foot. It looks like a hospital, it's so perfect.

Caruth: You had decided as a part of your marketing approach that you were going to use a party type plan, is that right?

Ash: Yes. Mostly because I really believe in this way of merchandising. Particularly from a cosmetic standpoint. You know, the average woman goes to a department store, and there's a make-up artist there. If you're willing to take off your make-up in front of everybody and sit down and let him do his artistry, fine. But the average woman is not. She's too shy to submit to that in a department store. She never really gets to try anything before she buys it; she goes up to a counter, puts down twenty dollars, and she buys something. She takes it home, and she doesn't like it. She doesn't like the way it smells, or feels, or what it does for her. I've always felt that it would be a wonderful if a woman in the privacy of her own home could try the merchandise before she bought it. That way she has a perfect opportunity to see if it feels good and acts well on her particular skin. I thought that this particular plan would be well suited to cosmetics although really there was nobody else at the time actually pursuing the party plan as such in cosmetics. Avon sells door to door, but nobody was going into the home, sitting down, giving the people complete facials so they had an opportunity to use every single thing. So we did that, and we decided to limit this to six people--the hostess and five guests.

Another objection to the party plan was that you usually had to have twelve to twenty-four people. That's a lot of trouble for the average woman to get that many people together in her home. It means serving refreshments, cleaning the house, and doing a lot of things. But six people sitting around the kitchen table is just not that much trouble, and so it was easy to book shows under those conditions. The second thing was that women like the idea of having just a few intimate friends in and they weren't reluctant to remove their make-up under these circumstances. Thus, at our beauty shows each person has a placemat and some of everything in front of them on a little tray for them to personally use every single item that they might possibly want to buy.

Caruth: Did you have this originally for your first shows?

Ash: Yes. Right in the beginning. It wasn't as elaborate as it is today. Today we have beautiful pink placemats and pink trays and mirrors. Originally, it was more like a paper plate with a little bit of everything on it. But now it has developed into something quite professional looking. Originally, it was not so nice, but at least everybody got a chance to do for themselves what we have them do today. A second thing was that in a store an artist applies that make-up, and so you buy

forty dollars worth hoping that you'll be able to go home and achieve that same look. And what happens? You get home and you find out that you are not the artist that he was and as a result you can not duplicate what he did. Now at our shows we do it this way: The consultant, using a make-up chart, shows you the correct techniques on the chart, but you implement them yourself. Giving yourself the facial is far better because you know that anything that you have done today you can go home and reproduce. One of the other objections of party plans is that invariably it takes two or three weeks for delivery of the merchandise because the consultant has to order from the company and deliver it later. Women are impetuous. What we want we want right now. We don't want to wait three weeks! As a matter of fact, sometimes I can't even remember why I bought it three weeks later. So I thought, "Well, if there was just some way that we could get it to them immediately." So we began by having the consultant take six complete sets with her to the show, and we say something like this, "The first show I attended the consultant had the product with her, and I was able to take it home, and it pleased me so that today I have brought along six complete sets and whatever you might like to buy is

available for you to take home today." So we deliver that day while the woman still remembers what to do, (women do not like to read directions). You've heard the joke about the lady who said, "If I have to read the directions on how to use this dishwasher, I'll just wash them by hand." Secondly, they're highly enthusiastic with the results that they got at the show that very day, and they go home and use it enthusiastically. After three weeks the average woman has lost that initial enthusiasm.

Caruth: Wash't your introduction to these cosmetics in kind of a show-like atmosphere? I seem to recall that.

Ash: Well, you mean how I first learned about them?

Caruth: Yes. How did you first learn about these?

Ash: Well, it happened that this woman, the hide tanner's daughter, was a Stanley Hostess for me. One evening I had a Stanley party in her home, and at the end of the Stanley party there always is the inevitable coffee and cookies, which generally were served in the kitchen. She was standing at her kitchen cabinet passing out little white jars with black tops with pencilled labels on them. When she didn't give me a jar I simply said, "What are you doing? Why are they getting these jars?" And I'd noticed that she had been writing down in a

little composition book a notation as she gave out each jar to each person. And she said, "Oh, well, these are my guinea pigs, and they're also my best friends." Then she told me the story of the hide tanner, her father, who had been in the business of tanning hides, and that one day he thought, "If you could take an old, big pored, ugly hide and turn that into a beautiful, small pored, soft piece of leather like a glove, why couldn't you do it with human skin?" And so he began to put on his own face the same--possibly in a more moderate form, the same thing that he used on the hides. He used the same procedure on his face to see if he could tan his face, literally. And what happened was that at seventy-three when he died he had a skin of a man many, many years younger. He had proved his point, but the hide tanning process is obnoxious, smelly, and time consuming. Of course, no woman would have been willing to do what he did, so the daughter had brought the formulations to Dallas, became a cosmetologist, and had spent seventeen years developing these into a cream and lotion form. It was at that point that I met her, and she was that night passing out these little jars and bottles. I said, "Well, how about me as a guinea pig?" And she said, "I don't usually take anybody unless there is some real

problem with their skin." And a woman next to me said, "You should have seen me when this started. I had these terrible things, nodules, sticking out of my face." And another one said, "You could put your fingers in the ruts of my face I had such deep lines," and so on, and I thought, "Boy, has she ever got these people brainwashed!" And I really didn't believe all that, but I said, "Well, could I be a guinea pig?" And she said, "No, not unless you have something really wrong." So she began to feel of my face and discovered that I had quite a whitehead problem. It felt like a gravel street. I had noticed that evening that everyone's skin looked "peaches and creamy," which just simply does not happen in a group of twenty women. I had given all the credit to the pink lights that had just come on the market about that time, and I thought, "I've got to find out what kind of lighting she's using in here." But it turned out that all were giving credit to this cosmetic. So that night she gave me a shoe box, if you please, filled with various little jars and bottles. I never shall forget. One of the jars she put my night cream in was a Clover Leaf Salve box, which is something kids used to sell years and years ago from door to door. Then she put my skin freshner in a prescription bottle with the old label for

the prescription still on it. It was really very, very bad. I thought when I took it home and looked at her crudely written directions, "My goodness, I might not have any face at all if I use this stuff." It took me quite a while to decide to even give myself a facial with it because her methods were so unschooled, shall we say. It just didn't seem to me that anybody who wrote as crudely and who . . . certainly didn't have the product on the market might have anything worthwhile. But I did begin to use it and I did think. . . it did wonderful things for me, and in three or four weeks people at my Stanley parties began to say, "What in the world have you done to your skin? It looks great! What are you doing?" And I couldn't even sell them any because it wasn't on the market. But that's how it was introduced to me.

Caruth: Do you recall the first show you gave?

Ash: Yes. I very well recall that because it was a dismal failure (laughter). Now remember, I had put my life's savings in this and I go out to hold that first show and I just felt that everybody in the world should be just waiting to take this away from me, and I sold two dollars worth. I came out and again I went around the corner and cried because I thought, "Oh, my goodness.

I've put my life's savings in this and they bought two dollars worth. I have really really fizzled here. What has happened?" And then it suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't even asked for the order. I had not even given them an order card. So you can be assured that the next day when I put on the second one, the first thing they got was the order card, and I asked for the order the second time. But our procedure of putting on the show has developed, of course, over a period of time.

Caruth: Originally, too, you were selling wigs along with the cosmetics.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: How did you happen to pick up that item?

Ash: Well, when you mention a new cosmetic to a woman, her invariable comment or thought is, "Oh, not another one," because there is a new cosmetic on the market every morning when you get up, and no woman is interested in changing from what she is already happy with or fairly satisfied with to something else, usually. So to get a woman to change to a brand new cosmetic that's just on the market today, you needed some kind of a gimmick. Wigs in 1963 were terribly new. Nobody had one. They weren't at that point prevalent like they are today. They were very expensive, too; like \$200 or \$300 apiece;

there were no inexpensive wigs then. So I decided that if you could offer a woman the opportunity of trying on a wig at the completion of her facial that maybe this would be a reason for her first of all to come to the show and secondly, to do her make-up well. I went to a wig school in Florida and spent a week down there learning how to at least put wigs on and how to select them and the elementary things you need to know. And then I came back, putting some more money into wigs , and we started with a wig shop. As I told you, they were so new and so great at that particular point, and the cosmetics were really just kind of on the shelf. We had one small Sears, Roebuck \$9.95 shelf. . . one little shelf was filled with cosmetics that day we started.

Caruth: Where was this original shop located?

Ash: In Exchange Park here in Dallas. We selected that location because there were 5,000 women who worked in that building, and I thought, "A perfect captive audience," but that was erroneous. Those women come to work and they go home, and they don't do anything in between except go on coffee breaks. Now one smart thing we did, which was not smart because it was an accident, was to choose our location next to the coffee shop, which meant that when they came down to coffee they had to ~~come~~ right by

our wig shop. We started giving fifteen minute facials, and we would have those girls in and out of there on their coffee break and back upstairs looking somewhat presentable, at least, and we tried booking them for a show from that original little introduction to our product.

Caruth: So you were using the shop then to introduce people and you were also using the show plan in the home at the same time.

Ash: Yes. When we went out on the show we would insist that they have the facial first. We kept the wigs in the car because if you brought them in they created so much excitement that you never could get through the facial. So we kept them in the car and insisted that they had to get their make-up on and perfect before they could try on the wigs. Then we brought the wigs in and let them try them on. We did this till July of 1965. Actually, the time consumed in selling a wig for \$300 or so was so great that the consultant used up so much unnecessary time that she wasn't selling as much cosmetics as we thought she could be selling. So we decided one month to take the wigs out, and sales went up \$20,000 the next month. So it was a good decision.

Caruth: But the wig was simply one of the vehicles to introduce the product at that time?

Ash: It was a vehicle, right. Yes, to get . . . a foot in the door, you might say.

Caruth: How did you recruit the first ladies who worked for you?

Ash: Well, there were nine. Friends of mine who I think more or less came to see how fast I would fall on my face, but who were somewhat intrigued and a little bit interested. Not one of them had decided to become a consultant when we opened our doors on Friday the 13th, 1963. We've done everything, I guess, against the rules. Anyway, they came, and there was one man in this group. Of the nine people, there were eight women and this one man who seemed to have more ideas than anybody else, but I had the uneasy feeling that there was something wrong with that man. Not one fact to put my finger on, not a thing, just my feminine intuition that said, "Something's wrong." And so I found myself out in the mall that very first day, as desperate as we were for people, saying to him, "I'm sorry but I just don't feel you will do," My heart was saying, "You're an idiot, you first class idiot. Why are you doing this," because I really needed people desperately. Here was a man who seemed to have more on the ball than anybody, and I was turning him down. But that again has been another thing that has

been injected in this company. If someone comes in that we feel does not fit what we now call, "The Mary Kay image," in other words, the right kind of person from every standpoint--appearance, morals, everything, then we reject that person feeling that she cannot live up to the high ideals that we have set in this organization. You see, I have the feeling that every single person who goes out to put on a Mary Kay beauty show is, in effect, Mary Kay to those people. They may never meet anyone from the company, so to them she is the company, and I want this company represented in a very high idealistic way. So we are very careful about who we choose to be consultants. You must be sponsored by someone else; we never put ads in the paper; we do not recruit that way at all because the average person does not have the ability to sort out . . . the people who come and apply to an ad, so instead they are carefully chosen by a consultant who feels that she sees in some other woman the qualities that we want.

Caruth: Let me go back for a minute to this institution or awareness or perception. You and I talked about that last August, too,

Ash: Right.

Caruth: Do you think that perhaps this is one of those very

important, yet intangible, things that separates the successful manager of business person from one who is not successful?

Ash: I think there has to be some way or some intuition of knowing when it's right to do a certain thing and when it's wrong. Certainly in dealing with people you have to know how to be able to effectively work with people. Rockefeller said, "I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than for any other commodity under the sun, sugar or wheat or flour." And I really feel that, yes, intuition has to have something to do. . . not only with when to do things but how to deal with people.

Caruth: Have there been other cases in the history of the company where the same intuition has served good purpose?

Ash: I'm sure there have been. But, by the way, that man was indicted on a felony in Fort Worth six months later that would have literally rocked the company had he been a member of our organization. So I was right.

Caruth: And intuition paid off.

Ash: Right. It paid off.

Caruth: All of your sales people and your directors are independent contractors. Is that right?

Ash: Yes, Yes, they are.

Caruth: Is that another idea that comes out of Stanley and World Gift or what?

Ash: Yes and no. For one thing, it's much to their advantage to be independent contractors. Literally, they are presidents of their own little companies with our company. All we do is to help them in every possible way to know how to train and build and to recruit and how to run their organizations. But they don't have to do anything we tell them to do. However, we have a certain kind of wonderful loyalty within this company that makes it a real no-no for you to do anything the company doesn't suggest you do. For one thing, they know we have their interests at heart, and we're only going to tell them to do the things that are right for them.

Caruth: Let's go back again to this first few months in business beginning with September the 13th. Your first show fizzled. What kind of thoughts were going through your mind that first month, two months, three months, and what was happening to sales at that period of time?

Ash: Well, I think we did \$17,000 those first three months that we were in business; half of September, October, November, and December. It was doing fairly well. Of course, remember that a good portion of that was in wigs at that particular point. Really we hadn't gotten into the cosmetic business yet. In the meantime, I was taking a few recruits that I had and I was working with them

long hours teaching them the elements of selling and then having them go out and try what they learned with real people, and we were working out the various steps in the show procedure. What you do first, what you do next, how do you do this, what's the most effective way of getting that mask dry in a hurry, how can you cut your show time, other little things that took approximately six months to work out. All of the people who were in the business in the beginning were instrumental in helping work out that procedure because we all came in at least once a week, sometimes oftener, and got our heads together and spent several hours talking about what we had done during the week and what had worked and what hadn't worked.

Caruth: How did you locate the individual who did the formulations for you originally?

Ash: I had known Mr. Elwood Goodier, who was associated with his father's firm out in Oakcliff, and when I got the formulations I took them to him and asked him if he would produce them for me, and he agreed to do so. They had a very fine reputation of more than forty years in business, and when you're dealing with cosmetics, you need someone who knows all about F.D.A. regulations, and all about the important governmental rules that must

be followed, and cleanliness and whatever else is needed to be known about chemicals, and you see my knowledge of cosmetics was zero. I knew nothing about what goes into cosmetics, what makes them work. The only thing I knew was that the formulas I had had worked on me personally, but I didn't know why, so I had to resort to someone who had knowledge in that field, and I felt that this man was fully qualified and equipped having been in business so many years.

Caruth: Is this the firm that became Creative Cosmetics which you then . . .

Ash: Right. Cosmetics Creations. Yes.

Caruth: Cosmetics Creations which you . . .

Ash: After a period of a few years we made them our wholly owned subsidiary.

Caruth: They do work, of course, not only your formulations, but do they work for other firms, too?

Ash: We will take other people's formulations and make up a product for anyone else providing it is not in competition with our people. We will do nothing that is competitive with our own people--again back to protecting our people.

Caruth: Is one of the problems you have initially in any business, I suppose, is pricing your product. How did you arrive

at a pricing decision or pricing policy?

Ash: This was Richard's bailiwick of course, and I think he can better tell you about the pricing and how we arrived at that.

Caruth: Okay. Well, let me ask you now about some of your ideas on motivating women. You do various and sundry things here in the form of recognition and financial incentives and so on. Would you like to elaborate on that?

Ash: Yes. Again we're back to doing what I wish other people had done for me. I remember that in Stanley for high sales prize once I received a "flounder light." Now I am about the last person in the world who would ever be using a flounder light. That's a thing you use to gig flounders (laughter). My branch manager was a man and that interested him. I can't imagine how he ever thought it would interest me. We had other such unimaginative prizes in that business, and I was always rather dismayed by some of the things I won. But you see, women will work for recognition when they won't work for money. They really aren't working for the prize per se, they're working for the recognition that they get for the achievement. Now I want to give them things that I think women would like to have but would not necessarily go out and buy for themselves, like a pretty diamond ring. She

usually would wait for the man in her life to give it to her. If she went down to buy it herself, it would weigh very badly against the hamburger that could be bought with that same money, and so she probably would wind up not buying it or buying a very inexpensive one for herself. So we give as incentive prizes things I think women would like to have but would not go out and buy, like for instance a pink Cadillac? A diamond ring or a mink coat? And so those are the incentive prizes that we use primarily (laughter).

Caruth: When did the idea of the pink Cadillac develop?

Ash: After we began doing well, I bought a Cadillac. And I decided that the ideal thing to do would be to paint it pink. So it was painted pink, and it just caught on like a house afire. Everybody wanted a pink Cadillace, and somebody said, "Couldn't that be a prize?" and I thought, "My goodness, that's a lot of money." And then we decided to give one to the top director in the company at the annual seminar. And then that evolved into five pink Cadillacs the next year. Then we increased it to ten the following year and then to twenty and then year before last we decided to give a pink Cadillac to every Director whose unit sold \$200,000 in retail sales during the year. Now then we're back on our level of everybody

being able to achieve a goal. You know how much and what it takes, and so you start out at the beginning of the year trying to win it. Not just the top five, you might not be in the top five or the top ten or the top twenty, but you can plan to be in the \$200,000 category.

Caruth: Would you tell me the story of the golden goblet? I think that's kind of interesting.

Ash: (Laughter) Well, again we're back to the fact that women will work for recognition when they won't work for money. And the Golden Goblet Club evolved from the fact that in Stanley I was given one of those little cups like you see in stores engraved "The World's Greatest Lover." It really wasn't a very nice cut, and the handles fell off sometimes after you had them a year or two. You got that for selling \$1,000 wholesale or \$2,000 worth of mops and brooms in a single calendar month. That was a lot of selling, to get that little stupid cup, and then in World Gift I changed that to a silver punch cup, and we gave silver punch cups which were practical and usable. I decided this company would use a golden goblet which could be used as a water or wine goblet for your table. And you could win as many of them as you liked and you could keep on acquiring them. They were both useful and beautiful. They have become a symbol of success of

the company. We give a Golden Goblet for \$2,000 worth of retail merchandise sold in a period of any calendar month, and that is a real achievement.

Caruth: Well, along with that goes a necklace, is that right?

Ash: With the first goblet, we give a little pendant that has a tiny little golden goblet, which can be worn around their necks to show that they are a member of what we call the Golden Goblet Club, and you wear that one permanently. After the first one we give ribbons to indicate that you have won your second, third, fourth, or sixty-fifth golden goblet, which one girl has achieved.

Caruth: Is that the highest number that's been won?

Ash: Yes, sixty-five.

Caruth: Sixty-five. How many of these cups did you give away last year?

Ash: I'll have to look the figure up for you.

Caruth: Are you causing your source of supply some difficulties by giving away so many?

Ash: We have had to change sources of supply several times because they couldn't keep up with the production. We are now up to thousands and thousands per year, and it's necessary that they all be exactly the same size and the same shape. It seems to be difficult for some

Then, of course, gold going up as it did sort of threw a little monkey wrench into the situation, but we're still continuing to give the golden goblet, high price of gold or not. It's twenty-two carat electroplated, you know.

Caruth: What sort of differences do you see in the motivation of men versus the motivation of women?

Ash: Well, I don't think men will work for recognition as much as perhaps women will. You see, women have always been out of the limelight of their husband's achievements. They've been in the shadow, and most of us would like to feel that we could do something on our own. Nobody has given her a round of applause or any kind of acclaim since graduation from high school. I think women are programmed from birth to be non-achievers. If you'll think how we handle little girls and how we handle little boys . . . we say to the little girl, "Oh, honey, you're a little girl, and a little girl can't do that!" Little girls this and little girls that, but what do we say to little boys? We say, "Why, of course you can. You're a big boy now, . . . big boys don't cry!" etc., etc., etc. So we program little boys in a completely different direction than we do little girls with the result that many of the women who come upon our horizon

are women who have never been told they can do anything. They really don't think they can. They come in saying, "Well, I hope I'll be able to do something," and they really don't know that they can do anything, and at home the husband says, "You? Why, you couldn't sell anything." And he says, "How much is this going to cost me?" That's his usual attitude. So she starts out with quite a few handicaps with nobody believing in her but us. If we select her as one of our Mary Kay girls then we believe in her to start with; we see something there. Then we praise her to success. Women cannot take criticism as a rule. There will be some who will disagree with that statement but . . . women, I think, have to be praised to success and this is one of the things that has helped us to be very successful in getting women to become high achievers. One of our women came into this organization because her husband fussed at her when she brought home ivy along with the groceries every week. So she simply wanted to be able to buy all the ivy that she wanted without any fussing from her husband. Her check in the month of July was \$11,197.15. She can now buy the store every month.

Caruth: (Laughing) That's a lot of ivy!

Ash: That's a lot of ivy. However, she has now progressed to

area directorship and that includes overrides on several thousand people. That's in eight years with no professional background, which I think is interesting. We have eight area directors now. These girls are people who have progressed up the ladder of success, who began literally as housewives but who had an innate ability to deal with people and didn't really realize it. They started out as consultants. As everyone in this company does. You cannot buy your way in, and become a director. We're like the bank that will lend you money as soon as you can prove you don't need it. You have to prove first of all that you are an expert at selling the product. Secondly, you have to be able to prove that you can interest other good people in our business. In order to build a group to manage, you must find them first. You must be able to find and bring into the business some other good people whom you will personally train. If you don't train her so that she is a success then you aren't a success. The whole thing is rather "like a golden wedding ring." The only way you can progress in this organization is by helping someone else to success.

Caruth: What sort of screening process do you use?

Ash: In . . . for a consultant?

Caruth: In selecting consultants.

Ash: We have a personality analysis. It's a very shallow psychological test that tells us if they have even the rudiments of being a good salesperson. It really is not good enough a test for us to be able to evaluate anybody, so we spend then a whole week taking them with us on shows, observing them, deciding if they have the fundamentals of being able to get along with people, and then whether or not they can sell. When I say sell it merely means the ability to interest another person in something you believe in. Usually that comes out during that week, and at the end of the week if we feel that she really had passed all of our little subtle tests, and she was not rude or sarcastic to anyone, if she was able to help a woman to decide to buy the product because of her enthusiasm, or her knowledge, all those little things that will tell you, "Yes, she will do." If not, we reject her at the end of that week and tell her that we feel she would be happier doing something else.

Caruth: What sort of percentage might you reject?

Ash: Well, it would be difficult to say because our organization is so far flung now. We're in all fifty states and have approximately 33,000 people. We're recruiting at the rate of something 2,000 a month. It's pretty difficult for me to know how many are rejected. Our

700 directors are the ones who make the decision that we want this person or we don't.

Caruth: What I was getting at is whether you see this as a really . . . a screening process or you're taking more people in . . .

Ash: You mean the little personality analysis thing?

Caruth: Right, and the evaluation.

Ash: No, except that we have built up through the years a certain loyalty to the company through our consultants. We say, as a means of testing, "Could I take this person with me on any show in my date book and proudly introduce her as my associate?" Now to a woman that means a lot of things. Is she dressed well enough? Does she speak well enough? Is she personable, and if that person does not feel that she could proudly introduce her as an associate then she's not for us. If there's any reason you feel that you cannot accept her as an associate, then she is rejected.

Caruth: If she doesn't fit the image then she's . . .

Ash: If she doesn't fit the image . . . yes.

Caruth: What kind of training do you give your consultants?

Ash: It's a continuous course that never stops, but it begins with one week of intense study of our manual which is now a couple of hundred pages long.

Caruth: The manual was the original memoirs of _____?

Ash: No. It has evolved from a few pages to more than 200 now. As time has gone on everything that we have learned that has been successful we've put on paper for other consultants to help them. This is our director's methods of sharing their knowledge with others. We constantly add to it. If something new comes up that is really great, we try it out for a period of months, and when the new manual is printed, if it has been successfully used for a period of a year or so, then we will include the idea in the new manual. So it's a whole manual full of wonderful ideas, others have successfully used.

Caruth: But the original one came out of your own experience?

Ash: Right.

Caruth: Did you do that the first year or so that you were in business?

Ash: You mean changing . . .

Caruth: Did you have a manual for the first year?

Ash: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had a manual; I think it was only five pages long or six pages long to begin with. We had the rudiments of putting on a show, at least the way it should be done in theory. Remember, it had never been done, so it was only theoretical then. Out of real, practical experience a lot of things have evolved, and

it has grown and grown and grown as we have grown. We constantly . . . we have an interchange of ideas in this company that's marvelous. My theory is that "if I have an idea and you have an idea and I give you mine and you give me yours we each have two. But if you keep yours and I keep mine we each have one. So all the directors have an input, weekly, of ideas. If they come across something they feel is great, they share it with the company. We print it in what we call a director's memo that goes out once a week. It's considered an honor to have your idea selected to be used in the memo. We screen and use only the ideas that we think are really great. All 700 directors then who put them into action.

Caruth: Let me get you back to the training because I've sidetracked you a little bit into talking about the manual, but would you continue to describe that first week.

Ash: Alright. First, the prospective consultant must attend three shows. I believe that seeing real people buy real merchandise, hearing real customers ask real questions, and hearing the answers, watching a consultant perform in front of real people is a better training class than any possible thing you could think up. So she must attend three, she may attend more than three, but she must attend three regardless of how many she might have

been to prior to deciding to become a consultant. We feel those shows don't count because she wasn't really looking at it from the standpoint of becoming a consultant. Then, in addition to that she must thoroughly read the manual and fill out a questionnaire which is quite lengthy. This simply means to us that she's read the entire manual carefully and had to find all the answers to all the questions and write them out. Then she attends an orientation class that lasts from three to eight hours depending on her particular director. Each director holds her own. In this class she is told the "behind the scenes" things that you might not see while attending a show; i.e. why you do this first; why you do something next and so on, and she's given a little of the philosophy of the company. We call it the go-give spivis." In other words, we teach our new recruits from the very first day not to go out thinking, "Now let's see. I believe this lady looks like she could buy a complete set, and that one I think could buy a basic set, and she is obviously just a mascara." If you do, we fell you'll fail because the dollar sign is getting in your eye, so instead we teach our people from the very first day to go out thinking, "What can I do to make these six women go home feeling prettier, and

looking prettier?" We realize that when a woman looks pretty on the outside that she acts prettier on the inside, and she goes home a better wife, a better mother, a better member of the community. So she's really contributed something even if she didn't sell a thing. My contention is that the rewards will come if you give that facial and do your job right. The next time that lady starts to buy cosmetics, even though today maybe she isn't interested, she'll think of you and she'll call, and it is true, they do. So even though sometimes at the show itself a girl does not receive the sale that day, a month later, two weeks later, three months later, the woman calls her and says, "Look, I'd like to try those cosmetics." In addition, she must also book her first five shows and they must be verified. We want to see to it that she gets off to a successful start. We feel that her best chance of success is with her own friends who will probably be more charitable of her first efforts. Thus she books her first five shows with her own friends, receives her beauty case, and goes out and holds them. She is expected to hold five her first week, the reason for that being the need for repetition. Anything she repeats over and over and over enables her to become more proficient. So we insist that she hold five

shows her first week. So, during that first week of training she must study that manual completely, fill out the questionnaire, attend three shows and attend an orientation class, receive her case and book five shows, so it's quite full; she's pretty busy all week long getting ready to start her new career. Then her second week consists of hopefully holding five more shows and reporting in after each one. Even if she falls on her face on those first shows, we tell her how beautifully she fell and make suggestions as to how she could do even better. We never criticize, always praise, praise, praise, "Well, you did book so many," or "You did sell this much, and we'll try to do better tomorrow.

Caruth: Is the consultant's director going with her to those first five shows?

Ash: No. No.

Caruth: Those are on her own.

Ash: We feel that having someone sitting there at that show with her would undermine her self-confidence. Can you imagine, she would be saying, "Did I do this right, did I do that right?" and she would be constantly worried and would be deferring to the other person. But when she's on her own, she has to just go right on through. We suggest that she not tell those people at her first

show (with the exception of the hostess who would be her friend) that she's new. And most of them do not even realize that she's new because when she receives that case, she's going to spend several days putting on mock shows for her husband and children, and she'll gain a little proficiency. Most women know something about make-up to start with, and they just have to learn our methods. Now, going back to that, we have something else that's really in our favor, too. This comes under the heading of problems we've overcome. The average cosmetic company has, let's say, sixty shades of lipstick. If we did, the consultant would have to inventory sixty shades of lipstick. Think what a fiasco that could be. Why, she could have \$500 worth of lipstick and still not have the right shade if she's had to inventory this herself. So I decided to do something to avoid this, and I invented something called a lip and eye palette. It has five shades of lipstick which will convert to fifty-three shades by mixing, so it doesn't matter what fashion turns to this season, she can mix the exact shade of lipstick to go with whatever clothes she might be wearing. She has five shades of eye shadow which she can also intermix to make up all kinds of shades of eyeshadow. So in one little durable palette

case made of cyculac, which is what your phone is made of, you have ten shades, five shades of shadow and five shades of lipstick complete with two sable brushes, one for the eye shadow and one for the lipstick, and a little mirror. And then to make it very practical, the insert that holds the lipstick can be taken out and a new insert put in. This means that for \$2.00 she can buy a new refill, and not have to buy the whole case again. For \$2.00 she can keep on refilling her palette from now on, and she likes that idea because it's economical. It has also kept us from having to inventory 500 shades of lipstick, or for the consultant to have to inventory that many. She only inventories one lip and eye palette which has five shades of shadow and lipstick in it.

Caruth: How many items do you have in your product line?

Ash: Now that's interesting. Avon, for comparison, has, I believe, at this point 1,400. We have twenty-eight.

Caruth: Just twenty-eight.

Ash: Twenty-eight items, which includes our men's line, and the colognes, and the body lotions, but it is a complete make-up line. Our basic set consists of five items, and those five items, we feel, have to be used together to really obtain results. Now, another thing that we did in this company was to find a need and fill it, and they

say that that is the basis of success--finding a need and filling it. Surprisingly enough the average woman does not really know how to have a good complexion. She does not know why she uses a cleansing cream, why she uses an astringent or a freshener, why she uses a mask, she doesn't know what the functions of those products are. She doesn't know why she should use them regularly. She really doesn't know all the steps, one, two, three, four, five, that are needed to have a good skin. So our beauty show consists of training that woman in the necessary steps to achieve a really good, smooth, clear, blemish free complexion. We begin with step one and take her right through it with pictures--"the eye buys more than the ear"--and we tell them how, and then we let them experiment on their own faces, which is perfect training; tell them how, show them how, and let them show you they know how. Right?

Caruth: Right.

Ash: Thus at the show they learn how to have a good skin. We impress upon them that using one of these products and not using the rest of them simultaneously is like trying to use my recipe for chocolate cake and saying, "Can I leave out the chocolate or the sugar or the eggs?" Well, not if you're going to get my chocolate cake! If

you want a perfect skin, you must use all five of these things together. It's been described as scripton in five jars, and that all five of these things must be used together in order to achieve a perfect skin, so we teach women how to care for their skin, and teach them why they're using what they're using, and the function of each product. Most women really do not know this. Those five items account for a great percentage of our total volume of sales because this is where we place the emphasis. We feel that anybody can put on lipstick, anybody can put on eye shadow, anybody can put on rouge. It doesn't matter too much where complexion is concerned. So we go through that rather fast, knowing that if a woman has put on her eyebrows in "peek-a-boos" for twenty years, she's going to go right home and with our pencil put the "peek-a-boos" back, even though we've shown her how to make a perfect brow.

Caruth: What's a "peek-a-boo"? Pardon me (laughter).

Ash: Well, the "surprise look." There's not very much we can do to change her habits, where lipstick or eye shadow or any of those things are concerned. We can, however, help her to know how to have a good complexion, so we do not place as much emphasis on the make-up portion of our product as we do on the five basic items. Fifty-three

per cent of our sales are on the five basic items. We also have the same items for men that we have for women, and that came about in an interesting manner. The basic set is supposed to last four to six months. Occasionally we would have a customer come back in two months and say, "I need another set," and we would say, "But you must be overusing it. Why have you used it so quickly?" And she would say reluctantly, "Well, my husband's using it now." And so I thought, "Well, wouldn't a man feel rather stupid using something out of a pink jar with Mary Kay on the label? Wouldn't he prefer to have a masculine looking product?" Even though it was the same thing, he would want his own jars. So we simply designed a masculine jar and in royal blue and silver. We changed the name of the 'Night Cream' to 'Conditioner,' the 'Skin Freshener' to 'Toner', etc., so that the man would feel masculine and be using something out of a masculine jar. We changed the name to "Mr. Kay", but it is the identical product because "skin is skin". So the man has access to everything that his wife has if he wants to care for his skin. You have to know, of course, that there is a tremendous educational process to be done before men really begin to use cosmetics, as such; I mean skin care. They'll do a little something, and

there's hope because about fifteen years ago men weren't even using deodorants. Today, I think, he would be thrown out if he weren't. In Australia men still aren't using deodorant, and it is just awful.

Caruth: How successful is your line in men's products?

Ash: Well, because our emphasis is not there. . . . since we see ninety-nine to one hundred per cent women and we don't see men. The people who come to these shows in the daytime, or even in the evening, are six women, not men. Most of our products are sold to the women for her husband as a gift, or because he had noticed the dramatic improvement in her skin. So we really aren't getting to men, and I believe approximately five per cent of our total volume would cover our sales to men.

Caruth: It's just really an accomodation item.

Ash: It is an accomodation item. I hope that as men become more educated to the niceties of caring for their skin that our volume in this area will improve.

Caruth: Let's get back to the training for a minute. We've talked about the training that you give the consultant that first week. What other sorts of training do you have?

Ash: Every single week each director holds a sales meeting. It's really motivation, but it is also half education.

Some facet of our business is taken up at each of those meetings, and one hour at least is devoted to some educational process. In other words, how to better sell, let's say eye shadow, or how to apply it, or how to sell the basic set, or how to book shows, how to look for other prospective recruits. All these elements are taken up at the sales meeting, and these are conducted once a week throughout the United States by 700 directors. In addition to that they have two or three other meetings during the week, too, where they train either new recruits or they have what we call Pacesetter Classes. A Pacesetter Class is made up of half a dozen people who have shown exceptional promise. The director really zeros in on them to help them to do even better than they're doing. It's most important to have a few setting the example for everyone else to follow. A few people selling \$500 or \$600 every week can really inspire others in a group. Everyone wants to know, "How are they doing it?" So it's vital to have a few pacesetters.

Caruth: So you're relying on your directors to do . . .

Ash: Yes. The directors do the training.

Caruth: . . . most of your training then.

Ash: Yes, it's important to remember that a director got there by proving herself to us.

Caruth: Let's go through that. Let's say she first comes in as a consultant, then how do they . . .

Ash: Alright. She comes in as a consultant. First she must sell . . . prove to us that she is a successful sales person. Then she cannot even become a director for six months no matter how successful she is at selling. We feel that she has to absorb the philosophy of the company during this period. This thing we call the give spirit, this golden rule aspect. We employ this daily, in every situation. It's very difficult to get an organization of 33,000 women to work together in complete harmony, and we have just about achieved that. We have perhaps one little gossipy phone call a day. But in a company of 33,000 that's pretty remarkable. The people work together in harmony to a degree that you would hardly believe possible. It is because we employ the golden rule so wholeheartedly. And anybody who doesn't do it is felt to be out of step. So, she has to first prove that she can sell, then she has to prove that she can recruit people. At the end of six months when we feel that she has absorbed the philosophy of the company and she is ready mentally and emotionally to accept this position as a leader, we look to see if she has recruited during that period of time ten personal recruits. She must have each of these people on the road to success.

doing a certain volume themselves in order for her to qualify. In other words, if you've just recruited a warm body and haven't taught her anything and haven't helped her toward success, then you haven't really done much. So she must have ten people who are active and working successfully, and this is the basis then on which we will accept what we call a letter of intent. She submits her letter of intent, which is quite a document that goes into all of the aspects of her life, why she wants to be a director. We really look at this very hard, and then we take a look at her recruits and see if they are qualified and if she has a basis on which to build. If so, then she comes to Dallas and stays here for a week of intensive training at her own expense. The reason that we do it this way is because I feel like people will support that which they help to create. If a woman comes here and she has paid her own expenses, she is going to absorb all she can. She's not going to come here for a weeks' vacation. She is really coming to work. She stays all week, and from the time we meet her at the airplane until we put her back on the plane she doesn't have a minute free. Classes are held until 10:00 or 11:00 each night in every subject from make-up to recruiting to coaching to booking to holding a sales meeting, and any other facet of a director's life. Then,

she goes back home and as of the first of the month, (this director training is held the last week of every month), she begins what we call qualification. Then for three months she and her unit must make quotas that gradually elevate. In addition, she must multiply her group to a minimum of twenty-two by the end of the third month or she doesn't finish qualification. And she must make her monetary quota every single month, too. Now all this time she is not being paid. She is still in the other director's unit. She is simply in apprenticeship, proving to us that she can do the job. If she indeed does qualify at the end of the third month and finishes her qualification, then we have what we call a debut ceremony, and she officially becomes a director. From that day forward she is paid on a sliding scale commission nine to twelve per cent of her unit's production. From that point forward she can add to it. If a consultant recruits somebody in Hawaii and even if a Hawaiian director takes care of that person, she is still paid a commission on that girl's wholesale.

Caruth: Does that create some accounting problems?

Ash: It is computer problems. We've been on computer since the fifth month of business, so it's not a problem. Yes, it's quite comprehensive and pretty difficult. It

couldn't be done with accuracy except by computer.

Caruth: Beyond director, you have yet another area.

Ash: Yes. In your unit you have a consultant who does so well that she wants to become a director. Now, you can see that if it weren't to your advantage to have her as a director you would possibly hold her back. Right? So we pay four per cent commission then to an offspring director of the original director. It doesn't come out of her pocket. It comes out of company funds. So, the director is encouraged to take that person in her unit who shows real promise and to develop her into a director and to encourage her. So, she becomes a senior director, and receives a four per cent override on everything the new director's unit does. When you have ten units that have come from your unit, you are eligible to become a national sales director. Now I say eligible because this is the company's prerogative. If we don't feel that she's really ready, we will try to get her to wait till she is stronger. Once you relinquish your own unit you have no further way to build on the base. In other words, if your ten offspring units don't do well and they drop by the wayside, it's possible you could be right back where you started. We don't want that to happen, so we try to see to it that the base is strong

enough for a Director to go area. We now have ten area directors which we now call National Sales Directors. It took us nine years to get the first two. In other words, a Director has to really develop into a super manager of people to be able to achieve area directorship. However, those area Directors are now earning anywhere from \$4,000 a month to \$8,000 and \$10,000 a month, which amounts to an excellent salary, for example \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year, depending again on the volume that the areas do.

Caruth: So all these steps are laid out and the person coming in knows what has to be done?

Ash: They're all laid out. Exactly. On the very first day you know exactly what you have to do to get to be a National Sales Director. But you also know that there are probably five or six or seven years between you and that step because it takes a long time to build that kind of a base, where you have enough people to be able to support area directorship. Then the National Sales Directors travel the entire country wherever they have offspring units, and they put on workshops, motivational sessions, and educational sessions throughout the country.

Caruth: Are you providing any special training for the National Sales Directors?

Ash: Our National Sales Director program is, as I said, three years old, and we're still experimenting with it. We feel that by the time they reach that point they know almost as much as we do, as far as motivation is concerned. We do have National Sales Director sessions a couple of times a year where we try to delve into professional training and help them to understand people even better. There is no end to learning about how to motivate people and teaching them to handle the procedures that we use in a better manner, but they are pretty expert by the time they reach this plateau. They feed us more, I think, than we feed them. From their trips out in the field, they come back and tell us what they have found. They really are management when they get to that point.

Caruth: So there's a lot of opportunity here to go up, but it's up to the individual. If the individual wants to go up, the opportunity's as the individual wants to remain a consultant, doesn't it? She's permitted to do that?

Ash: Right. You may do whatever you please; therefore, it's very good if a woman wants to just earn \$25.00 a week pin money she can, or if she wants to earn \$250 a week as a consultant she can. She simply decides on what she wants to do and then sets the number of shows that she holds accordingly. And if she wants to progress into management, she can. It's a responsible position and one that in this

company is held in very high esteem, so it's necessary for her to really be the kind of person that we want before we will even allow her to be a director. Our directors feel it's a very special position, and they are really looked up to by the rest of the people because they've earned the position they occupy.

Caruth: The National Sales Director is still an independent contractor. Is that right?

Ash: Everyone is an independent contractor.

Caruth: Every one is, except those on the administrative staff.

Ash: Right. Except those on the administrative staff. It's much to their advantage because from an income tax standpoint it's very beneficial. You see, they can take off a portion of their homes, their cars, all their expenses, their traveling, and many other deductions. It's really to their advantage. The only thing that we as a company provide in addition is for the directors. We have a life insurance program on which we pay the entire premium. Again, this is based on their production over a period of a year, and it's re-evaluated each year. The amount of insurance is based on whatever they have averaged the year before, let's say from \$10,000 on up to \$100,000 or whatever in free term life insurance. This provides security for their families.

Business Oral History Collection

Mary Kay Ash

Interviewer: Dr. Donald L. Caruth

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: November 11, 1974

Caruth: This is Dr. Donald Caruth recording for the North Texas State University Business Oral History Collection. Today I'm continuing my interview with Mary Kay Ash, Chairman of the Board, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc. The interview is taking place in Dallas, Texas, on November 11, 1974.

 Let me ask you to identify some of the problems or difficulties that you had when the business was started and how you overcame some of these things.

Ash: Well, in my twenty-five years of experience, I had found various problems I felt could have been handled in a better way. One of the problems that is inherent in every direct sales organization is that in most cases the participants are women, and women usually do not have much of a background of business experience. Therefore they may never have had a large sum of money in their hands at any one time, nor can they usually get a large sum of money at any one time from their own sources. So we have this problem: In most companies, a woman begins work on what is known as a letter of credit.

Usually it is for \$200 or \$300. That means that she can go out and put on her first shows, sell the merchandise, and then order out from the company several hundred dollars worth of merchandise. She does not have to send a check or any kind of remittance because of the letter of credit. Then she is given about two weeks to pay the company. That means that she receives the merchandise, goes back and makes the delivery and therefore has the money to pay the company. However, women being women sometimes for the very first time having a large sum of money in their hands they get carried away and go shopping instead. The result being that when the time comes to pay the company they do not have the money. And in many cases, particularly if the person was out of state from the company, she could conceivably get into debt maybe two orders or even three before the company finds that those first or the second checks were NSF. After about three weeks, she could conceivably be \$600 in debt to the company, for which she has given many NSF checks. The company then begins to try to collect. So naturally they go to her husband. His attitude as a general rule is: "Why did you let her have it in the first place?" And remembering that she started to work because they didn't have any money and he had no resources

it's very difficult to collect. You might say it's impossible. When you go to the husband to try to collect the money the girl becomes irate, the husband becomes irate, and the first thing you know you have not only lost the money but you've also lost the consultant too because of her attitude. It results in a very unhappy situation all the way around and this happened time and time and time again. The biggest reason for termination in the average direct sales company is bad debts in that a company simply cannot collect on this kind of debt. So how do you overcome that? I decided that if you started off on the right foot in the first place and had the merchandise there to deliver and you didn't have to order and you would not give the person credit, that that situation could be avoided. So we begin by asking the consultant to purchase her Beauty Case for \$65 and to get a \$250 loan from the bank. We suggest even if they have the money in their own bank account that they not use those funds or their husband's bank account because the husband is the last one in the world to get paid. Instead we suggest they begin in a business-like basis and borrow the necessary funds from the bank because they have to re-pay the bank. So the girl goes and borrows \$250 plus the money for her Beauty case,

which runs approximately \$65. So let's say the total loan is a little over \$300. She then has a \$250 base from which to work. Now to overcome the second problem. We've already overcome the first one in that she is solvent. She will go out and hold those first five shows and even if the girl is not very good, she still will sell \$250 worth of merchandise, which will give her a profit. And she has \$250 to repay the bank, and she also has all of her profit still sitting there on the shelf in the form of merchandise which gives her something to deliver the second week. The second thing to remember is that since women do not usually mean to write an insufficient check, but because of financial problems they sometimes do, we decided in the very beginning not to accept checks. We insist on cashier's checks or money orders. We have a cash situation where she stays ahead instead of behind all the time, and she has managed this by getting the bank loan. The average cosmetic line is quite lengthy. For example, Avon has 1,400 items in their line. We decided that if we had a very short line, twenty-six items, that a consultant could conceivably carry her merchandise in the trunk of her car, and be able to deliver the day of the show. That took care of still another problem; not having to make a second trip

back to deliver. If you had a larger line this would become impossible. Through our entire history, if we add an item we try to subtract one that is not selling well. In most cases we've been able to adhere to that policy. By delivering at the show we deliver while the customer is still highly enthusiastic about the product and still remembers what to do. She can go home and reproduce exactly what she did at the show and she feels great about it. So this is another problem that has been overcome. We found in most direct sales companies that when you go back to deliver three weeks later that the woman's husband has lost his job, they've decided to move to Goose Creek, or something has happened that makes it impossible for her to take the order. In most cases she has just changed her mind, or lost her enthusiasm. Women are impetuous. What we want, we want now. So delivering at the show was another really good idea.

Caruth: Let me go back to this first problem, the one of cash. You did that from the very start?

Ash: From the very first day.

Caruth: The very first day. And even today do you require the cashier's check or the money order?

Ash: Right. Even today. This is one of the few multi-million

dollar businesses in the United States that has no accounts receivable.

Caruth: That is rather unusual.

Ash: And in a credit card society such as the one we live in today, it is unique.

Caruth: But, of course, from the standpoint of getting a company started, it's a beautiful way of doing that, too.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: Because it does not require you to go into debt to finance the people who are going to be selling your products.

Ash: That's right. And it gets them off to a good start. Okay, then we overcame another problem. The average direct sales company finds that they reach a plateau and their production from that point levels off, mostly because they simply cannot manage the people they have. Nobody yet has decided exactly what that number might be, but nevertheless, a certain peak is reached and they level off. Mostly because they just don't have enough management to handle the problem. In our company, when we have a new director, who in turn has twenty-two or more new people, we regenerate our management. As we grow larger, there are new managers constantly. If you take a look at the number of directors we have had

from the beginning you will see that as our number of people increased, our number of directors have increased at the same time. We're constantly regenerating our own management. I don't think we will ever hit this "leveling off" period as long as we continue to do this. One of the biggest programs that we have going for us now is something we call "Future Directors." We are constantly seeking out people who have management possibilities. People who have shown us by their own diligence that they, first of all, can sell the product; second, that they know how to interest other good people in our business; and third, that they can train them--that they can pass on whatever it was that made them successful to their new recruits. In doing this we recreate our own management constantly.

Caruth: Isn't it rather unique too to have a system that, first of all, generates its own managers and then adds sales force?

Ash: Yes. It's unique to any experience I've ever had. As I told you in the first company that I was with, they never told us what we had to do to get to be a manager. In the second one we had a management policy where when you obtained a certain number of recruits you became a manager. But, it was very weak and not enough to build

on. They really weren't management and sometimes we found that people would circumvent our rules by recruiting six "warm bodies." Actually, they were just names on a piece of paper. They had gotten their relatives or someone to sign and those people never went to work. In our company it's necessary for a recruit to have an active working record before the consultant can even put in her letter of intent. So they can circumvent our system too well. If they do, they're really just cheating themselves because they need a good base on which to build their future unit.

Caruth: So what you've done with this system is eliminate this problem of say increasing your sales force by 100 per cent and then diluting your managerial talent by fifty per cent.

Ash: Right. The "Show Plan", as simple as it is, overcame another problem. The average woman wanting to buy cosmetics goes to a department store counter and says, "I need some cleansing cream." They seldom say, "I want some Brand X cleansing cream." Instead they expect the girl behind the counter to find, out of the multitude of items displayed there from various companies, the exact cleansing cream that would be best for her. Not only that, but the girl behind that counter is

usually employed by some line of cosmetics. Therefore, she is going to give that customer whatever line it is that she represents, regardless of whether it's right for her skin or not. The customer does not have a chance to try the cosmetic. I guess there's not a woman in the world who doesn't have a bathroom full of cosmetics that she has bought, gone home, tried once or twice, and found she didn't like the way it felt or smelled or acted on her skin, and then just discarded the whole thing or left it sitting on the shelf. We decided to try something new. In our show plan we invite only five or six instead of the usual twelve to twenty-five people usually required in direct sales show plans. The average woman doesn't know that many people, or finds it difficult to entertain twelve to twenty-five people in her living room. We decided to have five or six guests and the reason for that initially was that one person can give personal attention to the hostess and five guests. Most women aren't interested in what it does for the other person. She just wants to know, "What's it going to do for my skin?" She really doesn't care what it does for the girl next to her. So the personal attention is absolutely necessary. She also finds that getting five people together is

really not much of a problem. She doesn't have to clean her house because these five people are usually her very best and most intimate friends, so five people is a reasonable request and easily gotten together. At the show each guest can try every single item before buying anything. They sit at the table with a placemat and lovely little containers where a little bit of everything is ready for her personal use with individualized brushes. The consultant who is conducting the show uses a flip chart because the eye buys more than the ear we are told, and she shows them and tells them and they sit there and follow the consultant's instructions. It's very complete--they hear, they see, and they do all of which makes for a real learning session. The girl instructs them in good skin care. As she does this, they have an opportunity to try every single item that we have in our line, and therefore they don't buy anything that they don't really want. As a matter of fact, I don't want anybody buying anything unless they feel, "This is the greatest thing I've ever used." I don't want them to take our product home and put it on the shelf. We discovered early in this business that the average woman does not know how to take care of her skin. Nobody ever really told her what the functions

of a cleansing cream, a skin freshner, a night cream, and a mask were. She just bought one at random at a department store and one at the drugstore and one some place else, and she uses on once in awhile and the other sometimes and another one never. She has no routine for caring for her skin. We try to teach her basic skin care, what the function of a cleansing cream is, what the function of skin freshner is, what the function of the mask is, and why all of these must be used together to accomplish a blemish free skin. The average woman has never been told this before. She used a half a dozen different companies' products at random, too, which sometimes have bad chemical reactions to each other.

Caruth: You're relying on teaching than on selling, then, per se.

Ash: Yes, we really are, and this helps with our recruiting, too, because I think most women sit there and think, "Oh, my goodness. I could never sell anything." But they can instruct women in the proper techniques of good skin care. The funny thing is that when they are through if they really did a good job of teaching, they really don't have to sell because then the people buy. It's not necessary to be a high-pressure salesperson to get the order. As a matter of fact, we avoid that

technique because the average woman, I think, hates to be sold anything. I do. When you start pressing me to buy something, I will resist even if I want the item because I feel you're pressuring me into buying it. So we are very, very low pressure. We simply show the guests how, knowing that even if they don't buy today we feel that the next time they want cosmetics they will remember and come back to us for cosmetics.

Caruth: Do you still try to limit the shows to about six people?

Ash: Right. We still limit it to six. I say limit. You can't really tell a woman what she can do in her own home, but we suggest that six is the right number; five and herself. Booking future shows is a tremendous with the average direct sales organization. It's the most talked about problem in direct sales. But you can understand that requiring only four or five guests, that booking has ceased to be a problem because any woman can get four or five people together. If the consultant does a good job of selling, the woman is impressed and can immediately think of four or five intimate friends that she would like to have over. So we have eliminated the booking problem. The customer does her own facial. The consultant does not do this. In order to give someone a facial and touch them with

your hands you need to be a cosmetologist in some states. So this necessarily had to be a function that the customer performed for herself. It's far better this way because the consultant simply stands there with a flip chart and tells them how to do it. They do it for themselves, and in doing so they learn. If a woman goes into a department store and a makeup artist does her makeup for her, she can no more paint that picture that he painted than she can paint the Mona Lisa. But once she has done it at a show, she feels perfectly confident that she can go home and redo it there.

Caruth: Well, let me ask you this question.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: All of these ideas were basically worked out before you went into business, right?

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: There were not perhaps as developed as they are now, but they were still there.

Ash: Most of these are problems that we had incurred in other companies. Nobody else in the industry, as far as I know, operates exactly as we do. There is one other thing that I didn't mention. From the standpoint of recruiting new people . . . the company that I was

formerly with ran ads constantly in the classified sections of the newspaper. I spent eleven years as National Training Director, and my job consisted of going from city to city placing one of these ads and then sitting there in a hotel room for two or three days waiting for people to call and make appointments and come and be interviewed. I found that, first, a lot of them who called never showed up. I spent many a day with appointments all set up and nothing happened. Secondly, I found that many who came were really not interested at all in becoming a consultant for your company. They really were not looking for a job. They were just seeking information. You have the problem of not knowing who these people are. You are in a strange city, and you don't know whether you're interviewing a bank robber or a little housewife. It's really difficult to tell, and you have to be a great judge of character to be able to sift the good ones from the bad ones. We decided instead to do our recruiting at the show where most of our problems are already overcome. You see when someone is interviewed in a hotel room, she doesn't know how you do business. She has never used your product. The whole thing is totally foreign to her. The first sale you have to make is

good, but she's never even had a chance to try it. She doesn't know how you operate, and maybe she would completely shy away from the way you do business by going into the home and holding a show. So those two problems must be overcome when you're conducting an interview, and it's very difficult to do. Many of them never gave you a chance to show them your product or to see how you worked. They just never showed up again, and that was the end of that. At a show you've already overcome both of those problems. They've tried the product; they liked it. Secondly, they liked the way you do business, and third, they usually feel that they can do what you do. So all those problems are overcome, and all you really have to do as far as finding a new recruit is concerned is to convince someone that she could do what you do. We feel that this is the very best possible way to find new people for our business. We developed something called a four-point recruiting plan that we use at every show, wherein we pick out one person from the show--the person that we feel would be the best of that particular group and we approach her about the possibility of her doing what we do. The consultant also gives a recruiting talk at each show saying that we're looking for people. We have found

that recruiting at shows is the very best possible way to recruit.

Caruth: So your customers become your consultants then.

Ash: Yes, they really do. A consultant going into directorship must have ten personal recruits, so we suggest that one of the best ways for her to do that, if she doesn't have ten at the time she decides she wants to be a director, is to take her date book and go back through her date book starting with January and call every single hostess offering them the opportunity. The hostess already knows exactly how we operate, knows about the product, has been using it for some time, usually is extremely happy with it, is already recommending it to her friends. Therefore, she thinks, "Well, why not, what have I got to lose?" So it's really the best possible recruiting ground. We estimate that as much as seventy-five per cent of our organization has come to us from people who first were either extremely enthusiastic customers or hostesses. It's terribly important that a new recruit be extremely sold on her product before she ever attempts to sell it.

Caruth: Let me ask you about advertising. Does the company do much advertising at all?

Ash: Only in the last two or three years have we done any at all. At first we did none, feeling that the best advertising in the world is one woman telling another about the product. When you think about this, even if you put a terrific product or a terrific ad on television you can look at it a hundred times, but until your next door neighbor says, "Have you tried that new so and so that you see on television. It is really great." That's the first time you ever go out and buy any because we have all become so numb about advertisements on television we just don't believe all that we hear anymore. In the past couple of years have we done some "corporate" advertising. The object of this is to help our people who are in some far flung place where we are at this point rather weak. We help them by their being able to say, "Have you heard of Mary Kay Cosmetics?" When the woman says, "No," the consultant can say, "It's in this month's Vogue." The very fact that it's in Vogue or that it's in McCall's or Ladies Home Journal makes it, apparently, as far as most women are concerned, okay. We've also gone on some of the game shows, simply to get the company's name across, not the product, because we make no attempt whatever to sell the product. That's the extent of our advertising.

Caruth: You're simply trying to create a level of awareness.

Ash: Awareness. Really, no selling at all has been done in any ad or on television.

Caruth: I had noticed that some of your consultants put ads in the paper. I've seen a few of those.

Ash: We don't recommend it, but remember, they're independent, and they may do what they please. We suggest that if they should do this they ask for our permission first and let us approve the ad because we are vulnerable from the standpoint of their saying something that we cannot back up. If it is put in the paper under the name Mary Kay, then we as a company are liable, and if they say something incorrect, it's pretty difficult to prove that we didn't sanction it as a company.

Caruth: Is this one of the disadvantages of having independent contractors?

Ash: It may be, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. For example, income tax advantages; they can take a portion of their homes, their cars, everything they do that they would not have otherwise done from the standpoint of business is deductible. If they were employees, this would not be true, so they have a tremendous tax advantage there and they have many other advantages, too, that far outweigh the few little things

that we don't have complete control of. Surprisingly enough the control is pretty good. Most of the people really want to do what we ask them to, and we have very few people who just buck the system.

Caruth: Let's go back to that first few months or so in business. Was there any point in time after you got started, let's say after the first month or so, that you were experiencing financial difficulties, or was the cash flow fairly good coming in?

Ash: We really never experienced any financial difficulties to any degree. We have always stayed within our budget. In our scrapbooks we have our original check stubs, and one time our bank balance did get down to \$250, but nevertheless we were still \$250 ahead. After about the first six months or so we showed a profit, and began to get into the black.

Caruth: What do you think are the key factors that have accounted for the rather rapid growth of the company?

Ash: First, an extremely good product, one that really induces customer loyalty. Once a person uses the product for four to six months, we have a good customer. The second thing is that we have tried to recruit an exceptional kind of person in this company. From the very beginning we have turned down people we felt didn't fit this thing

we call the "Mary Kay image." Most of our consultants are chosen for the fact that they are well groomed, maybe not beautiful, but at least know how to wear their make-up well. The general quality of our organization is way above average. Having worked with women for thirty-seven years, I would say that our organization is far above the average direct sales organization. We draw people who ordinarily wouldn't sell anything. We have about three millionaire consultants, would you believe, who certainly don't need to work. They're doing this because it gives them a sense of fulfillment. One of the vice presidents' wives of Braniff and Mrs. Ralph Abernathy is a director.

Caruth: That's interesting.

Ash: Isn't that interesting. Now why would she be a director, not only a consultant, but has become a director.

Caruth: She wants to do her own thing.

Ash: She wants to do her own thing. As a matter of fact, I was quite interested in what she had to say the week she was here for training. We kept referring to the fact that her husband was Ralph Abernathy, and she said, "Well, one of these days, they're going to say, 'He is Juanita's husband.'" And I thought that was kind of an interesting observation. In other words, she wants

fulfillment in her own right. We have been able to draw a prestige kind of woman to this business, and they are very proud to be Mary Kay consultants. Then, the third thing, we appeal to women from the standpoint of something that I think is sort of built into the female consciousness. I say that in this business you must have your life in its proper perspective--God first, family second, and your job third. There's probably not another chairman of the board in the world who tells you to put your job in third place. But I do because as a woman I understand that if a woman is not fulfilling what she feels is her God-given function of being a good wife and a good mother first, which is what every woman really wants down deep, I think, then she can't find time for a career. She must not be ridden with guilt about what she is doing or feels that her family is suffering because of her job. Then we try to teach women how to get organized. The average woman doesn't know how to organize herself to have enough free time to be able to do other things that she would like to do. She finds herself so taken up with the daily meals and bedmaking and dishwashing and clothes washing that she doesn't have time to do anything else. Her whole day can be literally eaten up with these things that are

really not all that important. So we suggest that she hires a housekeeper; find somebody else who is not as smart as she is to do those unimportant jobs. I would say that those are things that probably have contributed to the success and the growth of the organization.

Caruth: I thought about something the other day after we had talked the first time. It was acceptance of the products among blacks not knowing basically anything about cosmetics. Would you comment on that?

Ash: Yes. We found first of all that the product itself, the basic skin treatment agreed with the black skin as well as it did with the white skin. It is very popular with the chicano people, too. They look beautiful in our cosmetics. For black skins, all we had to do was add a few other shades of Day Radiance and Shadow Erase that would enhance their skin coloring, and the rest of the product just blended beautifully. It seems to work well, and particularly now that we added the oily skin cosmetics. We have three new products that are especially for oily skins and many black skins are extremely oily. We have approximately the same proportion of black people in our organization as the white population is to the black in the United States.

Caruth: That would be roughly 20 per cent or something like that.

Ash: Yes. So we have about twenty per cent blacks in our organization. It's interesting to note that the queen of recruiting for last year was a black girl. And the national queen of sales was a chicano. Isn't that interesting?

Caruth: That is. How many chicanos do you have approximately?

Ash: I would say once again, we are in proportion to the number of chicanos that there are in the population of the United States; ten per cent possibly, and growing rapidly because it looks so beautifully on them. We are constantly receiving requests to go into Mexico and South American and to the other countries because their relatives have used the product and go to Mexico or to Central America and want some. It looks so beautiful on them.

Caruth: Do you have any thoughts at this time about expanding in that direction?

Ash: Well, you know we opened Australia, by accident really. In 1965 when we were still quite new a young man was here from Australia to learn another business, Success Motivation out of Waco. He sold us some material, and it was quite good and we liked it. But even better we liked the young man who sold it to us, and we became very friendly. His wife had given a show, just sort of

a thank you for the fact that we had bought so much of his products. She had a problem skin, and she had been to dermatologists both in America and in Australia to no avail. Our consultant who held the first show with them suggested that she try it on her arm to see if there was any allergic reaction, and there wasn't. So she tried it on her face, and within a period of three or four weeks her face cleared up for the first time in years. She was so enthused and her husband was so enthused it was difficult to decide whether he was selling Success Motivation or Mary Kay. One day he came out and wanted to know if he could take our cosmetics back to Australia. We were so new then that we just said, "No, we're just not ready to expand into foreign countries yet, and we just never had a man who was successful in our sales force." And so he said, "Alright, I'll show you. I'm going back to Australia, and I'm going to get a cosmetic from a chemist there, and I'm going to show you that I can build a sales organization." So I said, "You do that. Good luck. Good-bye." So he went back to Australia and a year from then he had X number of people and was doing X number of dollars, and we said, "That's wonderful. You keep at it." Two years from then his volume had doubled. After about three

years when he was in contact with us we said, "Come over. We want to talk to you." It was at that point that we learned he had used our complete marketing system, and even the names of our products. We said, "Well, let's see, we're either going to sue you or buy you. We haven't decided quite which yet." After talking with him at some length, we decided to buy him, and so then for a million and half dollars we purchased what we could have had for free three years prior. That's how we got into Australia.

Caruth: By accident.

Ash: By accident. Now Australia . . . I'm sure Richard could fill you in on all the details if you wanted to know, but it really took quite a lot of red tape cutting to go into Australia with our products. They are beginning to resist foreign products now. The problems are even greater in a lot of other countries. For example, Mexico, you have to have a Mexican national who owns fifty-one per cent, and they have complete control. You have to buy all the raw materials there that you use in your product in Mexico, etc. There are so many problems that we really just don't want to get into all of that at this time. We want to develop all of the United States before we go into foreign expansion. We really

are only strong in about fourteen states surrounding Texas.

Caruth: Didn't you work with Pope McDonald, your sales and promotion vice president?

Ash: Vice president . . . market promotion. . .

Caruth: Vice president . . . at World Gifts.

Ash: Yes, yes, I did, but not in that capacity. He had his own movie company at that time, and he made a corporate film for World Gifts called "Treasures of the Earth," and it was in that capacity that I met him because I was the technical advisor on that film. In working with him I knew that he had a lot of sales know-how. I do not believe in proselyting so therefore I never asked any person who was a member of another firm to come with us when we started. One day Pope found that it was in his best interest to resign from World Gifts and he called and told me that he had and came over to see us. He didn't really intend to go to work for us. He was going to simply help me with the Seminar that we were preparing for at that time. But he stayed on, and now he is Vice President in charge of Sales Promotion. He has quite a background in sales promotion experience, and he's very, very good. One of the most important things though in addition to his sales know-how is that

he has a tremendous empathy for people. I've seen many a girl go into his office in tears or possibly raving and ranting because she's angry about something and come out with her feathers all smoothed and smiling in a half an hour. He really knows how to handle people beautifully. Rockefeller said, "I'll pay more for the ability to deal with people than for any other commodity under the sun." He has that unique and wonderful ability to deal with people.

Caruth: This has been one of the things though that you've emphasized to them, this personal touch with people and maintaining a personal communication.

Ash: Constantly. I sent out this week 2,574 letters, which doesn't sound exactly like it's personal, but 2,574 people in this organization of 33,000 have two or more recruits. Therefore, conceivably by January at the Jamboree they could be a part of what we call the Future Directors Class. By that time they must have recruited three more. So a letter of encouragement trying to get them to do that in order that they can attend my Future Director's Class at Jamboree and the Gold Medal luncheon. You get a gold medal if you recruit five within one calendar month. If they do that they attend a special luncheon that will be given in their honor. I send out

33,000 birthday cards a year and see to it that they arrive on the right day. To the average man this seems a bit of foolishness. As a matter of fact, somebody in the financial department comes down about once a year to see me about the cost of handling the birthday cards and the spiraling postage and the cost of the cards, etc. "Is this really necessary?" The answer is "Yes." You have no idea how important a woman's birthday is to her. To her it's the most important day of the year. And sometimes the only birthday card she gets is from ~~me~~. We become very important to her. It's a special little personal touch. We also send anniversary cards on their anniversary with the company, and with that goes a little bracelet that retails for about \$5.00. On her first one she gets the bracelet and a charm, and after that a charm each year. She adds those charms to her bracelet, and we have many a consultant with nine or ten charms on her bracelet. It helps to keep the people. We have the lowest turnover rate in the direct sales industry. As a matter of fact, we started with nine consultants and four of those nine are still active.

Caruth: That's amazing.

Ash: Isn't it? One of them is a National Sales Director now.

Caruth: You use a lot of little motivational . . . well, for want

of a better term, image . . .

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: . . . which I think are very, very clever. Do you recall which was the first one you used? That's going back eleven years.

Ash: Well, I guess the Golden Goblet was the very first. That was an innovation to recognize a sales achievement plateau---a thousand dollars wholesale in one calendar month earns you a Golden Goblet. When I first told Richard about that he said, "You don't really mean to tell me that a woman is going to go and sell \$1,000 wholesale worth of cosmetics to be able to win that little cup, do you?" I said, "Yes, Richard, I do because women will work for recognition when they won't work for money. This is going to start something very exclusive called a Golden Goblet Club with certain privileges that go along with being a member." Recently we had 943 winners in one month, which means \$943,000 worth of merchandise sold by those consultants in one month. The latest innovation is, of course, the "Warm Fuzzy," and that is spreading like wildfire. Half a dozen churches have picked it up and used it and have written to us for warm fuzzies for their congregations. One I happen to have on my desk today wants 500 warm fuzzies to give

for next Sunday, and it's just a little thing to remind people that doing a kindness for another person is probably the most rewarding thing in the world. We're trying to help our people to be better people, and as a result, better consultants.

Caruth: For those people who are going to be listening to this tape and cannot see a warm fuzzy, would you describe it?

Ash: Well, a warm fuzzy, of course, is not only a little pink ball of fuzz that we use to perpetuate it, but a warm fuzzy is any kindness, a hug or a kiss or anything else that you do that is a kindness for some other person. We had a company make up some little pink balls of wool with eyes and a couple of antennas and purple feet to use as a symbol of a warm fuzzy. There's quite a story, of course, that goes along with it.

Caruth: Right. And then this is just the latest then . . .

Ash: That's the latest.

Caruth: . . . in recognition-type ideas.

Ash: That one possibly not so much recognition oriented. We have many things. The pink Cadillacs are probably the biggest thing we've ever done. It started out with the fact that I personally bought a Cadillac and had it painted pink. That was 1965 or so, and it created quite

a stir. Everyone said, "Why don't we have a pink Cadillac as the prize for the Top Director?" So I said, "Well, maybe we could do that." So that became the prize for the top director. The first year we gave one. The second year we decided to expand it to five and the third year to ten and the fourth year to twenty, and last year we opened it up to any director whose unit produced \$200,000 in retail sales during the year. That has become a symbol of reaching the very top peak of the ladder of success in our company.

Caruth: When did you start putting on the annual seminars?

Ash: The first year, 1964. We put it on in the warehouse with pink balloons and pink paper hung from the rafters of the warehouse. On that first one we had 200 in attendance, and I cooked chicken and dressing, salad, and cake for 200. After I cooked everything, I changed clothes and M.C.'d it. Then when everyone left I cleaned up the place. We really had no outside help. Last year's budget for seminar ran over \$400,000.

Caruth: There's been quite a change.

Ash: There's been quite a change, and I didn't cook the meal!

Caruth: What was the intent of the seminar? Is it the annual sales meeting or something equivalent?

Ash: It's the annual big event to reward and recognize the people who have done an outstanding job for the year. Awards are given to the Top Sales Person (queen of sales) and the Top Director, the Top Recruiter, and there are usually twenty or so in each category because you can't just recognize one person. It used to be that we recognized the top ten--the top ten in sales and recruiting and so forth. Now then adhering to the policy that we never have contests where just one or two persons win. Instead now we have six plateaus. If, for example, you have recruited twenty people during the year, then you are in what we call the queen's court. You know what you have to do to get in the queen's court--recruit twenty people. And it's a much better plan. I don't know why we didn't do this sooner. The very first year we had some thirty-four in one category where we normally would have had ten. I thought that was interesting. When we set plateau for them the numbers increased.

Caruth: Just expanding the opportunities?

Ash: Expanding the opportunity, and the opportunity to be recognized, too.

Caruth: You mentioned a minute ago something called Jamboree. What's that?

Ash: Jamborees are held in January, and the object of the Jamboree is to get the people back to work after Christmas. After a consultant is at home from the 15th of December through the first of the year, she finds out how nice it is just to be home. We found that we lost many people the first of the year because they really didn't get started back to work. They lost their bookings during that period of time because it's difficult to get people to hold shows during the holidays. Now we have contests for booking the week before Christmas and booking the week after Christmas. In January we start on our Jamborees, which is a motivational session and two or three days of classes. Instead of having them come to Dallas, since weather at that time of the year is usually very bad, we go to them. The entire staff travels to our branch locations and we have a Jamboree in each area. Now it takes us from the first part of January to the middle of February to get through all of them. We see more people that way than we would if we asked them to come to Dallas. The first of February sales really begin to perk up, and by March they are in full bloom.

Caruth: Where are these branch locations? I think you may have mentioned those the other day, but could you mention

them again?

Ash: Well, of course, Dallas, and then the second one is Los Angeles, then Atlanta, Piscataway, New Jersey, and Chicago. Merchandise is shipped, and we also have a training facility for consultants at each facility.

Caruth: Do the consultants and directors pay their own way to Jamborees, too?

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: Just like the seminars?

Ash: Yes. Again, with the feeling that if they pay their own way, they take full advantage of all that is offered to them.

Caruth: Is it true that if the woman wants to bring her husband she's got to pay for him, too?

Ash: Yes, she has to pay for him. As a matter of fact, we even charge a registration fee now of \$35 for each person attending

Caruth: Let me ask you about some potential plans for the future. You've seen the company grow very rapidly now in eleven years. What do you want to do from this point on?

Ash: Well, of course, considering that I am at this point a grandmother, I realize that one of these days I'm not going to be here. So what I'm trying to do is to create

a lot of people in my image who will carry on the philosophy of this company. I am speaking, of course, of our directors. So every director that I have contact with, I constantly reiterate the philosophy of the company and try to see to it that they are carrying on this go-give spirit and this Mary Kay philosophy that we've developed. One of these days when I'm no longer here I want our company to continue to grow, and this is, of course, my primary concern. Most company start each month by saying, "This is the goal we have to attain this month. This is our sales quota and we must do this." Well, Pope and I never set up a sales quota that we want to attain or anything like that. We constantly work day to day with people trying to help and inspire them. I know that sounds like a very low-keyed philosophy about what you want for the future, but that's the basis on which we work. Now down at the other end of the building you'll get what their financial projections are and what they want and the strange thing about it is that if we live up to our recruiting helping people down at this end, those sales happen!

Caruth: This is not to say now that you don't have an annual plan or something of that nature.

Ash: Of how many people we'd like to have?

Caruth: How many more people and how much more in sales.

Ash: We really don't.

Caruth: You really don't have that?

Ash: We really don't. We sort of operate on a very short-range basis at this end of the building--on what's happening now and taking care of the now problems, and not worrying about what's going to happen in the future. My faith is that if we take care of all the little, the big things will take care of themselves, and it has worked.

Caruth: Richard is probably making some of his own projections.

Ash: Yes, Richard can very accurately project what we're going to do at any given time based on our growth pattern.

Caruth: So your concern is with motivating the people.

Ash: Motivating people.

Caruth: Keeping the communication channels open.

Ash: Yes.

Caruth: Applying the personal touch.

Ash: Right, daily.

Caruth: Don't you think perhaps that's one of the things that has made this business so successful because you've been able to take the skills that you developed and accumulated over twenty-four years of direct sales and transfer those to a great number of people?

Ash: I think possibly this has had something to do with it. I hesitate to take credit for that because there have been a great number of people involved in it. But the basic ideas of how to motivate people and how to make them work successfully have been mine, yes.

Caruth: And I think perhaps that is one of the things that kills a lot of businesses trying to get started because the owner-manager cannot transfer the skills from himself to others.

Ash: That's true. As a matter of fact, we find that occasionally a director can recruit and sell herself, but apparently cannot teach others. Invariably she will have a failing unit. A unit fails if it falls below \$2,000 wholesale two months in succession. (We usually give the Director a third month if there are tennating circumstances.) It's a very sad day when this happens because she worked very hard to get there, and certainly doesn't want to relinquish her unit. But the check point is there for the simple reason that if she falls to that level, she doesn't even have eight people ordering out \$250 wholesale in a month, which means she really no longer has a functioning unit.

Caruth: There's actually then no point out in the field where you can stop and rest on laurels?

Ash: No. You've always got to be available when they need you, and you can lose a good person by simply not being available at a critical moment to inspire them or to help and encourage them. So, I guess, no, there's not really any point where you can sit back on your laurels.

Caruth: Which may be a very good thing in itself.

Ash: Yes, I think so.

Caruth: Let me ask you another question that's off the track of what we've been talking about. It involves entrepreneurship in the Southwest. As we look at our area, it would seem to me that we have more business being born and more businesses developing here than in possibly any other part of the country. Do you have any thoughts as to why this might be so?

Ash: Only by the fact that where anything has succeeded, where they've seen other entrepreneurs begin a business and succeed, you might be inspired to think of something that you would like to do on your own. If you put a successful gasoline station on one corner, it usually isn't long before there's one on each corner. I believe a woman or a man can do anything he or she want to do if they want to do it badly enough, and they're willing to pay the price--and there is a price. You can't just work eight hours a day. The thing that separates executives

from the rest of the world, is the fact that the average executive puts in many, many more than that required eight hours a day. I often go home and work several hours at home on some project.

Caruth: Let me throw out another kind of disjointed question-- disjointed because it's off track from some of the others. What do you think about opportunities for women in business today versus say ten years ago?

Ash: Well, if you read the publications from the Washington Bureau of Standards and other sources, you find that even though women seem to be succeeding as never before men's salaries have been raised to keep up with the rising inflation rate, while women's salaries are not being raised accordingly. The man who was making \$5,000 ten years ago now makes \$10,000, \$11,000, or \$12,000, whereas the same woman who was making at that point \$3,000 or \$4,000 is now making, say, \$7,000 or \$8,000 at the most. As a result, her salary has not really risen enough to take care of the inflationary rate. I read an article the other day put out by Washington that said that we were really back where we were in 1930 from a percentage basis. We really haven't gotten very far after all, and though women today are able to get into

some occupations today that they formerly couldn't fill the salary rate is generally less than for a male. Do you see any really great number of women who are being put into jobs that they didn't formerly hold? In this particular company women make more than the men, but it's probably one of the few in America where that is actually true.

Caruth: In fact, you have almost a token male or two around (laughter).

Ash: Right. Yes, we have a few males in the organization. One man said one day, "You're going to have to rewrite your literature. It's all female." And I said, "Well, not until the percentage is much greater." And I really don't think that will ever happen because this is just not a male-oriented business. I, of course, have as my assistant Erma Thompson, a woman, naturally. Richard, when he needed an assistant chose a man, naturally. From the administration standpoint, during these past eleven years men have been much more accessible than women for those jobs. So we've wound up with a staff of male executives here because Richard has had most of the job of expanding from the administrative end, and naturally chose men. From the sales department end it is true

that women like to listen to men. They really do. Pope gets across to them beautifully, and then Pope hired as his assistant, of course, another man, who also has a great deal of empathy with women, and they like him very much. And I think that it's a good mixture from the sales department standpoint of having both men and women in staff. Erma does a very wonderful job of assisting me on all the phone calls that come in each day. You can imagine with 33,000 people now we get a multitude of calls daily. She can handle lots of the little problems and knows exactly what I would say to them. Then we have a Customer Relations Department headed by Donna Angot, who has grown up with the business, too, and she in my eyes is comparable with Erma Thompson. She has a whole staff of women to assist her. They solve any customer or consultant problem that comes their way. There's a staff of eleven of them. So . . . I guess looking at it from that standpoint we have a mixture of both men and women running the organization.

Caruth: Let me ask you one final question. If you were doing it all over, what things would you do differently?

Ash: I really can't think of a thing. You see, the whole thing was very carefully thought out before we began--to

try to do things differently than they had ever been done before. Most of them have worked so beautifully that it would be stupid to change them.

Caruth: There is a lot of satisfaction in that, isn't there?

Ash: Yes, there is. One of the hardest things I had to learn when I started this business was that I didn't have to ask anybody's permission to try my ideas. I would find myself thinking, "Well, let's see, I'd better take this to . . ." And then I would think, "I don't have to take it to anybody. If I want to do this I can." It was a sense of great satisfaction: For the first time in my life not to have to ask anybody else if I could do something I thought was good. I could just start implementing the thing and get it done.

Caruth: Thank you.