

FORGOTTEN FIRST LADY: THE LIFE, RISE, AND SUCCESS OF DOROTHY SHAVER,
PRESIDENT OF LORD & TAYLOR DEPARTMENT STORE, AND
AMERICA'S "FIRST LADY OF RETAILING"

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In 1945, Lord & Taylor Department Store, a \$35 million company, and one of New York's premier retailers, elected Dorothy Shaver president, making her the first female elected to a large US corporation. Shaver rose through the corporate ranks as a communications executive. She was first Head of the store's Comparison Shopping Bureau in 1924, was then elected to its board of directors in 1927, became a vice president in 1931, a first vice president in 1937, and then was elected president in 1945. She served in this capacity until her sudden death in 1959. Her innovations in publicity, promotions, merchandising, and advertising brought her to the attention of management, other retailers, and industry leaders in the United States and abroad. She popularized many trends that form the basis of fashion and fashion retailing as it is known today. This study provides a biographical account of her life, documents her rise through the corporate ranks, and discusses her accomplishments. It also discusses keys to her success, important influences in her life, her leadership style, and gender effects on leadership.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to every woman who has, whether knowingly or unknowingly, suffered an inequity, disparity, or injustice, simply because she was a woman.

This is to all of us.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSC	Dorothy Shaver Collection
DSP	Dorothy Shaver Papers
NMAH	National Museum of American History, Archives Center, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC
SLRI	Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, Boston, MA

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: SHE WAS THE "BEST MAN FOR THE JOB"	1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	10
The Status of Women Managers and Executives in the United States	10
Leadership and Gender	13
Effective Leadership and Leadership Styles	15
Effective Leadership Associated with Transformational Style	21
Do Women Have a Slight Advantage?	21
Accounting for the Difference: Biases and Stereotypes	25
Comparative Studies	31
Women and Leadership Studies in Public Relations and Advertising	39
CHAPTER 3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	43
CHAPTER 4 METHOD	45
CHAPTER 5 FROM ARKANSAS TO NEW YORK: THE STAGE WAS SET	51
Samuel Wallace Reyburn.....	61
Lord & Taylor Dept. Store: “The Jewel of Associated Dry Goods”	64
The Rise of the Department Store: Cathedrals of Commerce.....	67
The Rapidly-Development Garment Industry: Clothing the Masses	68
A Burgeoning Communications Center	70

What New York Did Not Have.....	71
CHAPTER 6 "THE SHAVER TOUCH"	75
Rising Through the Ranks.....	75
The Re-branding of Lord & Taylor: From Dowdy to Chic	86
The American Designer Movement and the “American Look” Campaign	97
Lord & Taylor Public Relations: A Gold Standard.....	117
End of An Era.....	133
CHAPTER 7 REFLECTIONS ON “AMERICA’S FIRST LADY OF RETAILING” ...	141
Significance of Her Accomplishments.....	141
Keys to Success.....	151
A Copycat?.....	171
Shaver and Men: “Thought Has no Sex”	179
CHAPTER 8 SHAVER IN COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE	185
Task Orientation Versus Human Orientation.....	185
“Pink” Versus “Blue”	185
Type of Industry	190
Leadership style	191
Shaver’s Path to Power	201
Hennig, Jardim, and Hackman’s Combined Studies of Female Executives ...	202
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION.....	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	223
APPENDIX A FEMALE CEOS ON THE FORTUNE 500, 2009.....	237
APPENDIX B DOROTHY SHAVER - HONORS, AWARDS, AND SERVICE	238

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION:
SHE WAS THE "BEST MAN FOR THE JOB"

On December 19, 1945, the board of directors of Associated Dry Goods elected Dorothy Shaver, an employee of twenty-one years, and a woman, to be president of their best-producing subsidiary, Lord & Taylor Department Store.¹ “The Associated Directors, in the act of voting Miss Shaver into the presidency, are supposed to have congratulated themselves on picking the best man for the job,” it was reported in tongue-in-cheek fashion.”² The election of Dorothy Shaver was heralded as stunning, and “a breathtaking first for Fifth Avenue.”³ Her increased profile drew attention to her work and accomplishments such that she was named by the Associated Press as Outstanding Businesswoman in both 1946 and 1947, and *Life* named her “No. 1 Career Woman” in 1947.⁴

Shaver proved to be an effective leader. She ascended to the top leadership position of one of the foremost retail establishments of the time, on one of the most prestigious shopping

¹ "Shaver to Head Lord & Taylor, Hoving Resigns" *New York Herald Tribune*, December 20, 1945, A1; Time, "Business and Finance: Extra Special," December 3, 1934, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,930004-1,00.html> (accessed December 18, 2008).

² Jeanne Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," *Life*, May 12, 1947, 126.

³ Smithsonian Institute, "Four Women who Excelled in Business: Dorothy Shaver," <http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/WIB-tour/mainMovie.html> (accessed May 20, 2008).

⁴ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman." 116+.

streets in the world – New York’s Fifth Avenue. She climbed the corporate ladder as a communications executive. With energy and excitement, she raced through each of her posts in quick succession, leaving a trail of innovations in retail merchandising, advertising, and public relations behind her. Her work has left a legacy that has affected industry standards across the worlds of merchandising, retailing, and advertising. Her first supervisory position was in 1924 as Head of Comparison Shopping, a department devoted to scouting out the competition. In response, she created a new type of bureau, one that would focus on customer and product research instead of competitor research. This set a new trend in retailing. By 1927, only three years later, she was asked to serve as a member on Lord & Taylor’s board of directors. In this capacity, she staged a furniture and decorative exhibit in the new style of French modernism that helped to usher in the modernist movement in the US and changed the taste of the American public in furnishings. On February 27, 1931, she became the vice president over style and publicity, overseeing much of the merchandising, advertising, and public relations functions of the store. In this capacity, she turned heads with her theatrical window displays, instituted new forms of advertising with her airy layouts and artistic renderings, and created smiles with her fresh style of promotions that came to be known as “The Shaver Touch.”⁵ On January 9, 1937, she became a first vice president in charge of advertising, fashion, promotion, public relations, and display programs “having complete charge of advertising [and] promotion, [and] projecting the store in the public’s mind.”⁶

⁵ "Store Elects Miss Shaver: Made Lord & Taylor Vice President, Became Director in 1927," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 28, 1931, 17.

⁶ "Miss Shaver First Vice President," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 10, 1937, 59; Allene Talmey, "No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor, Unorthodox Store Strategist," *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 198.

As a result of her innovations, she successfully re-branded Lord & Taylor to a chic and modern image, bringing it out of its elite but dowdy past, and putting it on par with the most modern and progressive stores of its day. The store was able to keep pace with, and often surpass the likes of Saks, Macy's, and Bonwit Teller. She jettisoned passed her competitors in merchandising innovations, including the focus toward consumer research, popularization of the personal shopper concept, and a turn toward more attention-getting window displays. Lord & Taylor, under Shaver's influence, was the first retailer in New York to use electric lighting for display and to serve light lunches for busy shoppers. Shaver also pioneered the model for the suburban branch store that would rise to popularity during the middle part of the twentieth century. She was credited with developing the concept of shops within shops, being among the first to have a petites section, college section, and teen department. Lord & Taylor was the first department store to have a separate department for girls aged seven to fifteen.⁷ These innovations, among others, led her to being fondly named America's "First Lady of Retailing."

Her trail-blazing efforts were not limited to Fifth Avenue. She had a global vision. She felt that the United States could have a fashion industry on par with Paris in quality, scope, and profitability. To this end, she devoted a significant portion of her career to encouraging and supporting American designers. She did this by giving domestic designers a platform at Lord & Taylor to show their styles, and by nurturing art and design institutions such as the Costume Institute and Parsons School of Design. She would become known as the most consistent and persistent force for the development of American design. She also instituted the American Look campaign, a fashion promotion that introduced a unique style for American women. This style was copied the world over, further entrenching American design in the global marketplace.

⁷ Virginia Pope, "Floor Set Aside for Junior Girl: Her Wardrobe Needs From Head to Toe Amply Provided For in Display," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1947, 18.

Her enthusiasm, ideas, energy, and creativity won her the confidence and the vote of corporate executives at Associate Dry Goods. They first elected her as president of Lord & Taylor, and six months later, they asked her to also serve with them on the board of the parent company. As president, she oversaw the company through an unprecedented period of growth and expansion. She supervised the opening of seven branch stores located in the northeast from Washington, DC, to Connecticut. Under her influence and direction, Lord & Taylor received distinction as a leading retailing establishment, bringing the company from \$30 million in sales in 1945 to \$100 million in sales in 1959, a 225 percent growth in fourteen years. This was the highest rate of growth in that period among New York's major retailers.⁸

Shaver was applauded by manufacturers, retailers, business leaders, publishers, politicians, designers, diplomats, women's groups, and public relations and advertising executives alike for her advertising, marketing, and promotions techniques, the re-branding of Lord & Taylor, her impact on the world of fashion, and for her pioneering position as an early elected female executive of a major multi-million-dollar US corporation. She received many awards and citations in recognition of her accomplishments including citations from the Public Relations Society of America, Advertising Federation, American Schools and Colleges Association, American Woman's Association, Society of New York Dress Designers, and The New York Board of Trade, among others. Awards also came from outside the country. The French honored her with the Chevalier French Legion of Honor in 1950 for her contribution to

⁸ In these years, Bonwit Teller showed an increase of 100 percent in sales from 1946 to 1959 (\$17.1 to \$33.9 million), Macy's 85 percent (\$255 million to \$472 million), and Saks/Gimbel Brothers 65 percent (\$230 million to \$384 million) as cited in *Moody's Manuals on Microfiche: 1909 to Present*, Moody's Investors Service, Inc. New York, 1981; *1946 Moody's Manual of Investments American and Foreign Industrial Securities*, John Sherman Porter, Editor, text-fiche, pp. 18, 1518, 1600; *1959 Moody's Manual of Investments American and Foreign Industrial Securities*, John Sherman Porter, Editor, text-fiche, pp. 851, 2153, 2842.

spreading their art and fashions in the United States. Italy presented her with the Star of Solidarity in 1954 for promoting Italian fashion and strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

Toward the end of her life she came to the attention of the academic community and was awarded six honorary doctorates including degrees from New York University, Syracuse University, and Bates, Lafayette, Russell Sage, and Wheaton Colleges.

Shaver served Lord & Taylor and the fashion industry until her sudden death of a stroke in 1959. *The New York Post* wrote, “the death of Dorothy Shaver has closed one of the most brilliant merchandising careers ever achieved by a woman.”⁹

Since her death, she has received little recognition or study, and has only been rarely or briefly mentioned in the press. The most significant mention in the press was in 1993 when she was named by the *New York Times* as one of fifty people who mattered most to the business of fashion.¹⁰

Shaver’s work and activities were well-covered by major newspapers and magazines of her day, but none of those treatments provided formal analysis or study. Even though she has received mention in newspaper and magazine articles since her death in 1959, these mentions are brief, sporadic, and becoming fewer with time. There are references to her in many biographical sources such as *Who’s Who of American Women*, *Who’s Who in Commerce and Industry*, *Contemporary American Business Leaders*, *Dictionary of Women Worldwide*, *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, and *Women in World History*.

⁹ “Death Ends Top Store Career,” *New York Post*, June 29, 1959, 26.

¹⁰ “50 Who Mattered Most,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 24, 1993, SM122.

There are few, if any, sources of serious study. There has been no biography written about her, although one is in process. There is no analysis or in-depth treatment of her trade or industry literature. She has been the focus of scholarly study on only a few occasions. First, she was included in a study of 1,000 influential leaders of the twentieth century that attempted to provide descriptive analysis of some of the nation's leaders; however, she is not the primary focus of the study. There are two graduate studies, one in which she is the focus, and the other in which she is discussed, but both discuss her impact on the world of fashion only.¹¹ Shaver's influence reaches beyond the world of fashion and into the worlds of communication, feminism, and business. There are no studies of her in these fields. Also, there is no holistic work with Shaver as the focus, that discusses the totality of all of her achievements across these multiple disciplines, and that analyzes the reasons for her success.

Shaver is an important focus of study to communication scholars because she rose to the top post through the vehicle of marketing communications, more specifically advertising and public relations. Public relations has been deemed to be one of the three "dead-end 'R' departments" that limits career advancement for women, along with IR (investor relations), and HR (human resources).¹² Additionally, women in communications history have been

¹¹ Tiffany Webber-Hanchett, "Dorothy Shaver: Promoter of the American Look," *Dress (USA)*, (January 2003): 80-90; Rebecca J. Robinson, "American Sportswear: A Study of the Origins and Women Designers from the 1930's to the 1960's," M.Des. diss., University of Cincinnati, In Dissertations & Theses: Full Text.

¹² Patricia Sellers, "The 50 Most Powerful Women in American Business," CNNMoney.com, October 12, 1998, http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1998/10/12/249284/index.htm (accessed April 12, 2008).

understudied, not well documented, and not adequately represented in public relations textbooks.¹³

Shaver is important to feminist scholars because she gained the top spot of a major corporation at a time when it was virtually unheard of for a woman to occupy this position. She achieved an executiveship between the first wave of feminism in the early part of the century, and the second wave of feminism in the 1970s. She shattered the glass ceiling before the term was even invented. Similarly, she was addressed as *Miss* Shaver simply because the option of *Ms.* was not yet available to her. But in spite of the major feminist movements just prior to her emergence and shortly after her exit, she has received no recognition, acclaim, or attention from those in the feminist movement, nor has she been the object of any study by feminist scholars. As noted by columnist James Brady, “For post-feminists, Miss Shaver ... should rightly be something of an icon. Yet, she’s almost never mentioned, and probably only vaguely recalled.”¹⁴

Shaver is important to business scholars because she was the first female elected to a major, multi-million-dollar-company in the United States. The only other known possible exception is Mary Dillon, president of Brooklyn Borough Gas Company, who came to her post in 1926 and who oversaw budgets of two to three million dollars versus Shaver’s budgets of \$35 million to \$100 million.¹⁵ In the world of department stores there was certainly none her equal.

¹³ Karla Gower, “Rediscovering Women in Public Relations,” *Journalism History* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 14-22.

¹⁴ James Brady, "Retail Name Doesn't Register," *Crain's New York Business News* 19, no. 32 (August 11, 2003): 9.

¹⁵ Mary Dillon started with Brooklyn Borough Gas Company in 1903 as an entry-level employee, became a vice president in 1924, and then president in 1926. There is no evidence to suggest she had family ties to the business. She served as president until her retirement in 1949 as cited in "Woman Gas Head Started as "Boy": President Mary E. Dillon of Brooklyn Borough Company, Who Rose From Ranks, Has Specialized in Relations With the Public," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 28, 1926; Leonard Lyons, The Lyons Den, *The Washington*

Beatrice Fox Auerbach directed the very successful G. Fox & Co. Department Store in Hartford, CT; however, the store was family-owned and Auerbach attained her position by virtue of being the granddaughter of the founder. Mary Lewis was the vice president of advertising and promotion at Best & Co., starting in 1929; however, Best & Co. was not as prestigious as Lord & Taylor, and Lewis was never CEO (chief executive officer).¹⁶ Hattie Carnegie and Jane Engel were both extremely successful designers who each opened their own very successful dress shops; however, they started their own businesses and were not elected to their posts. Shaver was simply in a class by herself. To contextualize Shaver's career achievements, at the time she was elected president in 1945, only about 30 percent of women were in the labor force, and they were earning about fifty-five cents per hour as compared to a man's average wage of one dollar per hour.¹⁷ Shaver was named the highest paid business woman of 1946, earning a salary of \$110,000. By 1959, she was earning closer to \$125,000 annually.

Shaver's life and accomplishments deserve study because forty years after her death we are still asking questions about how to break barriers, deal with discrimination, gain power and influence, and overcome adversity. Shaver's life provides an interesting case study.

Post (1877-1954), May 6, 1949; Mary E. Dillon, *Annual Reports to the Stockholders of Brooklyn Borough Gas Company, 1919-1933* (New York: Brooklyn Borough Gas, [1919-1933]).

¹⁶ Lewis was elected to the directorate of Best & Co. in 1929 at the age of 32 as cited in "Milestones: May 27, 1929," *Time*, May 27, 1929, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,927946,00.html> (accessed June 4, 2009); Lewis earned a salary of \$44,266 in 1934, to make her the highest paid businesswoman of that particular year as cited in Stephen R. Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 290.

¹⁷ NASA Quest, "Female Frontiers," NASA, <http://quest.nasa.gov/space/frontiers/activities/womanswork/chart.html> (accessed March 15, 2008).

An extensive literature review will examine women in management in the US. It will discuss academic and industry scholarship about women as leaders. It will investigate the traditional path to power in the early to middle of the century when Shaver was rising through the ranks. It will also introduce some key studies about female managers during Shaver's time. This information will provide background and will serve as a comparison to apply to Shaver's case.

The findings will include a biographical account of Shaver's life, career, and accomplishments. This will be followed by a discussion of factors for her success, her leadership style, the effects of gender on her leadership, and key influences in her life.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study includes a review, synopsis, and synthesis of literature from both key trade and scholarly sources across a number of subject areas. It includes the following areas of discussion:

- a review and brief history of the status of women managers and executives in the United States
- scholarship on what is effective leadership
- scholarship about the effects of gender on leadership
- a discussion of predictors and pathways to positions of power in the middle of the twentieth century
- characteristics of successful female managers mid-century
- a review of the scholarship about women and leadership in public relations and advertising

Information from each of these six areas provides foundational understanding to Shaver's rise, leadership, keys to her success, and the significance of her accomplishments.

The Status of Women Managers and Executives in the United States

The presence of women at the highest levels of business has been, and continues to be, relatively rare. According to Catalyst, a leading research organization that has been documenting the status of women in business since 1995, women represent almost half the work force, but

their numbers become increasingly disparate the higher up the corporate ladder one travels. Women represent about 46 percent of the labor force, 50 percent of management and professional jobs, 16 percent of corporate officers, hold 14 percent of board seats, have 9 percent of the top titles on boards, represent 6 percent of the top earners in corporate America, and represent only 1.6 percent of all CEOs.¹

Gains have been slow since 1972 when Katharine Graham of *The Washington Post*, became the first woman on the Fortune 500.² By 2002, there were a total of six female CEOs on the *Fortune 500*; in 2005, there were eight; in 2008 there were eighteen, and as of this writing there are fifteen (see Appendix B for the most recent listing).³ Gains have been equally slow in the acquisition of directorships by women. Currently, women represent only about 15 percent of the directors on the *Fortune 500*.⁴ In 1995, women held 9.6 percent of corporate officer

¹ Catalyst, “2005 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners of the Fortune 500,” http://www.heidrick.com/NR/rdonlyres/30308A4B-614C-439E-8D53-29A073872D2D/0/CTLYST_2005WCOTECensusExecSum.pdf (accessed March 30, 2008).

² Some of the early women on the Fortune 500 include Linda Wachner of Warnaco who took the company public in 1991 although she had been CEO since 1986. She became the second female CEO on the Fortune 500; Carly Fiorina was appointed CEO of Hewlett Packard in 1999; Betsy Holden was appointed CEO of Kraft Foods in 2000, and Anne Mulcahy became Chairman and CEO of Xerox Corp. in 2001. More recent appointments include Brenda Barnes of Sara Lee in 2005, Indra Nooyi of Pepsico in 2006, and Angela Braly of WellPoint in 2007.

³ Catalyst, “2002 Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners;” <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/174/2002-catalyst-census-of-women-corporate-officers-and-top-earners-of-the-fortune-500> (accessed March 30, 2008); Catalyst, “2005 Catalyst Census;” Fortune, “Women CEOs,” CNNMoney.com, <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2009/womenceos/> (accessed June 2, 2009).

⁴ Catalyst, “2008 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners of the Fortune 500,” http://www.catalyst.org/file/241/08_census_cote_final.pdf (accessed May 10, 2009).

positions; in 2002 it was 15 percent, and it has remained fairly steady since that time.⁵ Women are particularly having difficulty breaking in as *inside directors*, often the steppingstone to the CEO post. Women have consistently represented only about 1 percent of the insider directors on the *Fortune 500*.⁶

This dearth of women in top management positions has been dubbed *the glass ceiling*, defined as the “transparent barrier that [keeps] women from rising above a certain level in corporations.”⁷ Exactly what constitutes the glass ceiling or why women often have difficulty rising above a certain level, has been a source of interest, debate, and scholarly study. Catalyst has determined that there are three distinct barriers that impede women’s quest for corporate executorships. It proposes that the major reasons are lack of role models, exclusion from male-dominated informal networks, and gender-based stereotyping.⁸

Women are being accepted as leaders in society, but very slowly. Studies show that most people prefer men in leadership positions, that very few prefer women in leadership positions, and that more and more people, over time, are indicating that they have no preference.⁹

⁵ Catalyst, “Women in US Management,” March 2009, <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/207/women-in-management-1950-present> (accessed May 10, 2009).

⁶ Directors and Boards, “Women as Directors,” September 22, 2004, http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-4219727/Women-as-directors-the-inside.html (accessed March 20, 2008).

⁷ Ann Morrison, Randall White, and Ellen Van Velsor, *Breaking the Glass Ceiling* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1987), 13.

⁸ Catalyst, “2005 Catalyst Census.”

⁹ George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Public Opinion 2002* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc. 2003), 140.

As women have increasingly made their presence felt in more management positions, albeit slowly, scholars are asking about the effects of the female presence on leadership, and whether women make more effective leaders.¹⁰

Leadership and Gender

Do women make better leaders than men? Do women lead differently than men? Do they have any advantage in the arena of leadership over men? As of this date, there is no strong, solid, and consistent evidence to suggest that women make better leaders (or that they make worse leaders), that they lead very much differently, or that they have any huge advantage (although there may be a possible slight advantage for women). There is, however, good indication that women are just as effective leaders, that gender diversity in leadership positions is good for business, and that the presence of women in leadership positions is positively associated with company performance and profitability.¹¹ We also know that women are no less qualified psychologically than men for leadership.¹²

The question about gender and leadership is difficult because the foundational concept of leadership has been built on a largely “male” concept. Scholars admit that the study of gender and leadership is predicated upon, and guided by, masculine norms as the standard.¹³ “Most organizations have been created by and for men and are based on male experiences ...

¹⁰ Women in management began to be tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1950.

¹¹ Roy D. Adler, “Women in the Executive Suite Correlate to High Profits,” European Project on Equal Pay, Pepperdine University, http://www.equalpay.nu/docs/en/adler_web.pdf (accessed April 12, 2008).

¹² Harry Tkach, “The Female Executive,” *Managing*, no. 1 (January 1, 1980): 25.

¹³ Luba Chliwniak, “Higher Education Leadership: Analyzing the Gender Gap, *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* 25, no. 4 (1997): 5.

Organizational definitions of competence and leadership is still predicated on traits stereotypically associated with men: tough, aggressive, and decisive.”¹⁴

Not only is the concept of leadership wrapped up with the concept of “maleness,” the system of management that has evolved in organizations has been created, developed, and populated by males, making both the formal and informal structure of management rooted in the male experience.

In most organizations, the informal system of relationships finds both its origins and present function in the male culture and in the male experience ... This cannot be viewed as either good or bad. It is real. Men founded and developed the vast majority of organizations that we know. Men made them places where they could work and live and their settings were intended to be both comfortable and familiar. And if organizations in general are dominated by a male culture, then we need to note that at the management level, and particularly in its higher ranks, the informal system is truly a bastion of the male life-style.¹⁵

Male managers define management in masculine terms and many theories of leadership have been constructed with stereotypically masculine terms.¹⁶ Researchers point out that in view of an inherently “male” construct of leadership, it is difficult to fetter out, or distinguish, the “male” from the “female.”

If we are examining something which by definition is conceptually wrapped in the concept of being “male,” and if we are studying it against the tapestry of what is “male,” it is inevitable that we will continually come to the foregone conclusion that leadership *is* male, that

¹⁴ Debra E. Meyerson and Joyce K. Fletcher, “A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling,” in *Harvard Business Review on Women in Business* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 74.

¹⁵ Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, *The Managerial Woman* (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), 13.

¹⁶ O. C. Brenner, Joseph Tomkiewicz and Virginia Ellen Schein, “The Relationship Between Sex Role Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics Revisited,” *Academy of Management Journal* 32, no. 3 (September 1989): 662.

effective leadership is *also* male, that female is *not* male, therefore female is *not* leadership and females *cannot* be effective leaders. The measuring stick itself provides the foregone conclusion. This becomes a challenge for scholars.

Effective Leadership and Leadership Styles

Leadership is traditionally defined as “the ability to influence others” and *effective* leadership is evaluated “in terms of organisational [sic] outcomes.”¹⁷ Thus, a leader who is *effective* is one who can influence others toward the achievement of organizational goals.

Early studies of leadership focused on individual characteristics, or traits, to produce *trait* theories. This evolved to the study of behaviors and priorities to produce *style* theories. This was followed by consideration of situation or context to produce *contingency* theories. Most recent scholarship has focused on *style* theories.

A number of different styles of leadership have been identified such as transactional, participative, transformational, democratic, authoritarian, pluralist, and laissez-faire. These have been subsumed into three main categories of style – *transactional*, *transformational* and *laissez-faire*.¹⁸

Transactional leadership styles are those that approach leadership as task-oriented and concerned with structuring. They are highly directive and concerned with rules, policies,

¹⁷ Judith Dwyer, *The Business Communication Handbook* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1993), 552; Andrew Hede, “Integrated Leadership: Multiple Styles for Maximal Effectiveness,” in *Leadership in the Antipodes; Findings, Implications and a Leader Profile*, ed. K. Parry (Wellington, New Zealand: Institute of Policy Studies Centre for the Study of Leadership, 2001), 7.

¹⁸ James M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

guidelines, and deadlines. The transactional leadership style is one that is more conventional in the sense that it encompasses a range of behaviors that is predicated upon an exchange relationship. Leaders utilizing a transactional style will identify specific outcomes for an employee's performance, for example, clarify motives, monitor subordinates, provide rewards for behaviors or achievements deemed "good" and correct other behaviors that are counter-productive to achieving organizational goals.

Transformational styles are those that are directed at gaining trust and inspiring confidence. Transformational styles are associated with supporting functions and have a focus on human dynamics. They include such concepts as leading by example, mentoring, coaching, participation, collaboration, motivation, creativity, innovation in achieving company goals, encouraging, empowering, and some would include the concept of *charisma* in this set.¹⁹

The structural or task orientation associated with transactional leadership, and the supporting or human orientation associated with transformational leadership, are often viewed as independent. To measure them, a profile would assess someone as either 'high' or 'low' on each.²⁰ These styles can be identified through administration of the Management Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) instrument. This instrument is completed by observers. The results are tallied to indicate whether, and to what degree, a leader is perceived as transactional or transformational.

There is a stream of leadership research that extends the concept of transformational leadership. *Servant leadership* is a concept developed by Robert Greenleaf, a former director of

¹⁹ Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

²⁰ Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, *The Managerial Grid III: Key to Leadership Excellence* (Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1985).

management research at AT&T. In his position as director of research, he studied how leaders emerged in organizations and identified a style of leading he called *servant leadership*.²¹ In contrast to leadership styles that are meant to exert power and control, servant leaders are motivated by a desire to serve others and empower others to complete organizational goals. Greenleaf coined the term in 1970. He describes it as a form of values-based leadership designed to empower others. At the core of his theory is that servant leadership is more about *earned* versus *hierarchical* leadership. A servant leader is one whose primary purpose in leading is to serve others by investing in them, contributing to their growth and development, and working toward a common good. Servant leaders, according to Greenleaf, lead out of a desire to serve -- in other words, they lead from the heart. For them, it is as much an *attitude* as it is a style of leadership. The concept came to Greenleaf as a result of reading a short novel, *Journey to the East*, in which a group of people on a mythical journey recognize the true leader as the one who has performed acts of service and has been self-sacrificing to the benefit of the entire group.²² Greenleaf identifies ten core competencies of servant leaders. According to Greenleaf, servant leaders have many of the following characteristics:

- a desire to build community and to foster a sense of purpose within members
- a sense of responsibility, care, and concern toward the company and toward those around them
- an ability to re-frame negative circumstances into positive expectations

²¹ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership, A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

²² Hermann Hesse, *Journey to the East*, trans. Hilda Rosner (New York: Picador, 1956).

- a commitment to the growth and development of others, and a belief that people have intrinsic value beyond the duties they perform for the company
- a desire to promote psychological and emotional health and healing
- empathy and tolerance for imperfections and failures undergirded by a belief that others operate from primarily good intentions and want to grow and develop
- good listening skills
- the ability to conceptualize and articulate vision with passion
- the skill to convince versus coerce (positive persuasion)
- the ability to plan and think ahead and have a certain intuitiveness
- awareness of self and others

As research on servant leadership developed, these competencies became collapsed into three categories -- *thinking* (listening, persuasion, foresight, forward-thinking), *doing* (healing, stewardship, creating community), and *feeling* (empathy, awareness, commitment to others) in the metaphor of *head*, *hands*, and *heart*.²³ Stewart van Graan, CEO of Dell South Africa, claimed to have a servant leadership management style. "My management philosophy is what they call servant leadership and I think one of my key strengths is getting the best out of people. Use your *head* to guide what you know, your *hands* for what you do and your *heart* for how you feel and

²³ Ken Rhodes, "The Servant Leader: Does Gender Make a Difference?" Resultants Int'l. http://www.eresultants.com/powerofservant_leadership.html (accessed May 10, 2008).

you can't go wrong," he stated.²⁴ Deborah DeHaas, Midwest regional managing partner of Deloitte and Touch, has also been linked to the servant leadership style of managing.²⁵

Servant leadership was first discussed in business and trade journals, and then touted by leadership gurus such as Ken Blanchard, Stephen Covey, and Warren Bennis. It was successfully marketed and promoted through the *Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership* in Indianapolis, IN. The concept eventually made its way into academic journals. Empirical studies followed. There are about 21,000 citations, mostly in trade journals.²⁶ Academic discussions have included such topics as theoretical models, conceptual frameworks, measurement, and factor analysis.²⁷

Studies have shown that servant leadership overlaps somewhat with the transformational model but with some subtle distinctions, and that there are correlations between perceptions of the servant leadership model with organizational trust and leader trust.²⁸

²⁴ Stewart van Graan, "A Servant Leadership Style," South Africa's Leading Managers, <http://www.leadingmanagers.co.za/pdf/LM%20DELL.pdf> (accessed May 10, 2008).

²⁵ P. H. Werhane, M. Posig, L. Gundry, L. Ofstein and E. Powell, "A Servant Leader in Values and Actions: Deborah L. DeHaas," in *Women in Business: The Changing Face of Leadership*, 85-92, eds. Werhane et al., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007). Interestingly, DeHaas is sister to Betsy Holden, CEO of Kraft Foods from 2001 to 2005, and an early female CEO on the *Fortune 500*.

²⁶ Deborah Eicher-Catt, "The Myth of Servant Leadership: A Feminist Perspective," *Women & Language* 28, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 17-25.

²⁷ John E. Barbuto and Daniel W. Wheeler, "Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership," *Group & Organization Management* 31, no. 3 (June 1, 2006): 300-26.

²⁸ Brien N. Smith, Ray V. Montagno and Tatiana N. Kuzmenko, "Transformational and Servant Leadership: Content and Contextual Comparisons," *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 10, no. 4 (Spring 2004): 80-91; Errol E. Joseph and Bruce E. Winston, "A Correlation of Servant Leadership, Leader Trust and Organizational Trust," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 26, no. 1 (2005): 6-22.

With regard to leadership and gender, proponents of servant leadership claim that it can serve to feminize leadership since the majority of the core components of servant leadership can be viewed as having a female gender-bias but that, at its core, "servant-leadership is gender neutral because true service is genderless and true leadership is gender blind."²⁹ One detractor calls servant leadership a "myth" that only further entrenches patriarchal norms.³⁰ Eicher-Catt argues, from a linguistic perspective, that by juxtaposing the terms, 'servant' and 'leader,' and depending upon who is leading, and depending upon which portion of the word pairing one decides to emphasize in any context, one can simply further entrench control by stipulating who is the 'leader,' (and therefore, by association, who is dominant, usually a male) and who is the 'servant,' (and therefore submissive and inferior, usually a female). However, the originators of servant-leadership envisioned this word pairing as a single unit – that is, a servant leader is one who leads by serving others. Servant-leading is not associated with inferiority, weakness, or non-dominance, but rather, it is a mark of strength. However, Eicher-Catt's observation, that the term could be misused to entrench power and manipulate gendered connotations, is noted.

The final style of leadership, laissez-faire, is one that is essentially 'hands-off.' Supervisors exhibit "an overall failure to take responsibility for managing."³¹

²⁹ Rhodes, "The Servant Leader," paragraph #11.

³⁰ Eicher-Catt, "The Myth of Servant Leadership," 17.

³¹ Alice H. Eagly, "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (March 2007): 2.

Effective Leadership Associated with Transformational Style

Studies show that *effective* leadership is most often associated with transformational leadership styles, either a purely transformational style or, at the very least, a mix of styles that includes elements of the transformational style. A meta-analysis of eighty-seven studies showed an association between transformational styles and leadership effectiveness. This is also anecdotally noted by business people industry.³² The laissez-faire style is not a style that has been linked to effectiveness.

Do Women Have a Slight Advantage?

Studies about the effects of gender on leadership behaviors are scattered, inconsistent, and inconclusive. There are some studies that suggest gender differences and there are some studies that suggest no gender differences.³³ Hall-Taylor (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of leadership and gender studies from 1972-1996 which tested across a number of predetermined variables such as assertiveness, motivation, performance, problem-solving, and self-confidence, and found that there were largely no gender effects across these variables. In the few cases of studies that showed gender effects, the effects were only marginal. The most marked difference was one

³² Kevin B. Lowe and K. Galen Kroek, "Effectiveness Correlates of Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A Meta-Analytic Review of the MLQ Literature," *Leadership Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1996): 385-425; Alice H. Eagly, "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage,"³.

³³ Vanessa Urch Druskat, "Gender and Leadership Style: Transformational and Transactional Leadership in the Roman Catholic Church," *Leadership Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 99-119; Marloes L. van Engen, Rien van der Leeden and Tinneke M. Willemsen, "Gender, Context and Leadership Styles," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 74, no. 5 (December 2001): 581-98. For example, the former shows female leaders as exhibiting significantly more transformational behaviors than males, the latter showed no differences.

that showed a substantial difference on the variable of personal values.³⁴ So, there is no solid or consistent evidence to determine that either gender consistently leads very much differently than the other, or has any significant advantage over the other. Differences are slight and suggest a possible slight advantage in favor of women.

Studies show that women, slightly more often than men, utilize both transformational and transactional styles. Women also tend to use the transformational style slightly more often than men.³⁵ This has held consistent over time as shown by Eagly and Johnson (1990) who conducted an extensive meta-analysis of gender differences in leadership.³⁶ In that meta-analysis, stronger gender differences appeared in democratic/participative versus autocratic/ directive leadership styles. It showed that women, more than men, preferred use of the former and that men were more likely to use the latter. These results were also noted in a similar study by Rosener (2005) in which women *described themselves* as utilizing more transformational forms of leading, and men *described themselves* as tending to utilize more transactional styles of leading.³⁷ According to one of the primary researchers in the area of effects of gender on leadership, “If we take the

³⁴ Brenda Hall-Taylor, “The Construction of Women’s Management Skills and the Marginalization of Women in Senior Management,” *Women in Management Review* 12, no. 7 (1997): 255-63; Leonard H. Chusmir and Barbara Parker, “Gender and Situational Differences in Managers’ Values: A Look at Work and Home Lives,” *Journal of Business Research* 23, no. 4 (1991): 325-35.

³⁵ Virginia E. Schein, “The Relationship Between Sex Role Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics Among Female Managers,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60, no. 3 (June 1975): 340-44; Kathryn M. Bartol, “The Sex Structuring of Organizations: A Search for Possible Causes,” *Academy of Management Review* 3, no. 4 (October 1978): 805-15.

³⁶ Alice H. Eagly and Blair T. Johnson, “Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 2 (September 1990): 233-56.

³⁷ Judy B. Rosener, “Ways Women Lead,” *Harvard Business Review* 68, no. 6 (November/December 1990): 119-25.

entire research literature into account, women's leadership styles emphasize both interpersonal relations and task accomplishment to a slightly greater extent than men's styles."³⁸ Because female leaders have been shown to exhibit transformational leadership *somewhat* more than male leaders, it can be said that women leaders may have a slight advantage. But the argument is an "indirect" one.³⁹

Werhane et al. (2007) interviewed twenty-two prominent women executives across many major corporations such as Weber-Shandwick, Kraft, Boeing, Turtle Wax, and Harley Davidson to uncover how they broke the glass ceiling and determine their leadership styles. Successful female leaders, they concluded, in accordance with the transformational style,

were not emulating a military command-and-control style of leadership ... did not think they knew all the answers ... did not believe they were solely responsible for their companies' success ... did business plans but were gifted improvisers ... were more focused on improving the future than correcting the past ... placed values at the center of their business ... poured enormous resources into building healthy, vibrant company cultures ... viewed mistakes as part of the learning process ... regarded passion as a strength ... and valued asking for help.⁴⁰

The researchers attributed this to a particular mindset they felt was evidenced by the majority of female executives.

In the end, I have come to believe that their success stems from a very particular mindset: one that sees companies not as machines but as living organisms. What is the test of a healthy organism? That it can sustain itself and that it can sustain others. When sustainability is the goal and test of leadership, the nature of leadership changes ... What

³⁸Eagly and Johnson, "Gender and Leadership Style," 247.

³⁹ Rosener, "Ways Women Lead"; Alice H. Eagly, Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt and Marloes L. van Engen, "Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-analysis Comparing Women and Men," *Psychological Bulletin* 129, no. 4 (July 2003): 569-91; Alice H. Eagly, "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage," 5.

⁴⁰ Werhane et al., *Women in Business*, xii.

makes all of them [the women executives studied] so exciting is that together they are re-defining what we mean by leadership and what we mean by success ... These are inspiring ways to work and to lead ... Values don't have to be a trade-off for profit and humanity is central, not peripheral, to growing a business.⁴¹

It has been noted in scholarly literature that there is a positive relationship between the presence of women in top management and organizational performance.⁴² Many industry studies also suggest a possible female advantage with respect to profitability:

- Bernardi, Bosco and Vassill (2006) identified twenty-seven companies that appeared on both *Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For* and *Fortune 500* in 2001. They found a positive correlation between the number of female directors on a company's board and its appearance on these two lists.⁴³
- The number of women on boards of directors has been associated with a greater level of corporate social responsibility.⁴⁴
- One study, conducted over nineteen years (1980-1998), evaluated 215 *Fortune 500* companies. Compared with the median companies in their industries, organizations with a

⁴¹ Ibid., xii – xiii.

⁴² Hema A. Krishnan and Daewoo Park, "A Few Good Women – on Top Management Teams," *Journal of Business Research* 58, no. 12 (2005): 1712-20.

⁴³ Richard A. Bernardi, Susan M. Bosco and Katie M. Vassill, "Does Female Representation on Boards of Directors Associate With *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to Work For" List?" [Electronic Version], *Business and Society* 45, no. 2 (June 2006): 235-48, <http://bas.sagepub.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/> (accessed February 12, 2008).

⁴⁴ Abigail McWilliams and Donald Siegel, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance: Correlation or Misspecification," *Strategic Management Journal* 21 no. 5 (May 2000): 603-09; Sandra A. Waddock and Samuel B. Graves, "The Corporate Social Performance-financial Performance Link," *Strategic Management Journal* 18, no. 4 (April 1997): 303-19.

higher number of women executives performed better with respect to profits as a percentage of revenue, assets, and stockholders' equity, by a range of 18 percent to 69 percent.⁴⁵

Admittedly, correlation is not causation; however, the association is significant and the end result, the value of the female presence in top management, is noteworthy.

Accounting for the Difference: Biases and Stereotypes

If there is essentially little difference in the leadership behaviors of men and women and only a possibly slight advantage in the leadership style of women, why aren't more women in top leadership positions? Increasingly, research points to cultural stereotypes, perceptions, and gender bias as the main reasons.⁴⁶ In other words, it is largely a matter of perception. When one views the totality of the studies on leadership and gender, there is strong indication that the lack of female representation in leadership positions, when all other variables are controlled for, can only come from a bias *against* women, and *toward* men, in leadership. Those in industry would anecdotally agree. A majority of CEOs questioned by a business journalist about the issue agreed that stereotyping and preconceptions accounted for the barrier.⁴⁷

One explanation for the stereotypes is that the same behaviors are perceived differently because of sex roles and gender role attitudes.⁴⁸ This is rooted in gender schema theory which

⁴⁵ Adler, "Women in the Executive Suite."

⁴⁶ Eagly, "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage," 4.

⁴⁷ J. Fierman, "Why Women Still Don't Hit the Top," *Fortune*, (July 30, 1990), http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1990/07/30/73852/index.htm (accessed April 3, 2008).

⁴⁸ Alice H. Eagly, *Sex Differences in Social Behaviour: A Social-role Interpretation*, (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1987); Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau, "Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders," *Psychological Review* 109, no. 3 (July 2002): 573–98.

provides a theoretical framework for understanding the impact of gender on leadership.⁴⁹ Because of social conditioning and the social construction of meaning, people develop preconceived notions and cognitive associations of what are considered *feminine* and *masculine* traits (some traits overlap but most do not). Gender schema theory is closely associated with social role theory and suggests that because of social conditioning, developing gender schemas, and the linking of particular traits to men and women, that men and women are expected to behave according to the role assigned them.⁵⁰

Sex roles have been defined in terms of *agency* and *communion*.⁵¹ *Agency* is the motivation to assert mastery and control, and *communion* is the motivation to form social relations through harmony and cooperation. Social role theory asserts that ingrained in sex roles is the expectation that men are more *agentic* and women are more *communal*. Hence, men and women become categorized – men with agency and women with communion.⁵²

Categorization theory can also be used to explain the stereotypes and biases about women in leadership. Categorization theory posits that observers carry symbolic knowledge structures, known as prototypes, in order to make sense of their world.⁵³ People carry a symbolic knowledge structure about the concept of leadership. Prototypes exist for virtually anything or any person. The influence of prototypes can be simply and effectively illustrated by the relationship between

⁴⁹ Sandra L. Bem, “Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing,” *Psychological Review* 88, no. 4 (July 1981): 354-364.

⁵⁰ Eagly, *Sex Differences in Social Behaviour*.

⁵¹ David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence: Isolation and Communion in Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

⁵² Eagly, *Sex Differences in Social Behaviour*.

⁵³ Eleanor Rosch, “Principles of Categorization,” in *Cognition and Categorization*, eds. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1978), 27-48.

Anne Frank and her mother as described by Anne Frank in the classic *The Diary of a Young Girl*, in which young Anne tells the story of how her family went into hiding to escape Nazi Germany's policy of extermination of the Jews. One theme of her diary is her tense relationship with her mother. She wrote, "I only look at her as a mother and she just doesn't succeed in being that to me ... I have in my mind's eye an image of what a perfect mother ... should be; and in her whom I must call 'mother,' I find no trace of that image."⁵⁴

More specifically, *leadership* categorization theory explains the knowledge structures developed by perceivers of how leaders should be and how they should behave.⁵⁵ Leadership prototype dimensions may vary; however, there are eight that seem to hold consistently. They are: sensitivity, dedication, tyranny (i.e. loud, domineering, demanding, and manipulative), charisma, attractiveness, intelligence, strength, and masculinity.⁵⁶ When a leader acts within the boundaries of the individual's prototype, he/she is judged by that person to be effective. When a leader's behavior is inconsistent with one's sex role, thereby violating the established prototype, he/she is perceived to be ineffective; this is called role incongruity.⁵⁷ There are studies in to support this. Men are perceived as more effective when they occupy positions considered to be masculine; women are judged as more effective when they occupy positions considered to be

⁵⁴ Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 41.

⁵⁵ Robert G. Lord and Karen J. Maher, *Leadership and Information Processing: Linking Perceptions and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁶ Lynn R. Offermann, John K. Kennedy and Philip W. Wirtz, "Implicit Leadership Theories: Content, Structure and Generalizability," *The Leadership Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 43–58.

⁵⁷ Eagly and Karau, "Role Congruity Theory," 573-98.

feminine.⁵⁸ Male leaders who exhibit the trait of obliging, considered to be a female trait, are rated as being less effective.⁵⁹

Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard (2008) supported role congruity theory, and additionally showed that in the *absence* of an expected dimension (i.e. when female leaders did *not* exhibit sensitivity, for example, or when male leaders did *not* exhibit strength), leaders were evaluated negatively.⁶⁰ Additionally, it revealed a double bind for females in that when female leaders were low in *strength* (an *agentic* dimension of the leadership prototype), they were perceived negatively, indicating that women needed to display *both* strength and sensitivity, one *agentic* and one communal leadership prototype dimension, in order to be judged effective, but male leaders needed to exhibit *only* strength to be judged effective. (This judgment was given by both female and male observers). Females need to exhibit the core dimensions of leadership such as strength, while not abandoning the expectations associated with being female, such as sensitivity, indicating perceptual bias – a “double bind” for women. Additionally, *strength* appeared as more important than *sensitivity*, which would indicate that male leadership would be consistently and inherently viewed as more effective than female leadership.

⁵⁸Alice H. Eagly, Steven J. Karau and Mona G. Makhijani, “Gender and the Effectiveness of Leaders: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 1 (January 1995): 125-145; Alice H. Eagly, Mona G. Makhijani and Bruce G. Klonsky, “Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 111, no. 1 (January 1992): 3–22.

⁵⁹ K. Korabik, G. L. Baril and C. Watson, C., “Managers’ Conflict Management Style and Leadership Effectiveness: The Moderating Effects of Gender,” *Sex Roles* 29, no. (1993): 405-420.

⁶⁰ Stefanie K. Johnson, Susan Elaine Murphy, Selamawit Zewdie and Rebecca J. Reichard, “The Strong, Sensitive Type: Effects of Gender Stereotypes and Leadership Prototypes on the Evaluation of Male and Female Leaders,” *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes* 106, no. 1 (May 2008): 39-60.

These findings all indicate that the knowledge structure of *leadership* is closely intertwined with the knowledge structure of *masculine* or *male* – in fact, they are so closely intertwined that *masculine* is, itself, a dimension. Hence, females are “handicapped” from the outset. Females face problems in that expectations and prototypes for how females should behave often contrast with the expectations and prototypes for how leaders, in general, should behave, the heart of role congruity theory. Female leaders, apparently, need to display the necessary agentic dimensions associated with being male, without abandoning the stereotypical communal traits that are associated with being female.

Even though studies suggest that women engage in transformational styles slightly more often than men, there is still a bias toward male leaders. More people indicate that they would prefer a male boss to a female boss, although this gap is closing. According to Carroll (2006), in 1975, 62 percent of respondents said they preferred a male boss, 9 percent preferred a female boss, and 29 percent said they had no preference. In 2006, this gap narrowed. Thirty-seven percent said they preferred a male boss, 19 percent said they preferred a female boss, and 43 percent indicated they had no preference. The absence of women, or the disparate numbers of women in leadership roles as one travels higher up the chain of command, indicates a practical preference for men over women in hiring, promotion, and placement in leadership roles at virtually all levels, particularly at top levels such as CEO (Elliott & Smith, 2004). Thus, evidence points to a female advantage *theoretically* speaking, but to a female disadvantage, *practically* speaking.

Meyerson and Fletcher (2005) lay out an intriguing proposition for where this all leaves us. Gender bias, they maintain, is so ingrained in our society that it is largely invisible even when we go looking for it. What we study is largely the *symptoms* of gender inequalities, such as

varying wages, alternate career tracks, and accommodations. We do not go to the core of variables like beliefs, attitudes, company culture, and company practices.

Launching family-friendly programs doesn't challenge the belief that balancing home and work is fundamentally a woman's problem. And adding time to a tenure clock or providing alternative career tracks does little to change the expectation that truly committed employees put work first – they need no accommodation.⁶¹

Who reaches the top positions of our nation's major institutions and how they get there are subjects of discussion and debate because "in answering [these] we come to better appreciate what values as a nation we hold dear" and "what pathways might lead to positions of power."⁶² Shaver occupied leadership positions at Lord & Taylor since her early days as Head of the Comparison Shopping Bureau. She rose through the ranks quickly, becoming a member of the board of directors within three years, then a vice president four years after, a first vice president after six more years, and president eight years later. She led Lord & Taylor through an unprecedented period of growth and expansion, made an impact on the fashion and retailing industries that contributed to the growth and development of the national economy, and developed a positive reputation with employees, colleagues, and civic leaders. Her success as a leader can be used as a case study to confirm or disconfirm characteristics or elements of effective leadership and to discuss the effects of gender on leadership. Shaver was a successful leader. What was her leadership style? Which of the leadership-associated words could best describe her? Was she authoritative, participative, collaborative, task-oriented, or human-oriented? Did she exhibit largely the qualities of transformational style, or its extension servant

⁶¹ Meyerson and Fletcher, "A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling," 78.

⁶² Anthony J. Mayo, Nitin Nohria and Laura G. Singleton, *Paths to Power: How Insiders and Outsiders Shaped American Business Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), ix.

leadership? Was she more agentic or more communal? Was she a mix? How did subordinates regard her? What role did gender play? How did she relate to male superiors and male colleagues? And how did they relate to her?

Based on the literature review of what we understand today about effective leadership and the effects of gender on leadership, it is hypothesized that she exhibited a largely transformational and/or servant leadership style characterized by collaboration and negotiation. Since she was a female CEO in the female-oriented industry of fashion, according to leadership categorization theory, she would be accepted as a leader in such a context. Since she was a successful leader and since she was also a woman, her leadership is likely consistent with role congruity theory and she likely had the stereotypical communal traits associated with women and also the stereotypical agentic traits associated with men and leadership. This study investigates, identifies, and discusses her leadership style in the context of these leadership theories.

Comparative Studies

Shaver was a woman who ascended to power in the middle of the twentieth century. How did she come to such a position of power at a time when it was uncommon for women to do so? How is it that a woman, relatively new to New York City, found herself on the management track of one of New York's most prestigious department stores at a time when women were not tapped for middle management or senior management positions, let alone president or CEO? How did one typically ascend to positions of power in the middle of the century and how did Shaver compare? To discuss this, we can utilize two major sets of studies. Mayo, Nohria and Singleton (2006) conducted a study of 1,000 of the most influential business leaders of the twentieth century in the United States to discover how the demographics of birthplace, nationality, religion, education, class, gender, and race, provided access to power and how the

importance of these demographics evolved throughout the century.⁶³ (Shaver was among the 1,000 included in the study.) For this dissertation, Shaver's demographics across these variables are identified. They are then compared to Mayo, Nohria and Singleton's (2006) assessment of how leaders of the mid-century typically came to power. This will show how typical or atypical Shaver's ascent was with respect to the seven variables.

For further comparison, we can also look to the work of leading researchers in the field of women in management in the 1960s and early 1970s. These researchers were Margaret Hennig, Anne Jardim, and Barbara Hackman, who studied female managers and whose combined studies formed the basis of the landmark book, *The Managerial Woman* (1977) which is considered to be an authoritative work about the qualities and characteristics of successful female managers of that period. Even though this is not exactly Shaver's time period (she died in 1959), this is very close, since the study utilized data collected in 1963 and there are no studies of female executives or managers prior to this period.

Ascending to Power in the Twentieth Century - Mayo, Nohria and Singleton (2006)

These researchers compiled a list of 1,000 influential leaders from a database compiled by the *Harvard Business School Leadership Initiative*. The lives of these leaders were analyzed for trends in demographic variables of birthplace, nationality, religion, education, class, gender, and race, and gender as pathways to power.

⁶³ Anthony J. Mayo, Nitin Nohria and Laura G. Singleton, *Paths to Power: How Insiders and Outsiders Shaped American Business Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006).

Birthplace and Nationality

From early to mid-century, most executives' birthplaces were in areas of concentrations of industry, particularly the Midwest and the Northeast. Of the leaders that ascended specifically between 1920 and 1950, most came from the Midwest. The West was consistently noted across the century for producing the most entrepreneurs. Of the leaders born in the South, nearly half had to leave the South in order to find success.⁶⁴

Most of the executives were born in the United States. Prior to 1950, only 10 percent of leaders were born outside the United States. Many of these foreign-born leaders settled in New York (19 percent) and the Midwest (16 percent). A great many of these experienced success in the entertainment and broadcast industries.⁶⁵

Religion

Religion played a very important role during the first half of the century. There were mostly Protestants, particularly Episcopalians and Presbyterians, represented in leadership. Religion played an important role in developing networks and opening doors of opportunity. Protestants held strong in the early part of the century, but then began waning. Increasingly, over time, there were more leaders who identified themselves as Catholics, Jews, "other," or "unknown."⁶⁶

Education

Education played an almost non-existent role for leaders during the first half of the century. Education was more associated with social class than with leadership. However, MBAs

⁶⁴ Ibid., 23-25, 47.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 26-27.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 87.

later became important to access. The earliest MBA-holder on the list ascended to a position of leadership in 1931. There were seven more by the 1950s, and more than half of the leaders of the 1990s held MBAs.⁶⁷

Social Class

Social class consistently played a role in corporate ascension. Of leaders who ascended before 1950, About 20 percent of the leaders in the study were from very wealthy heritage, 50 percent of top executives came from middle-class backgrounds, and 30 percent from lower middle-class, and poorer backgrounds. These percentages remained the same throughout the century.⁶⁸

Race and Gender

In no other category was “being an outsider” more prevalent than in the demographics of race and gender. There were thirty-three white females and six African American females for a total of thirty-nine female leaders identified for the study. The researchers noted that women enjoyed better success when they founded their own companies or were part of family-owned firms. Twenty-six founded their own enterprises, ten were heads of family-owned firms, and three fell in a category called “other.” All six of the African American women in the study founded their own firms. Shaver is noted in this study as the only female CEO who rose through the corporate ranks prior to 1980.⁶⁹

Female leaders throughout the century usually came from the Northeast and the Midwest and were involved in industries that catered to female consumers. Of those that succeeded in

⁶⁷ Ibid., x, 121-122.

⁶⁸ Ibid., x, 161, 184.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 187-220, 209.

enterprises in the Northeast, half succeeded specifically in the city of New York. Few of the women in top posts were married or had successful marriages. Nearly one-half of women in top posts were divorced, and of those about 40 percent divorced more than once. Twelve percent were single, and of those who had never divorced, about one-half came to their positions as widows and never remarried. About one-quarter were married and stayed married throughout their executive careers. In contrast, only 12 percent of men were divorced and less than 2 percent were bachelors.⁷⁰

Based on this study, if Shaver was consistent across all variables, we might hypothesize that she was born in the United States, most likely in the Midwest or the Northeast. If she was from the South, she would move. She would most likely come from the middle to upper classes, and belong to the Protestant religion (most likely Episcopalian or Presbyterian). A formal education would be optional. She would be Caucasian and either divorce or never marry.

The Success Female Executive/Manager -- Hennig, Jardim, and Hackman

Hennig, Jardim, and Hackman were some of the leading researchers on women in management in the 1960s and 1970s, and conducted a series of studies that they eventually combined to develop a leading body of research about female managers of the period. The series of studies started with a 1963 study in which Hennig and Hackman examined twenty-five women enrolled in the MBA program at Harvard Business School. In 1970, Hennig interviewed twenty-five female executives from the Northeast. These two studies formed the basis for additional interviews and the resulting landmark book about the characteristics of successful

⁷⁰ Ibid., 190.

female managers. This was published in 1977 as a book entitled *The Managerial Woman*.⁷¹ The studies examined many factors such as age, marital status, childhood, adolescence, college life, work experience, and career maturity among other variables. The main purpose of the study was to look for patterns of similarity between the women.

The 1963 study (women enrolled in the MBA program at Harvard Business School), includes the following findings:

- Twenty out of the twenty-five were either first-born or only children.
- Five of the subjects were *like* first-borns through the death of a sibling, or through age Differences.
- All had close relationships with their fathers and had joined them in what would be considered traditionally male activities.
- All enjoyed strong support of their families to pursue their own interests without regard to their gender.
- Most indicated a preference for the company of men versus the company of women.

The 1970 study (Hennig & Jardim's 1970 interviews of twenty-five women who held management positions in the Northeast) includes the following findings:

- All were first-born children (either the eldest or only-children).
- All the subjects were only-children for at least the first two years of their lives.
- All came from upper-middle-class families and had fathers in management or administrative positions.

⁷¹ Hennig and Jardim, *The Managerial Woman*. The book is based on the first two studies, plus some additional interviews conducted in 1973, and then interjected with Jardim's work on managerial behavior.

- All were American-born Caucasians; there were no patterns in religious preference or ethnic heritage.
- In the majority of cases (23), the education level of the mothers of the subjects was equal to or greater than the educational level of the fathers; most (24) of the subjects' mothers were housewives.
- All reported having happy childhoods and having experienced closeness and warmth with family members, particularly with their fathers.
- Fathers and daughters enjoyed activities that were traditionally assigned to boys; fathers supported the girls by affirming that activities need not be gender-specific.
- Subjects reported that their experiences with their mothers were warm, caring, and feminine in the traditional sense.
- All reported that at the time they reached adolescence, they felt that the concept of the inferiority of women did not apply to them as individuals.
- All had records of school achievement, and memberships in clubs and church groups.
- All had aspirations to marry and have children. None married until at least thirty-five years of age.
- All indicated they learned about traditional sex roles from school or from others and not from family.
- They rejected sororities and lived in residence halls during their college years.
- They all began to show different career aspirations while in college that differentiated them from their peers. Their choices often reflected some rejection of the traditionally female role in some sense, and it often produced some hostility and conflict in their relationships.

- All twenty-five indicated that during their first years on the job, their priority was to get to know the company, the nature of the business, and its people. Their focus was to establish solid working relationships with other employees and to excel at their jobs.
- All indicated that they were working toward positions in middle management. None envisioned themselves as president or CEO.
- Almost all got their jobs through their fathers' connections or through friends of the family. In the majority of cases, the job was created especially for the candidate as a favor to the father or friend.
- All indicated that they enjoyed warm supportive relationship with their bosses and progressed up the corporate ladder with him and always at his request.
- Most indicated that during the first ten years, their management style was factual, direct, task-oriented, and emotionally distant.
- They reported that after the first decade, they became much more independent of their bosses. They indicated that at the ten-year period, they felt their male associates considered them to be serious and ambitious and that male associates responded to them with some aloofness, in contrast to bosses, customers, and clients who responded warmly to them.
- All achieved their highest post at mid to late 30s.

It is noted that these last two studies contain rather small populations.

Based on these studies one might hypothesize that Dorothy Shaver, if she were consistent across most variables, was an eldest child or like an eldest child, from an educated family, had a happy and warm home life, enjoyed a close relationship with her father and was not bound by traditional sex roles in the home. She may have married after the age of thirty-five or was unmarried or divorced. She may have been working toward a position in middle management,

may not have planned on being CEO, may have had the support of a warm and supportive male in upper management and eventually may have become independent of that person perhaps after the first ten years, and may have achieved her highest post in her at mid-to-late 30s.

Women and Leadership Studies in Public Relations and Advertising

Shaver's work encompassed the public relations and advertising functions of Lord & Taylor. Even though more than half of public relations practitioners are female, and about 75 percent of public relations students are female, there is surprisingly little research about women in public relations or their contributions to the field.⁷² The women of public relations, or contributions by women to the field, are under-represented in public relations textbooks. Plus, the role models are questionable. For example, some texts list Lady Godiva, Catherine the Great, Annie Oakley, and Calamity Jane as female public relations figures from history.⁷³

There have been efforts to revive and record the substantive contributions of women. Efforts to ferret out the contributions by women to the field can be seen in studies about Doris Fleischman Bernays, partner to Edward Bernays who is often called the father of modern public relations. There is also record of Jane Stewart, president of Group Attitudes Corporation.⁷⁴ But,

⁷² Pamela J. Creedon, "Public Relations History Misses 'Her Story'," *Journalism Educator* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 26-30; Linda Aldoory and Elizabeth L. Toth, "Gendered Discrepancies in a Gendered Profession: A Developing Theory for Public Relations," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 14, no. 2 (March 2002): 103-126.

⁷³ Brigitta Brunner, "Where are the Women? A Content Analysis of Introductory Public Relations Textbooks," *Public Relations Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2006): 43-47.

⁷⁴ Susan Henry, "Anonymous in Her Own Name," *Journalism History* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 51-62; Susan Henry, "Dissonant Notes of a Retiring Feminist: Doris E. Fleischman's Later Years," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 10, no. 1 (1998): 1-33; Susan Henry, "There is Nothing in This Profession That A Woman Cannot Do: Doris E. Fleischman and the Beginnings of Public Relations," *American Journalism* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 85-111; Margot Opdycke Lamme, "Outside the Prickly Nest: Revisiting Doris Fleischman," *American*

it is quite likely that many records may simply have been lost.⁷⁵ This is unfortunate since the fields of public relations, and also advertising, were two of the few fields open to women in the early to mid-part of the twentieth century. Many women worked in these fields and if records could be found, they would be worthy artifacts. stages, and women's roles in them were well-known and accepted at the time. If records could be found, this would be valuable to the scholarship of these two disciplines.

Aldoory and Toth (2004) note the paucity of studies on leadership or the effects of gender on leadership in the field of public relations.⁷⁶ This is particularly striking, once again, since the field of public relations is dominated by women. There is one key study that examines the intersection of public relations, leadership style, and gender. This study showed that public relations practitioners prefer transformational leadership styles over transactional styles, with accommodation for contingency or situational factors to allow for the occasional use of the transactional style.⁷⁷ The study additionally revealed perceptions of a gendered nature of leadership. Most indicated that they felt women were better public relations workers because they perceived women were better socialized toward empathy and collaboration, traits associated with the transformational style. Many participants also stated that even though women

Journalism 24, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 85-107; Karen S. Miller, "Woman, Man, Lady, Horse: Jane Stewart, Public Relations Executive," *Public Relations Review* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 249-70.

⁷⁵ Karla Gower, "Rediscovering Women in Public Relations," *Journalism History* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 14-22.

⁷⁶ Linda Aldoory and Elizabeth L. Toth, "Leadership and Gender in Public relations: Perceived Effectiveness of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 16, no. 2 (2004): 157.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 157-183.

dominated the field in numbers, it was their perception that public relations leadership positions were held by men who demonstrated transactional styles of leading.

The effects of gender on practice is the focus of a book by the same name, which is an examination of the status of women in public relations and efforts to break pay inequity and shatter the glass ceiling of uppermost management. Research showed that gender inequities, particularly with regard to salary.⁷⁸

Another study about the effects of gender on practice was conducted in 2008. It explored how female and male practitioners interacted with the concepts of power and influence on practice. Men and women equally indicated that advocacy and ethics was an important means to exert power and influence. They differed in styles of discourse, and perception about power.⁷⁹

The study of women in advertising has focused more on the impact of advertising on them as a demographic group, versus their contribution to the field. There are a few works about the impact that women advertising executives have made on their industry, including *The Ad Men and Women*, which identifies the major female figures in the field. There is an extensive treatment of the professional life and career of Mary Lawrence Wells, advertising guru from the

⁷⁸ Larissa Grunig, Elizabeth Toth and Linda Childers Hon, *Women in Public Relations: How Gender Influences Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Jessica Anderson, "Pink Collars, High Heels and the Glass Ceiling: Feminism in the Field of Public Relations," *Public Relations Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2006): 30-31.

⁷⁹ Men and women were similar in importance and perceptions of advocacy and ethics. They differed, however, on style of discourse, with men utilizing more assertive words, such as 'winning,' and they also differed on perceptions of how to gain power, with men drawing power from professional measures and women perceiving power more in relationships and access to power sources. Linda Aldoory, Bryan H. Reber, Bruce K. Berger and Elizabeth L. Toth, "Provocations in Public Relations: A Study of Gendered Ideologies of Power-Influence in Practice," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 735-50.

1950s to the 1980s.⁸⁰ Helen Woodward was one of the highest paid women in advertising who retired in 1924 and wrote a book about the advertising industry which took readers into the inner workings of ad agency life.⁸¹ So, there are some advertising women recorded in the literature of the discipline, but there are many other influential women who can be studied if records could be found. Figures such as Erma Perham Proetz, vice president of Gardner Advertising Company, Fleur Fenton who had her own agency in New York for many years at the early part of the twentieth century are some historical figures. There are also Louise Taylor Davis, the copy director of Young & Rubicam, famed for its advertising copy, and also Sara Pennoyer, head of advertising and publicity at Bonwit Teller.⁸²

⁸⁰ Edd Applegate, *Ad Men and Women: A Biographical Dictionary of Advertising* (Westport, CT: 1994). This book includes the following women - Bernice Fitz-Gibbon, Jo Foxworth, Paula Green, Phyllis K. Robinson, Margaret Hockaday, Mary Wells, Helen Resor, Jane Trahey, and Helen Woodward; Mary Wells Lawrence, *A Big Life in Advertising*, 2nd ed. (New York: Touchstone, 2002).

⁸¹ Helen Woodward, *Through Many Windows* (New York: Harper, 1926).

⁸² As cited in Harry Lewis Bird, *This Fascinating Advertising Business* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), needs page no; Isabella Taves, *Successful Women and How They Attained Success* (New York: P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1943); 188-201.

CHAPTER 3

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Dorothy Shaver was named one of 1,000 influential leaders of the century, and one of the fifty people who made a significant impact on the fashion industry, yet she has not been the subject of much analysis. Since the time of her death, there has been no analysis of her significance or accomplishment in trade literature, and minimal analysis of her life and accomplishments in scholarly literature.

This study brings an important leader and historical figure out of obscurity. It discusses Shaver's impact and significance across the multiple disciplines of fashion, feminism, public relations, and advertising. It documents her achievements in one place with Shaver as the central focus. It provides an interesting case study about the leadership style of a successful leader of the twentieth century. It is also a case study of successful *female* leader, from which we can gain knowledge, either new or confirmatory, about gender effects on leadership.

This study can add to knowledge in the in the fashion, business, or marketing communications literature. It can also inspire research in other fields such as feminism, or general communication studies.

This study fills a gap in public relations and advertising history by documenting, in a significant treatment, the contributions of a woman to these fields. As has been discussed, public relations and advertising history scholars have been making efforts to discover, study, and report about the achievement of women to their fields. This study can build on that literature.

This study also has potential to impact public relations education. Public relations scholars have noted that textbooks present prominent male figures in public relations history and that there are few, if any, females noted. Since the majority of public relations students are female, it would be beneficial have appropriate role models represented in textbooks.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: Who was Dorothy Shaver? How did she come to Lord & Taylor?

RQ 2: What were her accomplishments?

RQ 3: What were the factors that contributed to her success and the key influences in her life?

RQ4: What was her leadership style and what role did gender play in her leadership?

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

This is a qualitative inquiry that utilizes the biographical method to study an historical figure. Historians study a person, place, or event that occurred in the past, largely to explain, and to gain human understanding. It “differs from the scientific purpose of certainty and accuracy and allows for a certain degree of interpretation by the researcher.”¹ Historical researchers rely heavily on primary sources, such as original sources of material and narrative, as their objects of study. Primary sources are the closest to the subject or subject matter and represent the best sources of information. Secondary sources are those that rest on primary sources They are also used. The primary and secondary sources are examined in context and interpretation is provided.

Qualitative inquiry usually answers questions related to “how” or “what,” versus quantitative inquiry which usually answers relate to “why.”² Qualitative inquiry is rigorous in the sense that it very time consuming, is generally multi-method, explores larger issues of human or social conditions, often requires that researchers work with many variables at a time, and usually involves the collection of a variety of materials including case study, historical, and visual texts. Qualitative research encompasses five traditions – biography, phenomenology, ethnography,

¹ J. Lukacs, *At the End of an Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 55.

² John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage), 17.

grounded theory and case study. This qualitative study is in the biographical tradition and will utilize the biographical method.³

“A biographical study is the study of an individual [either living or deceased] and his or her experiences as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material.”⁴ “The biographical method is the studied use and collection of life documents” and can include the study of any life deemed significant to the research question, including lives of greatness or previously unheralded lives.”⁵ The researcher builds a chronology of life events, gathers contextual biographical materials, organizes themes, explores meaning, and provides interpretation.

The biographical method requires that the writer, or biographer, become closely acquainted with the chosen subject and his/her life, try to see through the person’s eyes, and provide reasonable interpretation.⁶ Biographical writing borrows from many of the techniques of fictional writing such as narrative, or foreshadowing. For the academic, this poses challenges as he/she cannot risk accusations of misrepresentation or anything less than ‘truth-telling’ so, this act of interpretation is always a bit risky.⁷ The goal of the biographer is to tell the story and then interpret “accurately, fairly, and with comprehension of related contexts.”⁸

³ Ibid., xv - 5.

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Biography* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 69; Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 48.

⁶ Paul R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xv.

⁷ Ibid., xix.

⁸ Ibid., 10

One can tell the biography as a strict chronology, by topics, or by mixed method. Strict chronologies are recommended for short works, and the mixed method is recommended for longer works.⁹ This dissertation utilizes the mixed method of chronology and related topics. A chronology of Shaver's life emerges, followed by a discussion that focuses on key aspects of her life. The topics this study focuses on with regard to her life, are her leadership style, gender effects on leadership, and success factors.

This study was accomplished by examining primary and secondary sources about Shaver's life, work, philosophies, and any related contextual material. The primary sources included two collections of her papers. One collection is housed at The National Museum of American History in the Archives Center at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC (NMAH). The other collection is at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in Boston (SLRI). The former collection represents 7.6 cu. ft. of material dated 1922 to 1959 and includes twenty-seven boxes of printed, photographic, taped and phonographic material. It includes correspondence, press releases, corporate material, recorded interviews, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, photographs, and records of major events, among other items. The latter collection is one file box of speeches, newspaper clippings, and articles related to the Lord & Taylor Design Awards, and dated 1947 to 1956.

Secondary data included a search of materials available in library card catalogs and information databases. There were many references to Shaver in biographical dictionaries. There were very brief mentions in many fashion and design books. There were three short book

⁹ Milton Lomask, *The Biographer's Craft* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 41.

chapters that detailed her early life. Other secondary sources included books, journal articles, and web sites that provided background or historical context to Shaver's life, times, and work.

Databases in the fields of communication, business, and fashion were searched (e.g., WorldCat, EBSCO, Communication and Mass Media Complete, ProQuest, LexisNexis, etc.). A search across all databases utilizing the key words "Dorothy Shaver" yielded a total of about 700 references, the majority of which related to the Shaver in this study. Most were articles that appeared in newspapers or magazines. The majority of the articles were written between 1927 and 1959, when Shaver was at Lord & Taylor. These articles covered her professional activities such as store openings, promotions, awards, civic service, store appointments, travels, etc. She was usually not the focus of the article, other than in the ones that discussed her election, or her death. There were a few magazine articles that provided more in-depth treatment. There were about 88 articles dated after her death. Shaver was not the focus of any of these articles. When she was mentioned in an article, it was usually in passing, or as a brief reference about her impact on the fashion industry. There were a few articles that briefly mentioned her significance as an elected female CEO; there were no articles that discussed her specific contributions to the worlds of retailing, public relations, or advertising.

Shaver received more in-depth coverage in magazine articles, most notably in *Life*, *Vogue*, *Town & Country* and *Good Housekeeping*. These articles were written while she was at Lord & Taylor. There were many more in-depth articles about Shaver and her work in the Shaver papers at the Smithsonian Institute. These articles were written during the course of her career and provided good reference material about her career and the significance of her work. The articles were published in a variety of newspapers from around the country, and in a variety of industry and trade periodicals of the time, many of which are no longer published or are

unavailable through databases. These included such publications as the *Arkansas Gazette*, *Boston Sunday Post*, *New York Observer*, *Retailing*, and *Buyer's Job*, *Personal Efficiency Magazine*, and *This Week* among others. There were no articles of any significance published after her death and there has been no work that discusses the totality of her life, achievements, and significance.

These articles, coupled with artifacts such as corporate papers and correspondence, provided much specific knowledge about Shaver's activities, accomplishments, beliefs, and philosophies. All of these sources, primary and secondary, were read and analyzed. Data related to the research questions were captured and categorized. Data were then analyzed, put into context, and interpreted.

In answer to the research questions, the findings are presented in two parts. First, a biographical account of Shaver's life and accomplishments emerges. This is followed by an analysis and interpretation. The analysis and interpretation includes the following areas of discussion:

- the significance of Shaver's accomplishments
- factors contributing to her success
- her professional relationships with men
- key influences in her life

The interpretation includes a comparative analysis that discusses Shaver's leadership style against key studies from the literature review about gender and leadership. The comparative analysis

- identifies Shaver's leadership style;
- discusses gender effects on her leadership;

- compares her path to power against others' as revealed of Mayo, Nohria and Singleton (2006); and
- compares Shaver against other successful female managers as outlined by Hennig, Jardim, and Hackman, who studied successful female managers of the 1960s and 1970s.

CHAPTER 5

FROM ARKANSAS TO NEW YORK: THE STAGE WAS SET

If leadership were a gene, it would stand to reason that Dorothy Shaver might be carrying it. She had famous (and infamous) relatives who were leaders in their communities and vocations. Her earliest forebears, through her mother's line (Borden), can be traced to the early settlers of the New World in the 1700s.¹ Many were involved in the settling of the South, particularly the areas of Kentucky and Arkansas, and members of her extended family were local and regional leaders and celebrities. As such, she enjoyed a life of prominence, prestige and privilege, growing up in Arkansas in the early part of the twentieth century.

Shaver's father, James David Shaver (1861-1951), was an attorney and town leader. He eventually became a judge, serving in the Southern District of the State Courts. Her maternal grandfather, Benjamin Borden (1812-1887), was the owner and editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* from 1843 to 1848. It was the region's first newspaper, established in 1819 in Arkansas Territory, not to become a full-fledged state until seventeen years later. He also held the titles of reverend and professor. Borden established a reputation in the region for honesty and integrity, such that it led to an Arkansas expression "as good as Ben Borden's bond." He also became known as the last man to fight a legal duel in the state.²

¹ Terry Mason, "Family History Website," <http://www.tmason1.com/pafg50.htm> (accessed July 14, 2008).

² *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, s.v. "Arkansas Gazette," <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2344> (accessed

Shaver's paternal grandfather was perhaps the most colorful and notorious relative of them all. He was Robert "Fighting Bob" Glenn Shaver (1831-1915), a retired confederate general, a former attorney, and the first town sheriff of Center Point, Arkansas.³ He added excitement, drama, and adventure to the lives of the five Shaver children. He was full of stories about the war and his days as "Fighting Bob" Shaver who led a band of soldiers known as "Shaver's regiment." He told stories about great battles, particularly the Battle of Shiloh in 1862, in which he led his regiment in battle against Ulysses S. Grant. He was said to have carried permanent wounds from this skirmish. He would entertain the Shaver children with stories about college pranks played with his roommate, Jeb Stuart, who would become a famous cavalry leader. He was a local and regional celebrity, often covered in news media of the South. His fame extended way beyond his years as he was covered in local and regional newspapers, even as late as 1995.⁴

His body may have been hampered by war injuries and slowed with age, but his mind was always sharp. He promoted the Shaver children's education by encouraging them to pore

November 18, 2008); David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way: Eight Pioneers for Equal Rights* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 214; Elizabeth Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," *Arkansas Gazette*, n.d., n.p. In DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

³ *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History*, s.v. "Robert Glenn Shaver," <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=1761> (accessed November 18, 2008); David Boynick, *Pioneers in Petticoats* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1959), 214.

⁴ See "Gen. Robert G. Shaver," *Mena Weekly Star*, May 30, 1907, A7.; Robert J. Brown, "Gen. R.G. Shaver Led Ku-Klux Klan," *Mena Evening Star*, June 26, 1909, A2.; "Soon to Unveil Shiloh Monument," *Polk County Democrat*, September 21, 1911, A4.; "Gen. R. G. Shaver Has Answered Last Roll Call," *Mena Evening Star*, January 14, 1915, A1.; Wilson Powell, "'Fighting Bob' Shaver," *Independence County Chronicle* 3, October, 1961, 38-44; Rodney Bowers, "Descendants Honor Klansman War Hero," *Arkansas-Democrat Gazette*, August 28, 1995, B1.

over encyclopedias in attempt to stump him with quizzes at the dinner table. He would also be very influential as the teller of fairy tales. One set of tales held enduring sway. Stories from the Land of Never Wuz told of a certain family by the name of Olie-ke-wob that had five children, much like the Shaver family. The characters from the Olie-ke-wob family would capture the imagination of the young Shaver children.⁵

Shaver was born July 29, 1893, in the town of Center Point, Arkansas. The population of the town was a cozy 300.⁶ As the middle child, at the end of a set of boys, and at the beginning of a set of girls, Shaver became very adaptable at dealing between the sexes. Her two older brothers were Robert Benjamin Shaver (1888-1969) and James David Jr. (1891-1971). She was followed by a sister, Elsie (1895-1981). The youngest, Catherine (1901 – 1905), died of diphtheria when Dorothy was approximately twelve years of age. Shaver was described as a playful, curious, energetic, high-strung, and gregarious child who “played hard,” “liked the company of boys or girls” and who was “a natural leader.”⁷

Dorothy and Elsie shared a particularly close relationship, virtually spending their entire lives together. They grew up together, and after their college years they would live together for

⁵ Eleanor Clymer and Lillian Erlich, *Modern American Career Women* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 74; “Little Shavers Win Instant Success,” *Daily Garment News*, n.d., n.p. In DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 11, Folder 1.

⁶ Shaver often misrepresented birth year, declaring she was born in 1897. Even her gravestone bears the incorrect date, likely due to the work of Elsie as cited in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, s.v. “Dorothy Shaver,” <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=1762> (accessed November 18, 2008); Shaver’s early life is well documented across a variety of sources such as the above plus Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 72-80; Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 209-236; Isabella Taves, *Successful Women and How They Attained Success* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1945), 141-150.

⁷ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 74.

the remainder of their lives, neither marrying. Their sisterly devotion was evident throughout their lives.

The Shaver children enjoyed a typical upbringing of upper-middle-class comfort and gentility in the South. The family moved from Center Point to nearby Mena when Shaver was approximately six years old. They occupied an impressive and imposing Southern mansion in Mena with “double pillars, wide porches, and a picket balcony” at 1202 Port Arthur Avenue.⁸ It was Mena that Dorothy would call home. And it was Mena that was the setting for her traditional and conventional southern life, filled with books, music, literature, and childhood baseball games. She sang in the choir of the Episcopal Church and enjoyed many long evenings of conversation with family and friends. The Shaver home was steeped in conversation, words, and ideas. The children were encouraged to contribute to dinner conversation with a serious topic and Dorothy, or Deedie as she was affectionately known, would often go to her father’s study and select a volume from an encyclopedia to study.⁹ Shaver affirms her intellectual environment as a child. “The town had a number of well-informed people who were interested in literature, music, government, and world affairs. They used to meet weekly for discussions. When they came to our home, Elsie and I always sat close by so we could listen,” she said.¹⁰

As a child, Shaver was very fond of books and displayed her literary precociousness,

The town had a well-stocked library and I was encouraged to use it... [I went with] my list and asked the librarian if I could borrow the ten books ... She excused herself and went to

⁸ Allene Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist,” *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 192.

⁹ Sometimes spelled ‘DiDi.’ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 211-215.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

telephone my mother, whom she knew. She asked my mother if she knew the titles of the books I had come to borrow. My mother said calmly that it was all right.¹¹

When the new rector moved into town, Shaver heard a rumor that he had a library of 10,000 volumes. Wishing to see it, she asked her grandfather if she could go with him when he went to visit the rector. When she arrived at the rector's home, she asked to see the library and proceeded to count the volumes. "I was disappointed," she later remarked. "The rumor about the books was wrong. There weren't ten thousand, only about two thousand."¹² Shaver enjoyed words so much that, in high school, she thought she might like to be a magazine editor.¹³ She carried this love of reading through her entire life.

Shaver's literary education was part of a traditional classic southern upbringing that was firmly shaped by her mother, herself a Southerner and the privileged daughter of a newspaper editor. Sarah (Sallie) Hunter Borden Shaver (1858 – 1929) was a writer who was described as "charming ... intelligent ... and giving her children a grounding in the classics ..."¹⁴ Sarah likely influenced her daughters with many of her Southern gentilities including her charm, love of writing, art, books, and learning. Elsie took up a love of art; Dorothy's interests leaned squarely toward the literary. Sarah's greatest gift was said to have been in the field of human relations. It was reported that she could make an instant connection with almost everyone she met.¹⁵

¹¹ Dorothy Shaver in David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 214.

¹² *Ibid.*, 215.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 217

¹⁴ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73

By all accounts, Shaver was on the circular track of a traditional Southern life that included growing up, getting married, and then bearing children who would, in turn, grow up and get married and bear their own children and so on, in an endless series of begets. “No one suggested she should work for a living,” it was reported.¹⁶ And it might have been thus, had it not been for Dorothy’s choice of romantic interest, or rather, for her father’s reaction to her romantic interest.

After Shaver graduated in 1910 as salutatorian of her class, she was urged by her father to go to college, presumably to think over her choice of a boyfriend at the time. In Judge Shaver’s mind, the boy “had more personality than brains.”¹⁷ Shaver complied. She enrolled at the University of Arkansas to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree. The distance had the cooling effect that the Judge desired. What he did not know, was that this action would effectively derail his daughter from living out a traditional life and it would deny him progenitors. In the end, Shaver would devote herself fully to a career. She would never marry and would not bear children. Many years later, Shaver would call her father’s intervention “fortuitous.”¹⁸ As it turned out, though, Mr. Shaver need not have worried so much about the boy’s brains or character. The lad seemed to have turned out fine, even sitting for the bar exam under Mr. Shaver himself.¹⁹

¹⁶ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 75.

¹⁷ *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*, s.v. “Dorothy Shaver,” paragraph 4.

¹⁸ “Fifth Avenue’s First Lady,” *Time*, December 31, 1945, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,886788,00.html> (accessed May 20, 2008).

¹⁹ “Miss Shaver Dead; Led Lord & Taylor: Dorothy Shaver Is Dead at 66; Headed Lord & Taylor Since’ 45,” *Special to the New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 29, 1959, 1.

Shaver attended the University of Arkansas from 1911 to 1913, where she took classes in English, psychology, and history. She completed her sophomore year and did not return.²⁰ At this point, it appears she hit a somewhat difficult period of her life. From 1914 to 1916, she held various teaching posts which included positions with the school boards of Mena and also Prescott, located about 100 miles to the southeast of Mena. But her teaching career was stalled when she became one of four women fired from the Mena School District for attending a local dance as a single woman. This was something in opposition to local custom.²¹

In the winter of 1917 she accompanied her sister, Elsie, to Chicago where Elsie was enrolled at the Chicago Institute of Art to study painting.²² Elsie had lost her college companion and the Shaver parents encouraged Dorothy to accompany her sister to the metropolis.²³ While Elsie studied art, Shaver enrolled in the College of Education at the University of Chicago where she took two home economics courses and an English class.²⁴ She would complete the winter quarter but would not graduate, opting instead to go with Elsie to New York. Elsie had managed to sell \$600 of commercial art to Chicago's Marshall Field's Department Store for use in a catalog and she was anxious to expand her possibilities.²⁵ But she wasn't going alone. After the winter quarter was over, and using the money from the sale of the art, the two Shaver women

²⁰ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 75; The University of Arkansas Registrar's Office, in phone conversation with author, November 13, 2008.

²¹ *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, s.v. "Dorothy Shaver," paragraph 5. See also Nancy A. Williams and Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notable Lives* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 260-261.

²² Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 217.

²³ Melissa Houtte, Shaver biographer, email message to author, November 20, 2008.

²⁴ University of Chicago University Registrar, email to author, January 13, 2009.

²⁵ Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," n.p.

took their journey.²⁶ This would signal the end of Dorothy's formal education. Madame President would become, and forever remain, a college drop out. In later years, when questioned about her education, Shaver did not speak about it in detail and did not bother to correct journalists who reported that she had graduated. About these years, however, she did say that she felt somewhat hampered by college indicating that she was filled with a desire to work. "I'm a builder by nature," she said.²⁷ So, the two Shaver women took the first train to New York.

Shaver said she left Chicago in support of Elsie's ambitions and had no thought of a career for herself. "I just came along for the ride because New York sounded fabulous and exciting," she recalled. Once the two women made their decision to go, they took the first train out of Chicago and did not take the time to advise their parents. "I don't know why we thought New York couldn't get along without us another minute, but we were quite sure it couldn't," recalled Shaver.²⁸

The Shavers rented an apartment and then contacted their parents about their whereabouts. Sallie was reportedly worried and paid a visit. But in a move uncharacteristic of the relationship between mothers and daughters at the time, she left the girls ultimately to their devices, apparently satisfied. However, they would have to live on the remainder of their college stipends and then they would be on their own. Shaver recalled the scene.

²⁶ Shaver always cited her arrival in New York as 1920 or "the early 20s," however, this was not possible since, by 1919, "The Little Shavers" were reportedly doing a brisk business as cited in Williams and Whayne, *Arkansas Biography*, 260. Elsie wrote that the money from the sale of her art financed their trip, that they travelled to New York in style via train, and spent through their money rather quickly as cited in Elsie Shaver, (unpublished hand-written note), in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 2.

²⁷ Jeanne Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," *Life*, May 12, 1947, 120.

²⁸ Elizabeth Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," n.p.

She [Sarah] kissed us and looked us over a little anxiously. When she saw that we were all right she sat down and asked us why we had done such a reckless thing. She said she thought we should go back to Chicago. Elsie talked and talked. We told her what New York meant to us and how strongly we wanted to stay. When it became clear to our mother that this wasn't an escapade, that we had thought it all out, she said, 'Very well, you may stay. Just take care of yourselves and write us often. But all the money you'll have is your allowance, just as at school. If you want to remain you'll have to earn money to support yourselves.' She was a remarkable woman, my mother.²⁹

The funds quickly ran out. The Shavers were quickly introduced to the realities of self-sufficiency. It was 1917. Women traditionally worked in menial jobs. The Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women political power and eventually economic power, would not be ratified until 1920.³⁰ The city was a major industrial center and home to the nation's largest department stores. There were many opportunities for women as secretaries, typists, file clerks, and salesgirls at department stores.³¹ In search of revenue-making ideas, Shaver got an idea. She said she was reminded that the creator of the Kewpie doll made \$50,000 for her product.³² Tapping into her sister's artistic talents, Shaver suggested that Elsie create a doll collection to sell. Elsie was reminded about the fairy tales told them by their Civil War hero grandfather, particularly the tales of the Olie-ke-wob family from the Land of Never Wuz. So, she created a

²⁹ Dorothy Shaver in Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 217-218.

³⁰ Prior to 1920, many fields were not open to women and they worked menial jobs. The 1920 census recorded that there were eight million women in 437 different job classifications as cited in William Henry Chafe, *American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 48.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50; As women began to take sales positions as department stores, they were utilized as copywriters and so entered the field of advertising as cited in William Nelson Taft, *Department Store Advertising* (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Company, 1929), Part One, 57.

³² Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 219. The Kewpie Doll was the first or one of the earliest cases of merchandising success in the United States as cited in Bonniebrook Historical Society, "The Works of Rose O'Neill: Her Kewpies," <http://www.roseoneill.org/workskewpies.htm> (accessed April 13, 2009).

set of five whimsical dolls they dubbed the “Five Little Shavers.”³³ With Elsie as manufacturing and production, and Shaver as sales, marketing, and administration, the two now essentially had the basis of a business. Although Shaver would later become known as a “born saleswoman” who “could sell flower seeds in the Sahara,” at this point she may not have been that adept at cold-call sales as it was once reported that Elsie often had to nudge her sister into shops to attempt a sale.³⁴ If this was the case, Shaver would soon overcome any fears she may have had to develop her trademark “frightening gift of persuasion.”³⁵ By 1919, they would be doing a bustling business, largely to a stroke of good fortune.³⁶

As Shaver relayed the story, good fortune came their way when they had Sunday afternoon callers – Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Reyburn. Sallie Shaver, concerned for her daughters, had apparently contacted the fellow Arkansan and her second cousin, to please call on the girls and check up on them for her. Sallie had written her daughters to expect a visit.³⁷ The Reyburns arrived on a Sunday afternoon and during a lull in the conversation, as Shaver reported it, Shaver nudged Elsie that perhaps she could show their guests the dolls. Reyburn was charmed and intrigued. He asked many questions. He wanted to know how long it took to make them, and how much they cost.³⁸ The couple then said their good-byes.

³³ The sketches of Elsie’s original drawings of the dolls can be viewed in DSP, NMAH, Series 3, Box 11, Folder 1.

³⁴ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 76.

³⁵ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," 118.

³⁶ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 219; Williams and Whyne, *Arkansas Biography*, 260.

³⁷ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 220.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

Within a few days, representatives of Lord & Taylor, including the toy manager and the advertising manager, called on the girls to look at the dolls, place an order, and help arrange to put the dolls into production.³⁹ What the Shavers had not known, as Shaver told it, was that Mr. Reyburn was not only a distant relative (her third cousin), he was also the president of Lord & Taylor Department Store.⁴⁰ “The important fact is that he came from our part of the land, knew my parents and was a kind friend,” Shaver said.⁴¹ This social call would be the beginning of a long association between Shaver, Reyburn, and Lord & Taylor. Samuel Reyburn would be an important benefactor and a very necessary factor to Shaver’s success.

Samuel Wallace Reyburn

Samuel Wallace Reyburn (1872 - 1962) was another in the Shaver lineage who was a leader in his community and in industry. He grew up in the Little Rock area, about 150 miles east of Mena, and was twenty-one years Shaver’s senior.⁴² He graduated from the University of Arkansas law school in 1894, and served as treasurer for the City of Little Rock in 1899. He acquired some real estate holdings and became a bank president, all by the time he reached his

³⁹ Ibid.; Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 118.

⁴⁰ Reyburn was often identified in trade literature as her uncle, but he is her third cousin as cited in Terry Mason, “Family History Site;” Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 122; Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 220.

⁴¹ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 122.

⁴² In Boynick’s account, Shaver relays the story of her meeting with Reyburn in New York as a surprise call and that she did not know he was the president of the department store. With a twenty-one-year age difference, and 150-mile distance between their home towns, growing up in the era they did, it seems likely the two had little occasion, if any, to see each other and had little in common over the years as cited in Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 220.

early 30s in 1902. He also established and became president of the Arkansas Diamond Company.⁴³

It was his banking endeavor that would lead him to New York and to the dry goods business. As a result of his banking interests, Reyburn was put in charge of a liquidation of the H.B. Claflin Company of New York. Its failure was one of the big crashes of dry goods history at the time. H.B. Claflin Company had a holding company, United Dry Goods Company, which, in turn, had acquired Lord & Taylor Department Store in 1909.

Reyburn was apparently a very adept businessman. He was so successful at the reorganization of the Claflin liquidation that, in 1914, he was summoned to New York to serve as head of the United Dry Goods Company and, in 1916, as president of Lord & Taylor. He left the Little Rock area in 1914 (about the time that Shaver would have been struggling with her teaching career) and moved to New York. As a result of his successful business dealings in Arkansas and New York, he was recorded as one of *1,000 American Men of Mark of Today* of 1916.⁴⁴

⁴³ Men of Mark, *One Thousand American Men of Mark of Today* (Chicago, IL: American Men of Mark, 1916), 34-35; "Small Town Men Who Succeed Here: Cities Throughout the Nation Yield Leaders for Business in New York -- Little Rock, Ark., Alone Has Provided Many," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 27, 1927, XX10.

⁴⁴ By 1927 he was well entrenched as a leader in New York. In addition to being the president of Lord & Taylor, he sat as a director on many boards, including the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the Guaranty Trust Company, and the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, among others. He would eventually resign from Lord & Taylor in 1931 to head its parent company, Associated Dry Goods (the former United Dry Goods); New York University would award him an honorary doctorate in June of 1935; and he would retire to Sarasota, Florida, where he died in 1962 at the age of ninety as cited Ibid.; Time, Inc., "Business: Personnel, Samuel Wallace Reyburn," http://search.time.com/results.html?N=0&Nty=1&Ntt=samuel+reyburn&Nf=p_date_range%7cBTWN+19310401+19310531 (accessed January 5, 2009); "Senator Glass and 7 Others Get Honorary Degrees at N.Y.U. Commencement," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 8, 1939, 22.

Reyburn's instincts proved to be good, as "The Five Little Shavers" were featured in a window at Lord & Taylor and were greeted with great success. The store sold 110 units on the first day from a display alone, and without any advertising.⁴⁵ Shaver said she felt the dolls were successful because they were whimsical, fun, eccentric, and designed to "attract the attention of the little folk" and to "introduce a humorous element into the nursery."⁴⁶ "They went over like wildfire and soon we were making a good deal of money out of them," Shaver recalled.⁴⁷

Shaver and Elsie rented a loft at 3 West and 47th St. and began production. They hired and trained workers; Shaver got help from friends about record-keeping and bookkeeping.⁴⁸ Lacking any real background or experience, Shaver just dove in. "I really knew nothing about store management. It was a case of learning the rudiments and being one's own teacher," she said.⁴⁹ After three to four years, the Shaver sisters closed their shop, with Elsie reportedly tiring of production, and Shaver accepting an offer of full-time employment at Lord & Taylor.⁵⁰ Some accounts say Shaver "sold Lord & Taylor on the idea of giving her a job," some accounts report

⁴⁵ "Display Alone Sells 110 New Dolls at Lord & Taylor" *Retailing*, n.d., n.p., DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 11, Folder 1; "Little Shavers Win Instant Success," n.p.

⁴⁶ "Little Shavers Win Instant Success," n.p.

⁴⁷ S. J. Woolf, "Miss Shaver Pictures the Store of Tomorrow," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 5, 1947, SM18.

⁴⁸ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," 122; Boynick *Women Who Led the Way*, 222.

⁴⁹ "Only Themselves Keep Women From Going Ahead," *Retailing*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

⁵⁰ Her work obviously brought her into talks with Lord & Taylor management, and she was soon offered a job. It could be that she was impressing store executives during the process and that her abilities were being evaluated as cited in Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 222; Eleanor Roberts, "Her Rag Dolls Started Her on Road to Riches," *Boston Sunday Post*, February 3, 1946, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 1.

that store executives pursued her and that they “lured Dorothy away from the shop.”⁵¹ She tells it as if she was being tapped, and simply said she was offered the position. “Among our customers was Lord & Taylor, and the first thing I knew I was offered a position by the firm ... I have been here ever since,” she later recalled.⁵²

For the next 35 years, she would spend her working days on New York’s Fifth Avenue amid the giant retailers of her day. For the rest of her life, she would fondly refer to her place of employment as “the store.”⁵³

Lord & Taylor Dept. Store: “The Jewel of Associated Dry Goods”

When Shaver reported to work and stepped across the threshold of the eleven-storey Italian Renaissance building located on Fifth Avenue and 38th Street in the heart of New York’s shopping district, she entered one of the oldest department stores in the country, and among the oldest in the world.⁵⁴ While never the biggest of New York’s department stores, Lord & Taylor

⁵¹ Virginia Irwin, “Shopping Will Become Gay Affair,” *The Post Dispatch*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6; Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 76; Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p., col. 2.

⁵² Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures,” SM18.

⁵³ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159.

⁵⁴ Identifying the first department store is a challenge, depending on one’s definition of a department store and determining exactly at one point a shop evolved into one. The term ‘department store’ has been recorded only as early as 1887. But, stores that compete for the title of oldest department store include Brooks Brothers (1818, although not a department store in the strictest sense of the word), Lord & Taylor (1826), A. T. Stewart (which can trace its early organization to 1823), Austin’s of Ireland, (1830), Bon Marche of Paris (1838) and the Equitable Pioneering Society Ltd. of England (1844). It is likely that Lord & Taylor evolved into a true department store in the 1860s or 1870s as cited in Robert Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 25, 41, 87; See also KIPnotes.com, “Business History of Department Stores,” <http://www.kipnotes.com/RetailDepartmentStores.htm> (accessed June 10, 2008); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 12.

was among the elite, running “nose to nose with Saks Fifth Avenue and Bonwit Teller.”⁵⁵ Its gray granite and limestone structure was typical of department stores of the day, which copied the grand stores of Paris.⁵⁶ Lord & Taylor occupied Fifth Avenue nestled between the Public Library and the Empire State Building. The structure had been there since 1914, when architects had erected one of the most elegant large stores in New York. It was “more suave than Macy’s and more inventive than Saks,” according to one reporter.⁵⁷

Lord & Taylor was established as a dry goods business in 1826, only fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, at 47 Catherine Street on New York’s Lower East side. It was established by twenty-three-year-old Samuel Lord, an English immigrant. Within a year, he took on a partner, George Washington Taylor, his wife’s cousin. They enjoyed enough success that Taylor retired to England in 1852, a wealthy man. Lord continued with other partners through business growth and expansion that saw a number of physical moves of the store until it came to its final resting place at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 38th Street. Lord retired in 1895 and left the business to a partner, Edward P. Hatch, who was sole manager until he incorporated it in 1904 as a stock company, becoming its first president. When Hatch died in 1909, his estate was sold to United Dry Goods and Lord & Taylor came under second president J. H. Emery. Emery

⁵⁵ Toni Schlesinger, “Dear Lord & Taylor, Retail’s Resting Place,” *The New York Observer*, September 11, 2006, 14.

⁵⁶ Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 81.

⁵⁷ Christopher Gray, “An 11-Story Brick and Limestone Palace of Retail: The 1914 Lord & Taylor Store is Getting New Windows,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), July 27, 2003, RE7.

focused on developing a wholesale part of the business and entrusted the management of the retail portion to Hatch's grandson, Wilson Hatch Tucker.⁵⁸

As a beloved icon in the city, Lord & Taylor was twice bailed out by members of the general public, first under Lord in 1879 following the economic downturn of 1873, and then under Tucker in 1914 when, as a result of attempted expansion into a wholesale unit, and also as a result of its move to Fifth Avenue, it incurred massive cost over runs. Twenty-four New York banks bailed the beleaguered company out and agreed to finance the move, selecting Samuel Reyburn of Arkansas as treasurer. By 1916, Reyburn successfully maneuvered the company back to financial stability and was asked to remain on board as president. Over the course of the next ten years, Reyburn would wipe out a \$10 million dollar debt and Lord & Taylor would be on good financial footing by the time Shaver entered the scene as an employee in 1924. Reyburn served as president until 1931. He was followed by J. E. Priddy who served from 1931 to 1936. Its next president, Walter Hoving, served from 1936 to 1945. Shaver would succeed him.⁵⁹

Lord and Taylor was the jewel in the crown of Associated Dry Goods. It was the best producing of their seven holdings, with Associated having an 85 to 90 percent share in the

⁵⁸ For detailed treatments of Lord & Taylor history see *History of Lord & Taylor, 1826-1926* (New York: The Guinn Company Inc., 1927); Landmark Preservation Commission, "Lord & Taylor Building," October 30, 2007, http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/Lord_and_Taylor.pdf (accessed December 1, 2008).

⁵⁹ Hoving would leave Lord and Taylor to found the Hoving Corporation. Some properties came to include Bonwit Teller and the famed Tiffany's from 1955 – 1980 as cited in "Dry Goods Corp: J.E. Priddy Elected President of Lord & Taylor--Neil Petree Heads McCreery & Co.," *Wall Street Journal* (1889-Current file), April 8, 1931, 5.

store.⁶⁰ In 1924, Lord & Taylor had 2,200 employees, 800 of whom were salespeople. It was a solid performer in business, and was known for customer service and quality goods.⁶¹

The Rise of the Department Store: Cathedrals of Commerce

New York in the 1920s was enjoying the popular plateau of the wave of the department store. With its golden age from 1850 to 1900, department stores arose in the United States as an outgrowth of the dry goods business that served the masses of immigrants entering New York's ports.⁶² They quickly increased in number, and trademarks appeared. Most of the nation's major department stores were established between 1850 and 1910, including Macy's (1858), Saks (1867) Bloomingdale's (1861) and Nordstrom (1901). Many department store owners made great fortunes. Alexander Turney, of A. T. Stewart and Company Emporium, retired as one of the wealthiest of New York citizens on par with the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers.⁶³

⁶⁰ Other holdings included department stores James McCreery, and Hahne & Co., of which Associated had complete ownership of all their other six holdings. Lord & Taylor was the best producing entity, bringing Associated one-quarter of the income (four million dollars) of the combined total of all the others as cited in "Associated Dry Goods Corporation," *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), February 11, 1928, 11. Time, Inc., "Business and Finance: Extra Special," December 3, 1934, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,930004-1,00.html> (accessed December 18, 2008).

⁶¹ *History of Lord & Taylor*, 53.

⁶² Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 12; Norma M. Rantisi, "The Ascendance of New York Fashion," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28.1 (March 2004): 89.

⁶³ Christina Zarrello, "Top 10 Oldest US Retailers," August 19, 2008, Retail Information Systems News. <http://www.risnews.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=MultiPublishing&mod=PublishingTitles&mid=2E3DABA5396D4649BABC55BEADF2F8FD&tier=4&id=220EFF13E74541C0A3FC9482DEE5F58D> (accessed October 10, 2008); Stephen Elias, *Alexander T. Stewart: The Forgotten Merchant Prince* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992). When Edward P. Hatch died in 1909, the associated sold his interest in Lord & Taylor to United Dry Goods. United became Associated Dry Goods in 1916. Associated was acquired by May Department Stores in 1986, becoming the largest retail acquisition in history up until that time. May then merged with

The department store played a major role in the cultural and economic life of the United States. Retailers, wishing to cater to increasingly elite clientele, became conscious of providing establishments that offered some comfort, leisure, and elements of refinement and cultured living. Stores became larger and grander such that some were built in the style of small palaces. They became places for entertainment, leisure, and social life, particularly for women. Department stores tried to make women feel at home in the shopping experience and often blurred the lines between recreation and consumption, offering such amenities as lounges.⁶⁴ The availability and use of credit democratized the shopping experience, encouraging more and more shoppers, and the classes mingled.

At the heart of the dry goods trade, was the sale of clothing items. The department store owed its existence to the thriving garment industry of New York.

The Rapidly-Development Garment Industry: Clothing the Masses

The garment industry in New York was fueled by the steady waves of immigration beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. As the population increased, the demand for ready-to-wear clothing increased. This was particularly true with the onset of World War I. Many of the immigrants who settled in New York were those of German Jewish descent with

Federated Department Stores in 2005, to become a group of 1,000 stores. May then consolidated with Macy's, Inc. in September 2006, with Lord & Taylor as the only nameplate to survive the change. Macy's did not convert Lord & Taylor, but sold it in October 2006 to a group of investors, NRDC Equity Partners, LLC for \$1.2 billion.

⁶⁴ Mark Moss, *Shopping as an Entertainment Experience* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007), 15.

garment-making skills.⁶⁵ Women began entering the workforce. They had little time for custom fittings or for producing their own clothing. This fueled the demand for ready-to-wear clothing.

The garment and retail industries first developed in the Lower East side of New York at the port of entry to serve the burgeoning groups of immigrants and developing communities.⁶⁶ This is where Lord & Taylor had its beginnings. It opened on Catherine Street in the Lower East side in 1826.⁶⁷ Overcrowding and housing shortages pushed the population northward toward central Manhattan. The retail and garment industries followed the population and settled the areas between Fifth and Ninth Avenues and 34th and 40th Streets, which became key garment and retail districts, commonly known as the Garment District and Ladies Mile. Technological developments such as the invention of the sewing machine in 1846 further fueled garment production.

Other institutions and industries began to spring up around the garment industry. Retail outlets were needed to distribute the garments. Department stores began to spring up. Catalogues began to appear when, in 1866, Ebenezer Butterick began to distribute clothing patterns by mail order.⁶⁸ Magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* began publishing in 1867 and 1892, respectively. Such magazines were eager to communicate to the rest of the United States, "what the smart women of New York were buying."⁶⁹ Harsh working conditions in manufacturing

⁶⁵ Rantisi, "The Ascendance of New York Fashion," 89.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁷ *History of Lord & Taylor*, 5.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach* (New York: Random House, 1938); Elizabeth Ewing, *A History of Twentieth Century Fashion* (London: Bratsford, 1992).

⁶⁹ Edna Woolman Chase and Ilka Chase, *Always in Vogue* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1954), 40.

plants spawned the development of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1900. Its daily trade journal, *Women's Wear Daily*, was founded in 1910 and later became a leading source of fashion and industry news. Training institutes for clothing and fashion designers developed. The Pratt Institute was founded in 1888 and Parson's School of Design in 1897. The close proximity of many of these actors (people, retail, manufacturing, etc.) within the Garment District helped to speed the development of the industry.⁷⁰

A Burgeoning Communications Center

The growth of the apparel industry also fueled the developing communications environment. The expansion of the retail portion of the industry, in particular, necessitated the support of the advertising and public relations functions.⁷¹ Department stores needed to talk to their customers and used the predominant media of the time, which were newspapers and magazines. The clothing industry utilized the emerging communications and engaged in campaigns to reach customers and to compete. This increased the need for ad copy, artwork, sketches, and other support industries. The development of photography would soon follow. These communication systems and support services became important to retailers to stimulate sales and build brands. New York would become a major communications center. It would be the cradle of the nation's radio and television broadcast industries, which had not yet emerged when Shaver came to New York in 1917. The first radio network, American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) went on the air in 1923, followed by the National Broadcasting

⁷⁰ Rantisi, "Ascendance of New York Fashion," 104.

⁷¹ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 137.

Company (NBC) in 1926, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1927 and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in 1934. Television would follow two decades later.

With the increased competition for the airwaves and the growing sophistication of communications, modern public relations would emerge. Edward Bernays and his wife, Doris Fleishman Bernays, became prominent public relations practitioners in New York at the early part of the century. Edward Bernays would come to be known as the father of modern public relations, coining the term “public relations counsel” in his book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, which was published in 1923. He also taught the first university course in public relations that same year.⁷²

What New York Did Not Have

In the early part of the century, during its developmental stages, the garment industry was well known for its technical abilities at mass production, but it was quite devoid of any creative input.⁷³ What the apparel industry did *not* have, and what Shaver and a handful of others were able to envision, was *domestic influence in conception and design* of clothing. Inspiration came from across the sea. Buyers, fashion house designers and wholesalers sent representatives to Paris showings where they sketched copies of fashions, or purchased samples to be copied.⁷⁴ Customers celebrated the myth of Paris and preferred to buy clothing with labels from Paris,

⁷² George Rodman, *Mass Media in a Changing World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 373; Larry Tye, *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC).

⁷³ Phyllis Lee Levin, *The Wheels of Fashion* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 210.

⁷⁴ Rantisi, “Ascendance of New York Fashion,” 91.

idolizing only French designers.⁷⁵ Sometimes retailers copied a pattern from Paris, attached a label that falsely indicated the garment had been made in Paris, and featured the garment in a window for quick sale. If customers purchased clothing that was not made in Paris, they were known to sometimes tear out the label. The wealthy took little thought of travelling directly to Paris to do their shopping in search of the right label. Paris certainly had the corner on the market with regard to perceptions about what was fashionable. The concept of “American fashion” was incomprehensible at the time. One could even say it was an oxymoron, such that the American production of clothing was termed “the rag trade.”

The French dictated the direction and the concept of fashion for the United States because it had enjoyed a long history with fashion. The French fashion industry was already well-developed and had made the distinction between wearing clothing and wearing fashions.

Haute couture, or high fashion, is credited to Charles Worth, an Englishman in Paris, who developed the first haute-couture house in Paris in 1800.⁷⁶ He took dressmaking from a craft to a form of high art. He distinguished himself from other dressmakers by proposing that women choose a dress from a series of models.⁷⁷ Parisian fashion was based on this haute couture (high quality sewing by a few designers for members of the elite) concept.

The development of New York’s garment industry followed a very different path from that of Paris.⁷⁸ New York’s industry was predicated on the need for ready-to-wear clothing by

⁷⁵ M. Thomas Inge, *Handbook of American Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 421.

⁷⁶ Haute-couture means high quality sewing and refers to exclusive creations.

⁷⁷ Valerie Steele and Irving Solero, *Fifty Years of Fashion* (Yale Press: 2000), 2.

⁷⁸ Norma Rantisi, “How New York Stole Modern Fashion,” in *Fashion’s World Cities*, eds. Christopher Brewer and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 109-122.

demand from the masses, supplied through developing technologies and mass retail outlets. There were no couturieres to provide high quality sewing for the elite.⁷⁹ Customer chose from a selection of French designs that were either made-to-order or ready-made. The available retail formats were either in the form of specialty shops or department stores. Specialty shops carried a few French designs that one could purchase either made-to-order or ready-made. Department stores carried the gamut of French designs, mostly ready-made. (Some department stores offered a made-to-order department).⁸⁰

What the apparel industry *additionally* did not have was an artistic infrastructure to feed it. A fashion system is more than just clothing. A fashion system “endows garments with beauty and desirability, sometimes making direct contact with art.”⁸¹ Paris had a mature artistic infrastructure to feed its fashion with design inspiration. It was a major cultural center with renowned artists like Matisse. New York in the 1920s, however, was more of a financial and industrial center than an artistic center. It had not yet emerged as a center of culture.⁸² However, with continuing numbers of immigrants (many of whom were artists) and a growing bourgeois class, the demand for arts, amenities, mass entertainment, and all forms of culture would grow. It would include the development of the performing arts, vaudeville, and Broadway. This influence would eventually extend to Hollywood.

⁷⁹ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 121. Couturieres sell only their own designs, and only made-to-order. Hawes identifies one, Jessie Franklin Turner, who was making tea gowns. There was also a Herman Patrick Tappe, who was doing custom designs during World War I.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸¹ Joanne Entwistle, *Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 43.

⁸² Norma Rantisi, “How New York Stole Modern Fashion,” 115.

When Shaver arrived on the scene, a loop, or fashion cycle, composed of technological advances from the industrial revolution, an established garment district, retail formats to distribute clothing, and industries to support garment-making, was effectively in place. A chain of institutions and networks had settled within the narrow geographic and socio-economic landscape of Manhattan and had come together to form an industry that was centered on the manufacturing, distribution, and consumption of apparel. A quickly-developing and sophisticated communication system was growing around it. For a fully-functioning fashion industry, it only lacked domestic inspiration and accompanying cultural institutions to nurture domestic design. The scene was being set. By the early 1920s, when Shaver was establishing herself in New York City, the major actors were all in place and an unfolding drama was about to occur that would change the worlds of fashion, merchandising, and retailing in the United States and would have global impact.⁸³ Samuel Reyburn would provide Shaver entrée into the retailing scene. She would survey it and catch a particular vision. She would direct the actors to their marks, and write a sweeping script to produce a grand epic that would change public opinion, alter public tastes, set trends, and make stars.

⁸³ Ibid.,”109-122; See also Levin, *Wheels of Fashion*.

CHAPTER 6

"THE SHAVER TOUCH"

Shaver worked at Lord & Taylor for a total of about 35 years.¹ She worked in department head positions from 1924 to 1927, served as a vice president from 1927 to 1931, a first vice president from 1931 to 1945, and then president from 1946 to the time of her death in 1959. She brought innovation and creativity to each post she occupied, such that her style of promotion became fondly known as “The Shaver Touch.”² It would be felt at Lord & Taylor in a total re-branding effort, it would be felt upon the world of fashion both in the United and abroad, and it would have lasting effects in the retail and communications worlds.

Rising Through the Ranks

If Shaver consciously maneuvered her way into this solid company, she was certainly not aware of the world in which she was entering and it may have shocked her Southern sense of decency. According to a journalist who featured Shaver and her career in a cover story for *Life*, the world of department stores was “fraught with behind-the-scenes backbiting and intramural politics” ... “a tight cutthroat world ... [where] competition begins on the ground floor and

¹ Her exact starting date and starting position is unknown. She stated her start date as 1924 as Head of the Comparison Shopping Department, however, she worked for an unknown period of time in the Shoe Department prior to that as cited in Eleanor Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” *Boston Sunday Post*, February 3, 1946, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 1.

² Jeanne Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” *Life*, May 12, 1947, 125.

ascends with rising intensity through the hierarchy ... [and where] only a woman of parts can make her way through such an ambush.”³ But Shaver apparently somehow remained unphased. “From the start, I told myself I would never be afraid. If I saw a challenge, I’d meet it,” Shaver later recalled.⁴

One of Shaver’s earliest recorded assignments, and one often missed in many accounts, was to trouble-shoot in the Shoe Dept. The department was losing sales and executives wanted some ideas from her about how to fix it. Her no-nonsense report to Reyburn correctly identified the problem – the inventory did not reflect customer wants. “About 75 percent of the department’s stock was in the wrong type of shoe,” she reported.⁵ In an utter faux pas, the Shoe Department overlooked the demand for the Oxford, which was the latest fad in men’s shoes. Executives were impressed with her judgment and she was asked to work in the Comparison Shopping Department. Many stores had such units. They were often housed in the advertising department and controlled by the merchandising manager.⁶ Their function was to spy on the competition to see what merchandise was being carried, the prices, the relative quality of products to prices, how deep product lines were, what services and amenities the competitors were offering, and also to ensure the truth in their own advertising (e.g., to verify their own

³ Ibid., 118.

⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁵ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p., col. 2.

⁶ William Nelson Taft, *Department Store Advertising* (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Company, 1929), Part One, 7.

claims about having the largest selection, or the cheapest price, etc.). It was hard work, involved a lot of walking, and required physical stamina.⁷

In the 1920s, the department store business was very competitive and sometimes comparison shoppers were known for such guerrilla tactics as buying out the competitors' supply of product so that consumers would not be able to experience or buy it. Sometimes comparison shoppers would even steal the menus of competitors' restaurants. Large department stores and boutiques were all frequented by comparison shoppers. They often knew each other. Some worked in the industry for many years, and upon entering a store, the salesperson might simply allow that person behind the counter to examine merchandise. Some comparison shoppers even become experts in a certain line or type of merchandise.

When Shaver was handed this task of comparison shopping, she did it rather reluctantly. Within two months she was promoted to director and was in a position to make some changes.⁸ Comparison shopping, to her, was a glorified spy mechanism. Instead, she thought it a better idea that Lord & Taylor should mind its own business. She thought the store should develop a bureau that focused on the customer, not the competition. In reflecting on her career, she told a reporter that "It seemed to me [at that time] that we should spend less time in finding out what other shops were doing and pay more attention to developing our own business," she said.⁹ With simplistic genius, stimulated by a cup of coffee, she developed an extensive plan for such a bureau.

⁷ Marilyn Bender, "Strong Feet Prove Asset in Retailing," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 14, 1961, 24.

⁸ *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, 1999, s.v. "Shaver, Dorothy" (by Grant Eldridge).

⁹ S. J. Woolf, "Miss Shaver Pictures the Store of Tomorrow," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 5, 1947, SM18.

After I left work I went to a little coffee shop near the store, taking a good supply of paper and pencils with me. I had a pack of cigarettes in my purse and I ordered a small pot of coffee. Many Southerners like to carry coins, even silver dollars, instead of paper money. I spread my coins on the table on a sheet of paper. Near the top, I drew a circle around a silver dollar. That represented the position of the head of the new bureau. With my pencil I circled two half dollars for the assistants' positions, and used quarters, nickels, pennies and dimes for the other personnel. On another piece of paper I described how the bureau would function and set forth its goals.¹⁰

Based on her ideas, she wrote a report to Lord & Taylor management, suggesting that the store abolish the practice of comparison shopping altogether.¹¹ Perhaps it would be better, she suggested, to examine the customer and the environment to determine needs, analyze trends, and anticipate styles, in a sort of "fashion forecasting," she called it. She suggested that it be called the Bureau of Fashion and Decorating (later, it was sometimes also referred to as The Bureau of Stylists), and she proposed that it be staffed by stylists who would advise store buyers on purchasing decisions.¹² Stylists, she proposed, would become aware of the entire fashion picture and counsel store buyers on what kinds of designs or products they should carry in their respective departments. The goal of the bureau, she reported, was increased customer satisfaction.

Her idea won Reyburn's support. A bureau, Reyburn claimed, would cut down on "mistakes ... (that) resulted in expensive markdowns."¹³ Shaver's idea to totally abolish the

¹⁰ David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way: Eight Pioneers for Equal Rights* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 224.

¹¹ Some reports imply this report was unsolicited, and some imply that it was commissioned.

¹² Buyers relied heavily on the advice of manufacturers and producers, but these sources were not always the best barometers of style.

¹³ "Buyer and Stylist Not Rivals: S.W. Reyburn Explains That No Basis for Conflict Exists Between Them. Former Remains in Charge. Fashion Assistant Gives Forecast to Guide Buying," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 25, 1928, N18.

Comparison Shopping Department, however, was not met with approval. So, in 1925, Shaver was commissioned to head both departments. She became Head of the newly-formed Bureau of Fashion and Decorating and also remained Head of the Comparison Shopping Department. In her new bureau, she supervised a staff of seventeen local assistants and seven abroad.¹⁴

The idea of a bureau to do fashion forecasting was soon adopted by other retailers. She wrote extensively on the concept for *The Buyer's Job*, a publication by the National Retail Dry Goods Association; other stores would follow, until "every store [now] pegs around its [own] Bureau of Style."¹⁵

In a further innovation, she recommended that the Bureau work to develop exclusive products for the store. If Lord & Taylor had exclusive products perhaps there would be no need to comparison shop, Shaver reasoned in another moment of simplistic genius. "I presented a plan to management whereby I would organize a staff of women who had taste and flair to help the buyers develop their own exclusive merchandise; in that way, it seemed to me, we could cease our comparison approach," Shaver reported.¹⁶

These stylists were the beginnings of Lord & Taylor's soon-to-be-famous personal shopper service, which still exists today.¹⁷ The stylists of the Bureau of Fashion and Decorating

¹⁴ It could not be ascertained where those who served abroad were stationed, however, it is assumed that at least one was in Paris.

¹⁵ Dorothy Shaver, "The Style Advisor as an Aid to Merchandising," *The Buyer's Job*, Eighth Article, circa January 1929, 1-4, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 12, Folder 2; Lucille L. Huntington, "The Only Madam President in the Department Store World," *Personal Efficiency: The Success Magazine*, January, 1948, 9, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5; Isabella Taves, *Successful Women and How They Attained Success* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc.), 145.

¹⁶ Phyllis Cerf, "Dorothy Shaver's First Job," *Good Housekeeping*, October 1956, 150.

¹⁷ Talmey, Allene. "No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist," *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 194.

became popular with customers, serving as personal consultants to the customers. They were able to advise a bride on her trousseau, or a young mother on the selection of items for her baby. They advised customers in the art of finer living, instructing them on Christmas decorations, how to stage elaborate dinners, or how to organize flowers and decorations for weddings.¹⁸ Lord & Taylor received letters from around the world from women who were coming to New York to plan their purchases at the store. or who were coming to New York for a special event and wished to be outfitted by a consultant. They had only to write and ask for a sample of dresses to be sent to their hotel rooms, where a consultant would arrive to do fittings and alterations.¹⁹ The Bureau of Stylists led to Lord & Taylor being dubbed “one of the most distinctive stores in the country.”²⁰ This led to the development and popularization of the personal shopping service such that it became an industry standard in retailing.²¹ It finds its expression today at Lord & Taylor as its Red Rose Personal Shopping Service.

As a department head, Shaver began to make trips abroad, particularly to Paris, to investigate what designers and manufacturers were doing in Europe. She noted the cult of personality of the French designers, such as Coco Chanel. She noted their prestige, acclaim, and their design houses. She began to form a similar vision for the American designer.

¹⁸ Gisele D’Assailly, “The Great Granddaughter of LaFayette Discovers the USA,” Draft of a feature story, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 4.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p. col. 3.

²¹ Even though Lord & Taylor is often credited for the concept of the personal shopper, it was evident at Chicago’s Marshall Field Department Store some decades before as cited in Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants: The Story of Marshall Field & Company* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1952), 352-56. But, certainly, Lord & Taylor gave the concept a healthy revival, contemporary application, and popularity.

Within three short years of entering the store as a full-time employee, Shaver gained a seat on the board of directors as Vice President of Style and Publicity. Her crowning achievement during this period was the *1928 L'Art Decoratif et la Peinture Francaise* (The 1928 Exposition of Modern French Painting and Decorative Art), the first of its kind in the United States.²² It was the largest display of French modern design in art, furnishings, and accessories in the United States until that time. It established Lord & Taylor as “the first store to take so firm a step away from traditional design” and thereby introduce a new trend in home fashions -- modernism.²³ Shaver had been nurturing the idea for years. While in Paris on a routine buying trip in 1925, she saw a similar exposition and recognized the potential of modern French design for the US consumer. Three years later, she had the opportunity to implement her idea. Shaver convinced Reyburn to invest a sizeable sum of money to import a collection of modern French furniture and art and prepare an exhibit for the general public.²⁴ She worked on the exhibit for more than a year, travelling to France, Spain, and Italy. “There, during several months time, I bought antique and modern objects ... Not only did I have works of the most modern furniture designers (Rullmann, Leleu, etc.) but also silver, plates, glasses, linen and an extraordinary

²² William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 315; Helen Johnson Keyes, "Decorative Art at the Lord and Taylor Exhibition--Jean Dunand," *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), March 16, 1928, 7.

²³ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159; Walter Rendell Storey. "France Sends us Her Decorative Art: A Current Exhibit Reveals the Striking Developments in New Modern Forms," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 19, 1928; "Has the Style of the Century Arrived?" *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), March 17, 1928, 8.

²⁴ The sum of \$100,000 was widely reported in the news media, however, the sum of \$1 million is indicated in a congratulatory letter as cited in Priscilla Whiley, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), circa February 1928, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Box 10, Folder 5.

selection of paintings, among them Picasso, Braque, Dufy,” she later recalled.²⁵ She filled two floors.

The project finally came to life and was executed on February 2, 1928, in theatrical style reminiscent of a Hollywood movie premiere, complete with private reception, a grand opening night with red carpet, roses, floodlights, champagne, caviar, formal attire, and Shaver floating around in a white evening dress. It was the first time such a promotion had been seen in the retail world and the first time the store had such a gala evening.²⁶ Because of the theatrical style in which it was promoted, it was praised for establishing display “as an art form as well as a sales medium.”²⁷

Its unique style of promotion captured the media’s attention and the event was well attended. It turned into a sensation for Shaver, and for Lord & Taylor. “Everybody came to see the exhibition ... This was the springboard,” Shaver later recalled.²⁸ The exposition was kept open evenings, was held over twice, was shown for 32 days, attracted 300,000 visitors. It was even attended by members of the US Department of Commerce, who were curious about the new interest in the French imports.²⁹

Letters of congratulation began arriving at Shaver’s desk. “Really, you are a wonder ... I believe you have educated them all in this business of retail drama ... You’re such a great

²⁵ Dorothy Shaver in D’Assailly, “Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.

²⁶ Virginia Pope, “Happy Birthday, Dear Dorothy,” *Town & Country*, n.d., 88, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

²⁷ Sally Haas, “Typically New York,” n.d., n.p., DSC, NMAH, Series 3, Box 24, Folder 3.

²⁸ Dorothy Shaver in D’Assailly, “Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.

²⁹ “Art Exhibit Closes: 300,000 Have Seen Lord & Taylor’s Collection--Another Planned,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 8, 1928, N2.

publicity person,” said one.³⁰ “I was too excited to be at all coherent ... “[You have done] a tremendous thing of national importance ... to its utmost perfection. Nothing I have seen here or abroad has been so well exhibited, conducted, or so pleasing. I think your vision has been most inspiring and I’m so glad it was Lord & Taylor who did this first,” said another.³¹ It was such a sensation that Shaver had people contact *her* to apologize for not doing enough for her. “If at any time you are planning to hold another exhibition, I hope that you will let us know in plenty of time so that we can be of more assistance than we were during this past one,” said an editor of Doubleday.³²

The exhibition resonated with the public and created a demand for furniture and accessories in the modern style.³³ Critics felt that it worked well because of Shaver’s excellent choices of items that were modern and yet would not be considered bizarre to the general public.³⁴ Other department stores followed suit and staged similar exhibits.³⁵ Manufacturers and retailers were inspired to embrace modernistic styling and design in response to the new and growing demand.

³⁰ Patricia Whiley, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver). See note ²⁴.

³¹ Dorothy Mines Waters, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), February 29, 1928, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 5.

³² Ellen D. Wangner, Associate Editor, Doubleday Doran and Company, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), March 8, 1928, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 5.

³³ “Industrial Art,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 15, 1928, 26.

³⁴ Christopher Long, *Paul T. Frankl and Modern American Design* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 82.

³⁵ Ralph Flint, “More Modernist Interiors,” *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), October 8, 1928, 10.

Reyburn used the event to gauge public interest in modernism and to determine if there was justification for designers, manufacturers, and retailers to pursue production and marketing of such items as a viable business venture. It certainly appeared to be profitable. In September, 1928, Lord & Taylor reported that sales of modern furniture accounted for 20 percent of its sales, other stores across the nation were reporting increases of 10 to 20 percent in furniture sales.³⁶ Macy's reported an increase in earnings per share from \$7.05 in 1920 to \$16.66 in 1928.³⁷ By the end of the year, there was a movement to introduce an Industrial Art School into the Art Institute of Chicago to teach modern art and industrial design.³⁸ Shaver's vision made significant impact.

The success of this event and the prestige Lord & Taylor enjoyed because of it, plus the resulting sales from the event, brought Shaver recognition from those inside the store and also from her colleagues in the industry. It established Shaver as a leader in the retail world, and Lord & Taylor Department Store as the arbiter of taste and style.³⁹

In immediate follow-up to the exhibit and in response to the cult of the designer in Paris, Shaver began to advocate for the American designer. She announced her intention to hold an

³⁶ Lord & Taylor Furniture Sale, 1928; "Midwest Sales Increase: Department Stores Make Better Showing in February Than in January and a Year Before," *Wall Street Journal* (1889-Current file), April 6, 1928, 4; "Chicago District Prospers: Department Store, Shoe and Furniture Sales Increase," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 28, 1928, 43; Marilyn Friedman, *Selling Good Design: Promoting the Modern Interior* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2003), 110.

³⁷ Marilyn Friedman, *Selling Good Design*, 110.

³⁸ "\$400,000 Subscribed for Industrial School to Foster Modern Design," *Women's Wear Daily*, September, 21, 1928, 13, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 3, Folder 4.

³⁹ Brady, "Retail Name Doesn't Register," *Crain's New York Business News* 19, no. 32 (August 11, 2003): 9; Eleanor Clymer and Lillian Erlich, *Modern American Career Women* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 77.

exhibition of American designs as soon as American designers were ready.⁴⁰ Her first action in support of American design was later in 1928 when she formed the Contempra Group of International Arts. Its mission was to recruit American designers to design products for American retailers. The group designed products such as dresses, bags, hats, and scarves for Lord & Taylor. In 1929, Shaver formalized her commitment to American design by hiring Neysa McNein, Ralph Burtin, and Katherine Sturgis to create fabrics with American themes for the store. Because of these early actions, and stronger efforts to come, Lord & Taylor would become known as the first store to promote American designers.⁴¹

In 1930, she was part of an elite core, and a charter member, of about thirteen women who saw the potential of an emerging fashion industry and who came together to give direction, form, and voice to the industry. The Fashion Group, which later came to be known as the Fashion Group International, was started informally in 1928 by Edna Woolman Chase, editor-in-chief of *Vogue*.⁴² These women “all had three things in common: each held a job of consequence in the business of fashion, each held all the others in high regard and together they held a belief that fashion needed a forum, a stage, or a force to express and enhance a widening awareness of the American fashion business and of women’s roles in that business.”⁴³

⁴⁰“Art Exhibit Closes,” N2.

⁴¹ Best & Co. made an earlier, but small, attempt in 1929 ad as cited in "Display Ad 6 -- No Title," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1932, 7. But Lord & Taylor was consistent in the effort and ultimately successful as cited in Smithsonian Institute, “Four Women Who Excelled in Business: Dorothy Shaver,” <http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/WIB-tour/mainMovie.html> (accessed May 20, 2008).

⁴² Fashion Group International, “Fashion Group History,” <http://newyork.fgi.org/index.php?news=311> (accessed April 14, 2008).

⁴³ Other charter members of the group included Elizabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, designers Lilly Dache, Edith Head, Claire McCardell, and Clare Potter, and *New York Times* fashion columnist Virginia Pope as cited *ibid.*, paragraph 2.

In 1931, largely as a result of the 1928 Exhibition, she was promoted to Lord & Taylor's Vice President of Style and Publicity. This was her most productive and innovative period. She totally re-branded Lord & Taylor and also changed the face of American fashion.

The Re-branding of Lord & Taylor: From Dowdy to Chic

Shaver's re-branding of Lord & Taylor was achieved through innovative internal and exterior display, trend-setting advertising, and attention-getting promotions. From her new office, furnished in the modern style of stark white and chrome, she actively sought out ideas and brought enthusiasm and excitement to each project she undertook.⁴⁴ Her flurry of creativity culminated in a flair for merchandising and promotion that set many retail trends and that came to be known as "The Shaver Touch."⁴⁵

Lord & Taylor had developed a reputation as a very conservative and staid department store before Shaver. "It was sober, well-run, [and] eminently respectable."⁴⁶ It was a "pleasant place, famous for the excellence of its merchandise ... but the atmosphere was bland soap-stone gothic, touched up with mahogany" ... and its clientele "was not composed of chic women."⁴⁷

Shaver began to reinvent the store by first altering its interior appearance. She supervised a number of changes that were in departure from traditional display of the period. She introduced the use of color to in-store furnishings, going against traditional thinking that any extra color

⁴⁴ Talmey, "No Progress, No Fun," 192.

⁴⁵ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," 126.

⁴⁶ Phyllis Lee Levin, *The Wheels of Fashion* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 217.

⁴⁷ Talmey, "No Progress, No Fun," 159; Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach* (New York: Random House, 1938), 94.

only detracted from the merchandise. She allowed for the plentiful use of mirrors, particularly in the bridal area with its new mirrored walls. She narrowed many entry-ways into selling spaces, going against the traditional view to broaden them. This was done because an in-store study had shown that 75 percent of the sales occurred at the front of the store, so Shaver had the front narrowed and used directional lighting to draw customers deeper into the store toward selected selling spaces and merchandise.⁴⁸

Gradually, she turned Lord & Taylor into a large version of a grand home, changing it from its heavy staid mahogany interior to a more modern, clean, and airy interior. She brightened the color palette to pastels, made it more spacious, and focused on creating comfortable spaces that women would find especially entertaining, comfortable, and enjoyable. “It is in this spirit that I had the staircases decorated in a humorous way and have livened the display of the counters as well with flowers and animals,” she said.⁴⁹ She had stairwells painted with murals, and had unsightly fire equipment camouflaged under a haze of gauze and angels. Paper Mache cows led the way to the children’s department.

Also in the spirit of a grand home, she focused on customer comfort. She offered coffee, fruit juices, and folding chairs in the vestibule area in front of the main doors prior to opening. She established what is credited as the first store lunch counter in New York. The Bird Cage was a tiny tea room with an entrance that resembled a bird cage. It was “jam-packed from eleven to

⁴⁸ "New Floor Opened by Lord & Taylor: Store Departs From Tradition in Design Featuring Color and Narrow Entrances, Mirrors Used Lavishly, Lighting Arrangement Solves the Problem of Daylight Apparel Merchandising," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 1, 1938, 32.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Shaver in D’Assailly, “The Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.

three.”⁵⁰ Shoppers were served finger sandwiches from rolling carts modeled after Italian race cars. Shoppers could purchase a cup of tea for forty cents and be served in high style on one-armed chairs with attached trays. The dining experience included complimentary cigarettes. The Bird Cage was considerably smaller than the full-scale restaurants at Altman’s and Abraham & Straus’s, but it was certainly the most unique.⁵¹

Ease of shopping also became a concern. Shaver created a Milk Bar for mothers to drop their children while they shopped. The Milk Bar came complete with the services of a nurse. It offered milk, fruit juice, ice cream, and toys for the children. In true Shaver style, the area was decorated with cages of various animals such as parakeets, monkey, birds, or lions. For men who came shopping in tow of their wives, Shaver provided respite in the Men’s Soup Bar. It featured Scotch broth and deep dish apple cobbler.

For improved merchandising, and to cater to a group’s every need, she gathered merchandise into similar units and created specialty shops within the store in a system of shops-within-shops. This resulted in separate sections for different groups such as shops for teens, petites, college students, brides, budget shoppers, and mothers-to-be. To invigorate sales, she encouraged the use of the complimentary gift with purchase. Complimentary rattles came with the sale of every layette in the maternity shop, and seed-pearl hearts came with every bridal purchase in the bridal shop.

⁵⁰ Marshall Field’s in Chicago had a lunch counter as early as the 19th century as cited in Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants*, 213 ; Chris Pearson, “Restauranting Through History: Lunching at the Bird Cage,” August 7, 2008, <http://victualling.wordpress.com/2008/08/07/lunching-in-the-bird-cage/> (accessed Feb. 1, 2009); Patricia Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” *Promenade Magazine*, May, 1951, 20-47, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁵¹ Pearson, “Restauranting Through History,” paragraph 1.

In a desire to keep customers in a good mood and exhibit pleasantness, she interjected a characteristic humor to store displays and signage. A sign commanding people not to smoke was changed from “DO NOT SMOKE” to an airy sketch of an angel with the caption, “BE AN ANGEL. PLEASE DON’T SMOKE.”⁵²

From in-store display, she moved her attention to the exterior and window displays. She quickly realized the power of the window to attract customers. Department store windows of the time were typically cluttered with merchandise and highly visible price tags. Windows were meant to showcase merchandise and their price points. Exhibiting her love of arts, Shaver elevated the window display to theatre. “We change the windows each week and we try to vary the presentation of objects in such a manner that the woman making her choice will have the impression of being entertained,” she explained.⁵³ A swimsuit display included actual sand and beach grass. To increase sales of fur coats and underwear during an unseasonably warm winter, she created a fake snowstorm in the windows using Epsom salts, whitened corn flakes, beer froth, and fans. To enhance the effect, she produced sound effects of wind by using a phonograph. The fake snowstorm window display was a crowd-stopper. There was plenty of media coverage about the fake storm, and very little about the doubled sales of coats and underwear.⁵⁴ In another theatrical display, in order to speed the sales of perfume, she had the

⁵² Elizabeth Carpenter, “The Shavers Show the Big City,” *Arkansas Gazette*, n.d., n.p. In DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

⁵³ Dorothy Shaver in D’Assailly, “Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.

⁵⁴ “Fifth Avenue ‘Blizzard’ Spurs Winter Trade: Swirling Snow in Store Windows Warns of Cold to Come,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 15, 1938, 13; Perkins, “No. 1. Career Woman,” 125. This also happened to be the window display that caused some minor clash in 1938 between Walter Hoving, then president of the store, and the merchants of the Fifth Avenue Association. The display, with its motion and sound effects, stretched the boundaries of the association’s guidelines about what was permissible, tasteful, and appropriate in window

scent sprayed by giant atomizers onto the crowd outside the store. She spent \$1,000 but experienced a “five-fold increase in sales” of the product.⁵⁵ By 1941, most of the Fifth Avenue retailers produced similar displays in their windows, such that the famed street was called “the biggest art gallery in the world.”⁵⁶

The windows at Lord & Taylor were unique in that they were on elevators.⁵⁷ They could be lowered to the basement where artists, usually five men and a chief decorator, created the displays. The windows could be prepared in the sub-basement and then raised up at completion. The sub-basement was filled with all manner of props, mannequins, fabrics, pieces of furniture, paint shops, carpentry shops, and construction tools, similar to a property room for stage or film in a sort of “cross between Madame Tussaud’s Wax Works and your grandmother’s attic.”⁵⁸ During the Christmas holidays, decorators would sometimes alternately raise and lower the

displays as cited in Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006),

⁵⁵ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman, 126; “A Business Woman in Hartford,” *Fortune*, April 1953, 59.

⁵⁶ Time Inc., “Art Along the Avenue,” April 21, 1941, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772706,00.html?promoid=googlep> (accessed February 9, 2009).

⁵⁷ Dorothy Shaver said they were the only store to have windows on elevators as cited in Dorothy Shaver, “In Pursuit of Ideas,” (unpublished draft of text written for Playbill Magazine), August 1957, 3, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 4; The windows were installed by Lord & Taylor, which prompted a meeting of the Fifth Avenue Association to discuss policy on the use of motion in window displays. The situation came forward as a result of the window elevators being used to change mannequins every three minutes as cited in Earl Dash, “Clearer Rules on Fifth Ave. Display Sought,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, May 29, 1950, 1, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14 Folder 4.

⁵⁸ D’Assailly, “The Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.; Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” 47.

windows to the delight of passersby who could witness “a wonderful moving spectacle.”⁵⁹ Shaver used her competitive advantage of the elevator windows to their maximum potential, pushing the envelope of accepted practice. At one point, in 1950, she utilized the elevator system to change window display mannequins every three minutes. This was met with dismay by other retailers on Fifth Avenue who lobbied to have the practice restricted in the name of good taste and being “a bit too commercial.”⁶⁰

She is credited as the first retailer to use window display for public relations purposes. In a free-wheeling idea, she thought to fill them with no merchandise at all. Her first attempt at windows without merchandise was in 1938. Depression conditions were still evident in the country and wanting to lift people’s spirits, instead of loading her post-Thanksgiving windows with holiday merchandise, she decorated them with gold chiming Christmas bells against a black and white velvet background. “Shaver took all merchandise from the display window and advertised Christmas itself.”⁶¹ “It was a “Christmas card to the public;” “no merchandise at all, only golden Christmas bells swinging out their golden notes, a sound, incidentally, heard around the world.”⁶²

⁵⁹ D’Assailly, “The Great Granddaughter of LaFayette,” n.p.

⁶⁰ There were two incidents, one in 1938 when Shaver was first vice president and Hoving was president. Hoving managed to assuage fears. In the second incident in 1950, when Shaver was president, retailers complained about the continual changing of mannequins every three minutes on the elevator windows. There is indication that Shaver initially capitulated on their objection but may have resumed the practice at a later time as cited in Dash, “Clearer Rules on Fifth Ave. Display Sought,” 1. See notes ^{52, 55}.

⁶¹ Anne Robinson, “Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring to Fifth Avenue,” *Sunday Magazine, Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1956, 3.

⁶² One store from China wrote to request a photograph as cited in Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 233; Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159.

She also strung lights to form a ten-storey Christmas tree against the Fifth Avenue façade of the store, in a happy statement about the potential for the visual delights of the season. Other shops followed and New York streets would become famous for their Christmas displays. It was all a novel idea at the time. Shaver's windows and displays drew many crowds and received much media attention, such that the sidewalks of Lord & Taylor needed to be roped off in order to accommodate viewers in an orderly fashion.⁶³

One window along Fifth Avenue, called "the public relations window," was dedicated to charitable causes. It featured exhibits devoted to United Nations, The Red Cross, Children's Book Week, the New York Philharmonic, and camps for underprivileged children.⁶⁴ She allowed charitable groups to use her windows as early as 1938.⁶⁵ When World War II ended, she created a special window display, 'Paris is Free.' Henry Callahan, the window display director was called in at 4:00 a.m. to put together the display. It was revealed to the public early that morning, hours before the headlines appeared on street corners.⁶⁶

Shaver started a window display promotion that other retailers soon copied. It was called "Salute to the Seasons," in which Lord & Taylor created displays to herald the coming of each new season. This display incorporated the creative use of the awnings above the windows.

⁶³ Robinson, "Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring," 3; Carpenter, "Shavers Show the Big City," n.p.

⁶⁴ Melvin Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role. Window Display Used Attention Focused Fund-Raising Aided Services: Important Benefits Afforded," *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current File). December 11, 1959, 20.

⁶⁵ In 1938, she allowed her window to be used for an exhibit of Spanish children's drawings to benefit The Quakers' work in Spain, as cited in Anonymous, "Dorothy Shaver, President of Lord & Taylor," (text of speech typed on letterhead from the Office of the President of the Men's City Club of New York) in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 10.

⁶⁶ Coffin, "The Department of Utter Illusion," 47.

Shaver painted the awnings in various floral designs – sometimes roses in the spring, or red and golden leaves for fall, setting a national trend.⁶⁷ Lord & Taylor’s awnings were heralded alongside its window displays. Shaver’s “Salute to the Seasons” promotion became so popular that The City of New York eventually took it over as an officially sponsored program.

While Shaver was busy branding Lord & Taylor through interior and exterior design, she began to innovate with the store’s advertising. In 1929, the trend in advertising was just beginning to evolve away from formal, lifeless announcements and toward the “human-interest” element.⁶⁸ Ads were marked by an abundance of information, well-organized into units, and covered almost every inch of allotted space in order not to “waste” space.⁶⁹ Advertising layouts were often given great consideration. They were often hurriedly thrown together or left to the discretion of the printer. The trend was to dominate the page and to scatter other ads throughout the newspaper rather than buy full pages and try to feature a variety of merchandise.⁷⁰ Advertisements used existing typography styles of the time, and line drawings for illustrations.⁷¹ Shaver broke almost every rule. She approached advertising design from an artistic perspective. Each advertisement was a work of art in its attention to design, layout, and copy. She had artists design and illustrate them. Foremost among the artists, was the famed Dorothy Hood, an artist whose wash drawings replaced the traditional line drawings (the use of photography in

⁶⁷ Huntington, “The Only Madam President,” 6.

⁶⁸ Taft, *Department Store Advertising*, Part One, 15.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 34, 37.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Part Two, 2.

advertising had not yet been developed).⁷² Shaver allowed the artists to sign their ads. It was a practice that she said was unique in the country.⁷³ She also utilized artists to develop renditions of the store logo. It was created in artist's freestyle lettering for which there was no existing typography. Therefore, the logo would remain unique.⁷⁴

Shaver decried the use of clutter and insisted on ample white space. She did not give in to the temptations of her peers to use every inch of ad copy to display a garment, object, or to advertise a price. Sometimes she did not even mention details like available colors. "The only place for a woman to buy a dress or coat is in the fitting room, she said."⁷⁵ She would let her ads breathe, so to speak, and usually only featured one fashion at a time. One journalist reported that "Their [Lord & Taylor] ads, full page delicious ones, with an enormous following, have

⁷² Paul Shaw, "Lord & Taylor's Signature Style," *Business Week*, April 16, 2008, http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/apr2008/id20080416_449600.htm (accessed October 15, 2008).

⁷³ Dorothy Shaver, "In Pursuit of Ideas," 4.

⁷⁴ Artist for Lord & Taylor, Paul Shaw, called the Lord & Taylor logo "one of the most recognizable and yet most overlooked logos ... remarkable in that it is not the work of one person." The freestyle script logo debuted in 1933 with artist Harry Rodman, who was art director for Lord & Taylor until 1970. Shaver directed subheadings, such as "New York and Manhasset" or "Fifth Avenue." A number of artists incorporated the logos into their drawings for advertisements, Dorothy Hood being the first artist to do so, and so there never was a standard typeface or script for the Lord & Taylor logo. It was fresh every time. "The Lord & Taylor logo is an artistic collaboration that evolved to fit the times. Having functioned from the start as the company's signature, personality, and its bond with its customers, it was a brand decades before the concept existed," Shaw declared. Lord & Taylor kept this tradition and has utilized freestyle artistic lettering in all of its logotype redesigns, until 2006 when the company was taken over by NRDC Equity Partners and hired Brandbuzz, a division of Young and Rubicam, to design a fixed logo for use in all but newspaper advertising as cited in Shaw, "Lord & Taylor's Signature Style."

⁷⁵ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman, 125.

mentioned no prices, no sizes, no colours [sic], and rarely the floor number. Miss Shaver's explanation is 'why sell one pair of slippers against another?'"⁷⁶

Advertising at the time tended to be detailed and sober. Advertising managers were trying to move away from the "formal" and the "lifeless" and toward "human interest."⁷⁷ Shaver broke with the old traditions and often interjected humor. She shifted her ads away from the trend of "pleasing the merchandise buyer to amusing the spectator or reader." One perfume ad featured a baby elephant with the caption, "Everybody has a nose for perfume." Another ad for half-off the price of Early American furniture, featured a Puritan sawed in half.⁷⁸

Shaver led the way in institutional advertising for retailing.⁷⁹ She was careful to promote ideas and concepts over merchandise or objects. "The strategy is not to sell a specific item," said Shaver, "It is to plant the idea that we know fashion."⁸⁰ Her ads were created to instill beliefs and encourage confidence. Shaver's style was described by a journalist as "institutional advertising with an entirely fresh concept of retail-public contact ... [one] that needed a new name."⁸¹ Shaver's ads were noted for their "basis on a single idea, a definite single theme of personal, home or social significance. And however brief the theme copy, it precisely keys in with and supports the dramatization creating a new school of fashion advertising."⁸²

⁷⁶ Talmey, "No Progress, No Fun," 198.

⁷⁷ Taft, *Department Store Advertising*, Part One, 12.

⁷⁸ Talmey, "No Progress, No Fun, 159; Coffin, "The Department of Utter Illusion," 20.

⁷⁹ Edward Drayton, "Ad-Angles of Reconversion," *Women's Wear Daily*, February 6, 1957, n.p. in DS, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 3, Folder 5.

⁸⁰ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," 125.

⁸¹ Drayton, "Ad-Angles," n.p.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Shaver elevated advertising to an art form to attract attention, entertain, instill beliefs, and win confidence. By the mid 1940s, Lord & Taylor ads had become so distinguishable, legendary, and tell-tale that she did not need to put the name of the store on an ad, only stating “You know who.”⁸³

With the in-store display and window displays undergoing transformation, and the advertising now looking fresh, Shaver also set her hand to creating unique marketing campaigns which usually gained the attention of the press.

Her promotion, “Hello Spring,” included recorded canary chirps, garlands of apple blossoms outside the store, flower girls, bunnies, live lambs greeting customers at the door, and an appearance by the Mayor of Dublin.⁸⁴ It was almost a disaster because it snowed that day. When Shaver stepped out of her limousine to greet the Mayor of Dublin, she stepped on a green carpet covered in snow. “But she greeted the Mayor happily and the newspapers adored it,” wrote an employee.⁸⁵ Shaver capitalized on it by later featuring a window filled with fake snow and mannequins poking out of the mounds, wearing fur stoles and flowered hats.

Nearly every store copied her promotion “Wake up in a Flower Garden.”⁸⁶ One of the buyers had an abundance of chintz and suggested it be made up into drapes and bedspreads. Shaver took the idea further and suggested dressing gowns, housecoats and dresses, too. “We’re going to let the American woman wake up in a flower garden!” she declared.⁸⁷

⁸³ Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” 21.

⁸⁴ Robinson, “Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring,” 3.

⁸⁵ Anonymous, (unpublished hand-written note on ‘Hello Spring’ promotion) in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3 Box 2, Folder 5.

⁸⁶ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p., col. 5.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

“The Shaver Touch” injected Lord & Taylor with new ideas that brought it into modern times and gave it a sense of youthfulness. By 1951, the store was described as the “Gloria Swanson of New York Department stores ... the oldest and the youngest ... the grandmother with ideas as new as next fall’s fashions.”⁸⁸ Shaver’s touches helped give Lord & Taylor a fresh and appealing corporate personality. It was one that seemed as if it was “winking at you with its humorous ads, airy window displays, and its fraught-with-glamour interior,” wrote one journalist.⁸⁹

The American Designer Movement and the “American Look” Campaign

While Shaver was building a brand for Lord & Taylor through display, advertising, and promotion, she retained her conviction for the American designer. It was a conviction that kept her working tirelessly and against some resistance.

In 1932, Shaver inaugurated The American Designer Campaign. She sought domestic fashion design talent to build a fashion industry in the United States. Shaver wrote her early thoughts about such a campaign.

Except for a handful of very exclusive designers who worked independently and went to see the Paris collections to make designs from them which they sold at fabulous prices to individual customers and custom salons, America had no designers to speak of at all ... Yet I knew that America was full of talented young people who needed only encouragement and an opportunity to develop for America to become a great fashion center.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” 20.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Dorothy Shaver, “The American Look – How I Did it.” (paper describing the process she went through in developing the campaign), n.d., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 8, Folder 5.

Elizabeth Hawes, fashion designer, remembered the early stirrings and the reaction from within the designer community.

Up popped Lord & Taylor with an idea. They wanted to promote American designers! They'd been mulling over the thought for two years. Now, they said, is the time. For the next few years there was a game which you could start in any group of fashion people. You just said, "Who are the American designers?" Then you watched everyone scurry around looking in corners to try and find them.⁹¹

Shaver had more faith in the designers than they had in themselves. She came up a plan that involved advertising and promotion.

But how to overcome the snob appeal of Paris? How to convince the American fashion magazines and the American public of the designing talent all around us? How to prove to the fashion industry that by helping native designers it could be helping itself?"... "I started 'doing it' with a series of Lord & Taylor ads featuring clothes by young American designers. To do this meant ferreting out the manufacturers who had designers, then convincing them that by publicizing their designers, they would enhance their company's prestige, increase its business and help us ultimately to make America a great fashion center."⁹²

So, on April 17, 1932, Shaver ran an advertisement featuring American designs. She hosted a special lunch and fashion show at Lord & Taylor. It featured the work of three selected designers. Elizabeth Hawes, Annette Simpson, and Edith Reuss showcased their work and became known as the "first rank" of American designers.⁹³ The ad declared

Lord & Taylor recognizes a new trend toward clothes of, by and for the American woman, as created by three young American designers. Lord & Taylor, ever eager to sponsor a new idea, recognized in the work of three young designers, a new expression in clothes created for the American woman. Clothes that understand American life as she lives it ... These young women began designing clothes for their acquaintances, typical

⁹¹ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 193.

⁹² Dorothy Shaver, "The American Look – How I Did it," n.p.

⁹³ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 194; see also "Finds Style Centre Here: Store Executive, Honoring Designers, Predicts Eclipse of Paris," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 14, 1932, 18.

American girls ... In presenting these collections we believe that you will discover a new satisfaction in buying, and wearing clothes that understand you.⁹⁴

Shaver considered it a successful promotion.

Women came into the store, advertisements in hand, asking for specific models by name. We sold 50 of one number and 150 of another in just a few days. We were convinced that we had planned correctly and that American designers were at last coming into their own.⁹⁵

She followed up with a series of similar ads. The second round of promotions featured the works of Muriel King and Elizabeth Hawes.⁹⁶ A third promotion featured the work of Clare Potter, Alice Smith, and Ruth Payne. The promotions were widely reported by newspapers, and gained favorable coverage.⁹⁷ Because of these strong and definite actions, Shaver and Lord & Taylor became known as the first store to promote American designers.⁹⁸

This was not an altogether altruistic proposition, however. A keen merchant, Shaver was certainly not also unaware of the existing economic depression and the need to stimulate sales. There were high import duties on foreign goods. The pressure to keep costs down made imports costly.⁹⁹ It simply made good business sense to foster a source of domestic design.

⁹⁴ "Display Ad 15 -- No Title," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 17, 1932, 16.

⁹⁵ Dorothy Shaver, "American Styles for Prestige," *Merchandise Manager*, July 1933, n.p. in DSP, NMAH, series 3, Box 8, Folder 5.

⁹⁶ "Display Ad 18 -- No Title." *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 25, 1932, 18; "Display Ad 15 -- No Title." *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 5, 1933, 14; "Display Ad 21 -- No Title." *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 9, 1933, 21.

⁹⁷ "American Styles for Americans," Topics of the Times, *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 24, 1932, 18; "American Designers Create Clothes for the Average American Woman," n.s., n.d., n.p. in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 8, Folder 4; Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 196.

⁹⁸ Linda Welters and Patricia A. Cunningham, *Twentieth Century American Fashion: Dress, Body, Culture* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 118.

⁹⁹ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 194; Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 62-63.

Shaver enlisted the aid of Eleanor Lambert, a New York publicist who was actively promoting fine artists, to also take on designers as clients. Lambert had arrived in New York at approximately the same time as Shaver. Both were involved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the art scene. Like Shaver, Lambert was an innovator. Her first fashion client was Annette Simpson in 1932. Simpson was among one of the first designers publicly sponsored by Lord & Taylor, and she who would receive national acclaim.¹⁰⁰ Lambert took up the task of promoting designers full throttle, pressing for their name recognition and developing new styles of promotion to reach the goal. She developed the National Fashion Press Week, the Council of Fashion Designers of America, the Coty American Fashion Critics Award, and the International Best Dressed Poll. She would become widely heralded as the “inventor of fashion publicity” and lovingly referred to as the “Empress of Seventh Avenue.”¹⁰¹ Lambert and Shaver partnered together in the vision for the American designer and collaborated on many projects, including fundraising for The Costume Institute and developing the Coty American Fashion Critics Awards.¹⁰²

Designers, reticent at first, began to catch Shaver’s vision. They realized that their made-to-order designs could be sent to a manufacturer for mass production and sold to department stores as stock. Instead of just one design on a department store rack, designers could now

¹⁰⁰ Amy Fine Collins, "The Lady, the List, the Legacy," *Vanity Fair*, April 1, 2004, 260; "Finds Style Centre Here," 18.

¹⁰¹ "The Woman Who Owns Fashion Editors," *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, December 17, 1968, B6; Enid Nemy, "Eleanor Lambert, Empress of Fashion, Dies at 100," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 8, 2003, C17; Anne-Marie Schiro, "Notes on Fashion," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 16, 1985, C11.

¹⁰² Polly Rayner, "American Designers Made Names for Themselves in the '40s, Series: Defining America: The 1940s -- The Bomb [Second Edition]," *Morning Call*, July 18, 1999, E1.

envision an entire row of designs in different colors. They realized they could become full-fledged businesses.

But, as is the case with many businesses, it was a rocky start. Even though newspapers and magazines wrote about American design and American fashion, they fell short in that they did not mention the specific names of designers. Credit for styles was still being given to the manufacturers or the retailers. Newspaper editors had reasons to be reluctant. They were very sensitive to the relationship between advertising dollars and editorial coverage. They were conscious about setting up a rivalry between advertisers and the newspaper about whose store might be getting the most press coverage.¹⁰³ *The New York Times* learned this first-hand when, in an article about New York fashion merchants, it inadvertently left out the name of a particular department store, and that store withdrew thousands of dollars in advertising.¹⁰⁴ Journalists were happy to write about French designers, whose works could be purchased almost anywhere, but highly reluctant to write about the emerging designers from New York, referring to them only as “our own American designs.” “Our own American designs?” decried designer Elizabeth Hawes. “By whom? Why, by Americans. Who are they? What are their names? Never mind that, these are clothes designed in America...whoopee – by perfectly nameless people, by robots maybe,” she cried.¹⁰⁵ Smart retailers, like Shaver, realized the realities of the environment. They had to continue carrying and advertising their French designs. But Shaver promoted them alongside of each other. The press would eventually relent and start to name designers, but this wouldn’t

¹⁰³ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 181.

¹⁰⁴ Bill Cunningham, “Our Miss Pope: The Ladylike Journalist Who Gave American Designers a Forum: Fashions of the Times,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 24, 1993, SM82.

¹⁰⁵ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 181

happen for another eight years. “For a long while, Lord & Taylor and I fought this battle alone,” Shaver once wrote.¹⁰⁶

Hawes gave Shaver credit for her persistence and shed additional light on possible reasons for the slow chugging of the industry.

She [Shaver] batted her head against many a stone wall and many a merchandise man ... [but] the American Designer movement fell flat on its face [at first] ... in part because of reluctant newspapermen, but also because there weren't enough trained designers available, and there was an unwillingness on the part of retailers to invest money and time in existing designers to allow them to experiment.¹⁰⁷

Apparently, the American design movement had lagged because media were uncooperative, designers lacked confidence, and retailers preferred quicker profits. But Shaver chugged along.

While newspapers were dragging their feet, Shaver worked the problem from a different angle. She was always active in the design and art communities, but she stepped up her support. In 1937, she instituted the Lord & Taylor Awards as a means to stimulate initiative and originality in American design.¹⁰⁸ The awards were for outstanding design. In the first year four recipients received a check from Lord & Taylor for \$1,000. The awards went to fashion designers Clare Potter and Nettie Rosenstein, textile designer Dorothy Liebes, and rug designer Stanislave V'Soske. In the beginning, designers simply went to the store to pick up their checks; however, Shaver got the idea to turn the awards into a dinner event. Media began to cover it in 1938. The awards provided encouragement to designers and fodder for the press. The awards

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Shaver, “The American Look – How I Did it,” n.p.

¹⁰⁷ Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 261

¹⁰⁸ Pope, “Happy Birthday, 108; The collection at SLRI is a complete collection of all the programs, speeches, and winners.

served their purpose until the design community became more solidified. at which time Shaver shifted the focus in support of the war effort and humanitarian causes. The Lord & Taylor Design Awards became one of New York's most prestigious events. By 1945, it held significant drawing power, attracting about 1,800 influential guests to the Waldorf-Astoria.¹⁰⁹

Also in 1937, Shaver began to lend her support to The Costume Institute. The Costume Institute was started by the Lewisohn sisters as a repository of costumes to support their dramatic playhouse. But Shaver had another vision for it. She saw it as a source of design inspiration for designers, believing that all fashion was cyclical and was simply a modification of past fashions.¹¹⁰ In 1945, Shaver spearheaded an effort to have The Costume Institute moved from its home on 49th Street and into the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Since museums were the major vehicles for the transmission of style ideas, Shaver and the members of the Fashion Group believed that housing the Costume Institute inside the Met would help raise the profile of American fashion. Designers could get inspiration from permanent displays in both the museum and the Costume Institute. Designers could also benefit from the collections that were available on loan.¹¹¹ The aim of the plan was to “evolve the most workable museum possible for designers and students of costumes, and to project fashion to the American public through exhibitions, on a plane the creative talents of this country deserve,” wrote the *Women's Wear Daily*.¹¹² Julius

¹⁰⁹ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 234.

¹¹⁰ Dorothy Shaver, “A Few Basic Points to be Watched and Weighed in Merchandising Fashion,” n.d., 1, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 3; Dorothy Shaver, “Appreciation for Style: Buyer's Training Course,” May 25, 1927, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 17, Folder 2.

¹¹¹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 313; Francis Henry Taylor, “Review of the Year,” *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 6, no. 1, July, 1947, 9-28.

¹¹² “Costume Institute Set Up By Metropolitan Museum,” *Women's Wear Daily*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, NMAH, Box 4, Folder 3.

Hochman, vice president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, recognized the economic potential of such a plan to the garment industry and declared that it was sitting on a “gold mine” of “about 1 billion-and-a-half dollars in apparel manufacturing.”¹¹³ The Metropolitan Museum called it a giant step toward industrial relations. The *St. Petersburg Times* declared that, with the move, fashion was a “serious art.”¹¹⁴

To finance the move, Shaver once again enlisted the aid of fashion publicist, Eleanor Lambert,. They embarked upon an ambitious program. They raised \$150,000 and completed the move in 1946.¹¹⁵ The two institutions merged to make the world’s most comprehensive collection of fashions. The new site included study rooms and a laboratory where students could examine artifacts and read books on fashion across the ages.¹¹⁶ The fund raiser started by Shaver and Lambert became an annual event, known as “The Party of the Year.” “It’s Dorothy Shaver who makes it [the party] tick,” said a party organizer.¹¹⁷

In addition to supporting the Costume Institute, Shaver also supported the work of design training institutions to ensure a ready supply of designers to promote. Among the most famous of those institutions, was the Fashion Institute of Technology. Shaver was instrumental in securing

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, “Review of the Year;” Dorothy Roe, “American Fashion is Recognized as Serious Art,” *St. Petersburg Times*, January 7, 1945, Sec. Two, 16.

¹¹⁵ “Costume Institute Set Up By Metropolitan Museum,” n.p.

¹¹⁶ Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures,” SM18; “Costume Institute Set Up,” n.p.

¹¹⁷ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 102. The Design awards started by Shaver in 1937 were well established by 1945, attracting 1,800 guests annually for a gala dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria as cited in Clymer and Erlich, *Women Who Led the Way*, 234. “The Party of the Year,” is still held annually as one of The Costume Institute’s premiere fund raisers.

a \$15,000 endowment from Lord & Taylor for its continued success.¹¹⁸ She also supported the New York School of Applied Design for Women, the Cooper Union Art School, and the Parsons School of Design. At the time of her death she was a trustee of the latter.

And so, American design chugged slowly forward. But World War II gave it extra steam and propelled the industry forward at breakneck speed. With the outbreak of the war and the subsequent occupation of France, Paris fashion houses were cut off from the United States and the rest of the world. There was a void in the fashion industry. Manufacturers and retailers feared that without the French supplying designs and fashion, American women would lose interest in fashion and stop buying their dresses and, unlikely as it seems, that everyone would lose business.¹¹⁹ There could very likely be a huge hole in the supply chain. Shaver and the members of the Fashion Group acted quickly by providing the forum for discussion. The consensus was that American designers simply had to fill the void. “It was evident to us on the firing line that the never-ending flow of ready-to-wear with which this country is so abundantly supplied could not possibly all be derived from Paris,” said Shaver. It was time for the anonymous American designer to “quit blushing unseen.”¹²⁰ Designers simply had to rise to the challenge, produce top-notch designs that American women would like, and convince the public that they were on par with Paris. In the summer of 1940, five large retailers, including Lord & Taylor, came together and conducted a series of promotions.¹²¹ They staged fashion shows and coordinated them so

¹¹⁸ "Tribute to Miss Shaver: Late Store Head Eulogized by Fashion Institute Trustees," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), December 15, 1959, 46.

¹¹⁹ Welters and Cunningham, *Twentieth Century American*, 109.

¹²⁰ Asa Bordages, “Stars of the Payroll,” *World Telegram*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 1.

¹²¹ The ten designers named were Charles Cooper, Frances Troy Stix, Fritzie Hannah, Vera Jacobs, Zelma Golden, Will Saunders, Karen Stark, Bertha Althoz, Vera Host, and Pat

that members of the public and press could go to all of them. They broke with tradition by allowing pre-publicity of the fashions. Pre-publicity had previously been discouraged because of the possibility of production copies and knock-offs. On September 4, Lord & Taylor hosted a press luncheon and a fashion showing to introduce ten selected designers. There were 200 people in attendance.¹²² The event received a full page of coverage in the *New York Times* and the newspaper named the designers and discussed their creations. On September 9, Lord & Taylor featured their designs in the newly-created Designers' Shop, an area in the store developed specifically to showcase American creations.¹²³ And, to make an additional statement, the garments had the names of the designers sewn on the labels.¹²⁴ Soon, this would become common practice and Shaver would receive credit for it. "Before Dorothy Shaver, most stores cut the labels of American designers out of clothes," said designer Donald Brooks.¹²⁵

More and more retailers followed Lord & Taylor's lead and began to actively and consistently promote American designs. Manufacturers and garment workers unions joined the effort, but mainly to preserve the industry and their jobs, since the fate of Paris seemed uncertain. But, by July, 1941, the practice of affixing the names and sewing labels of American designers

Warren. The six participating retailers were Lord & Taylor, Wanamakers, Bonwit Teller, Hattie Carnegie, and The Tailored Woman as cited in Virginia Pope, "Style Show Lifts Prestige of the US: Designs by American Stylists That Are Aiding United States' Bid for Leadership in Fashion," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 5, 1940, 27.

¹²² Pope, "Style Show Lifts Prestige of the US," 27; "Parade of Style Originals Designed For All Tastes From Young to Old :In Lord & Taylor's New Designers' Shop the Varied Work of Ten Fashion Creators Will Be Shown," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 8, 1940, 57.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Pope, "Style Show Lifts Prestige of the US," 27.

¹²⁵ Donald Brooks in Judy Klemesrud, "At Lord & Taylor, 150 Is Only the Start," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), September 23, 1976, 86.

on their creations became common, the sale of women's dresses remained lively, American designers were elevated in status, and the industry would be safe.¹²⁶

From the 1930s to the 1940s, the American Designer campaign at Lord & Taylor put about sixty designers on the map including Adrian, Clare Potter, Joyce, Nettie Rosenstein, and Lilly Dache.

“The American Look” was a term popularized by Shaver to describe a certain fashion style that encompassed and embodied the lifestyle of the American woman and the typical Lord & Taylor customer.¹²⁷ Shaver believed that there could be a unique style created *by* American designers specifically *for* American woman. American women had not really had their own look. The closest they had come was the Gibson Girl image from the early part of the century. “The American Look” was described as a look that had “certain litheness, a casual jauntness, a healthy complexion, broad shoulders, and slim hips.”¹²⁸ The look was created to accommodate American women who were very busy, on tight budgets, and required comfort. It also had to factor fashion into casual and leisure wear. “In Paris, a smart woman may lounge around in a sumptuous negligee with dust-catching ruffles, but in America leisure followed the cool, clean-cut pattern,” explained one reporter.¹²⁹ Shaver sought out designers whose work fit this vision. And she found them.

¹²⁶ Welters and Cunningham, *Twentieth Century American Fashion*, 113.

¹²⁷ Shaver is often credited for the term, but Best & Co. claims they utilized it at an earlier time as cited in Mamie J. Meredith, “The Language of Feminine Fashions,” *American Speech* 26, no. 3 (October 1951): 231; “Display Ad 6 -- No Title,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1932, 7; “Display Ad 6 -- No Title,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1932, 7). file).

¹²⁸ Meredith, “Language of Feminine Fashion,” 231.

¹²⁹ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p. “Believes in America,” paragraph 4.

Clare Potter, an early find, was one that led the way in inventing American sportswear. “She wasn’t influenced by Paris, but by the modern American leisure lifestyle,” according to Valerie Steele, chief curator of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology.¹³⁰ Potter was one of the four who received a Lord & Taylor Design Award in 1937. She was an important figure in fashion history. She was one of the first in the group of designers from the 1930s to be recognized by name. Her designs were causal but sophisticated, and she was particularly known for her use of simple textures, discreet styling, use of color, and simple lines. She is credited for the two-piece swimsuit, sweaters for evening, and simple ornamentation. She also designed a dress for Eleanor Roosevelt for a royal visit to England.¹³¹

Claire McCardell, an early Shaver protégé, came to be known as the quintessential American designer. Prior to her association with Lord & Taylor, she had been designing for many years but with moderate success. She had rejected the haute couture styles of Paris and went her own way, so she was unable to find mass appeal. But in 1945, with sponsorship from Lord & Taylor, she gained support, exposure, acclaim, and recognition for her designs. They fit perfectly with the simple, functional, and stylish American Look that Shaver was promoting. Her designs paved the way for many fashions we now consider to be common, such as the tent dress, the wrap-around skirt, harem pajamas, streamlined swimwear, the use of denim, and fake fur. McCardell influenced fashion to such a degree that her designs became the signature designs for the American Look and she is often called the first truly American Fashion designer. *Life*, in 1990, named her one of the 100 most important Americans of the twentieth century for her

¹³⁰ Anne-Marie Schiro, "Clare Potter, Who Set Trends In Women's Clothes, Dies at 95," *New York Times Late Edition* (1857-Current file), January 11, 1999, A15.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

influence on design. She was one of the first American designers to license her name, and the first female designer on the cover of *Time*.¹³²

Donald Brooks, one of the nation's most influential designers, was encouraged by Shaver to start a career in fashion. Brooks had a summer job at Lord & Taylor in the display department. His desire was to design costumes for stage and film. His supervisor, Henry Callahan, the display director at Lord & Taylor, showed Shaver a collection of Brooks' sketches. Shaver advised Brooks that he needed to be a fashion designer. He became one of the influential designers of "The American Look."¹³³

These designers were followed by a host of others including Bonnie Cashin, who was noted for bringing sophistication to American sportswear; Rudy Gernreich designed the topless bathing suit; Norman Norrell was noted for gowns; Pauline Trigere was known for her sophisticated and structured tailoring, particularly in coats and dresses; and Vera Maxwell was the first designer to use ultra suede. These designers all made their debuts in Lord & Taylor windows.¹³⁴ Their styles would gain the attention of the rest of the fashion world and be copied by Europe. Lord & Taylor came to be known as the store with uniquely American styles which led to the development of their slogan "The Signature of American Style." It remains their slogan

¹³² "Claire McCardell: Designer of Fashion for All-American Beauties, The 100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century," *Life* 13, no. 12, Fall 1990, 6-7; "Fashion Designer Claire McCardell," *Time*, May 2, 1955, cover. Carmela Spinelli-Schaufler, "Donald Brooks," *Red, the Alumni Magazine of Parson School of Design*, Spring 2004, 4, <http://www.parsons.edu/applications/red.pdf> (accessed June 10, 2008).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Toni Schlesinger, "Dear Lord & Taylor, Retail's Resting Place," *The New York Observer*, September 11, 2006, 14; "NYC: Lord & Taylor 5th Avenue Flagship Store," Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/wallyg/656099106/> (accessed June 18, 2008).

today.¹³⁵ For a company symbol, Shaver chose the image of a long-stemmed rose, the symbol of American beauty.¹³⁶

By the mid-1940s, American design and designers had gained a foothold in the market. At the end of the war, Paris resumed its operations to full capacity and posed some challenges to the developing American market, but the American fashion industry rallied together and gave full support. Favorable and frequent coverage in support of American fashion ensured its longevity. Retailers continued to feature and advertise American designers, media continued to cover it and fashion editors continued to support it. It was eventually copied in Europe.¹³⁷

Shaver was a driving force in the American Designer Movement, the brainchild behind the American Look Campaign, and a tireless worker and for the artistic and cultural institutions that underpinned design. She has been credited as one of the strongest, persistent, and most consistent advocates for American designers – an engine of the fashion industry. Shaver is “unquestionably, the American designer’s foremost publicist,” said Adam Gimbel. The president of the Advertising Club of Washington declared in 1957 that “Her [Shaver’s] name ranks with those few people responsible for the amazing growth of the fashion industry in America.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Katie Weisman, “The Paris/New York Rivalry,” *The International Herald Tribune*, October 2, 2008, paragraph 10, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/10/02/style/rmus.php> (accessed January 8, 2009).

¹³⁶ Daniel B. Schneider, “F.Y.I. Patriotic Chic,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 25, 2001, CY2.

¹³⁷ Virginia Pope, “Floor Set Aside for Junior Girl: Her Wardrobe Needs From Head to Toe Amply Provided For in Display,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1947, 18.

¹³⁸ Levin, “Wheels of Fashion,” 213; “Dorothy Shaver Gets Capital Club Achievement Award,” no source, November 12, 1957, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

Designers acknowledged and thanked Shaver for her vision, work, faith, and persistence. She once received a phone call from a designer who said, “I want to thank you for what you are doing. Today was the first time that my boss said good morning to me since I came to work here.”¹³⁹ Oleg Cassini credited Shaver for saving his business.¹⁴⁰ After spending some time as a costume designer in Hollywood, Cassini said he re-located to New York because “fashion in Hollywood was going downhill because of TV and other things and you had to go to New York if you wanted to be a significant designer.” Shaver dedicated all of the store windows to his work for a time.

Gloria Gelfand, formerly of White Stag, credited Lord & Taylor for the success of the company’s early foray into the world of ladies’ blue jeans. “It was Lord & Taylor that bought the first three dozen pieces ... And when White Stag came out with the first multiple pieces of sportswear, not only did they [Lord & Taylor] introduce it, they set up an entire floor for it,” Gelfand said.¹⁴¹

In 1953, designers had developed and organized well enough to form their own association, The Society of New York Dress Designers. They presented their first award to Shaver, in recognition of her support for American design.¹⁴²

Shaver, in humble fashion, sometimes had difficulty accepting the importance of her role in the promotion of designers because she recognized that the designer was truly the star. “The

¹³⁹ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 228

¹⁴⁰ Rosemary Feitelberg, “L&T Windows Reflect Cassini’s Career,” *Women’s Wear Daily* 189, no. 14, January 21, 2005, 1.

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, “Dear Lord & Taylor,” 14.

¹⁴² “Cited by Dress Designers: Dorothy Shaver Gets the First Award of Group Here,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 19, 1953, 38.

people themselves do the work. I only have the vision, and horse sense, to recognize their talents. I am not an artist, but I can see with artists' eyes and speak their language," she said.¹⁴³

When the US officially entered the war, retailers turned their efforts away somewhat from the emphasis on the promotion of the designer and toward support of the war. It was difficult for Lord & Taylor to compete for the pages of the newspaper with newsprint shortages and with all the space dedicated to war coverage. For Shaver, who still had a store to run, this meant featuring patriotic themes in the store and lending her services to the war effort. Shaver's response was quick and resolute. She utilized her windows in support of the war effort, she featured patriotic themes in the store, and her speeches began to carry grand themes about democracy, freedom, and the importance of freedom to the creative spirit.¹⁴⁴ She was beginning to sound like a statesman and diplomat.

The Lord & Taylor Awards were also put on necessary duty. The focus of the awards shifted away from fashion design and toward military and industrial design. Toward the end of the war, awards were given for medical and rehabilitation work for veterans, and in support of institutions that promoted building for peace.¹⁴⁵

Shaver also assisted the United States Army. From 1942-1945 she was asked to advise on the design of uniforms for the Army Nurses' Corps (ANC). She served as a general consultant to

¹⁴³ Taves, *Successful Women and How They Attained Success*, 143.

¹⁴⁴ Both collections, the Smithsonian Institute and the Schlesinger Library, carry most, if not all, of the Lord & Taylor Design Awards speeches given by Dorothy Shaver. The latter is a concentrated collection of only Lord & Taylor Design Awards materials and comprises one Box.

¹⁴⁵ Lord & Taylor, "Former Lord & Taylor Design Awards Winners," in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 8, Folder 3.

the Office of the Quartermaster General, the first woman to do so.¹⁴⁶ Commanders wanted nurses to have uniforms suitable for use in combat areas and in many climates. Shaver coordinated the project, getting feedback from nurses, and examining army requirements. She selected materials, styles, and features. She produced uniforms that were easy to maintain and flattering to any figure. She incorporated features that were suitable to the needs of the multiple settings of an army nurse, including styles appropriate for street, hospital, and a work suit to replace the traditional overalls. In 1949, she was invited back as part of a panel of six women to advise on the uniforms for Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Women in the Air Force (WAF). Hattie Carnegie was chief designer for that project.¹⁴⁷

All of these activities spelled success for Lord & Taylor. The store was able to boast that each year between 1931 to 1943 (except for 1933), it was able to pay shareholders dividends while its parent company, Associated Dry Goods, paid no dividends at all.¹⁴⁸ By 1945, the store was making approximately \$30 million in annual sales.¹⁴⁹ President Hoving announced his resignation to start his own corporate holding company that included Tiffany's. Lord & Taylor

¹⁴⁶ Shaver is often mistakenly credited for the design of the WAC uniforms. She was involved, but only as a member of a team. She *did lead* the campaign for the re-design of ANC and WAF uniforms as cited in "A New Wardrobe for the ANC," *American Journal of Nursing* 43, no. 3 (March 1943): 240-242; "'New Look' for WAC, WAF: Uniforms Will Be Restyled by a Committee of Six Experts," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 10, 1949, 30.

¹⁴⁷ "'New Look' for WAC, WAF", 30. Others committee members were close associates of Shaver's including Edna Woolman Chase, editor of *Vogue*, Tobe Coller Davis, fashion consultant, Eleanor Lambert, fashion publicist, Mary Brooks Picke, home economist, and Carmel Snow, editor of *Harper's Bazaar*; Virginia Pope, "New Outfit Adds Glamour to WAC," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 24, 1950, 20.

¹⁴⁸ *Women in World History*, 207-208.

¹⁴⁹ Lord & Taylor's annual sales of 1945 and 1959 were widely reported as these were the years of Dorothy Shaver's election as president and then her death. The sales figures are based on self-reporting as it was a private company. It remains a private company today in spite of buyouts.

was in need of a new president and Shaver was in line for the job. She apparently knew the fundamentals of stock control, long range buying, and turn-over rates as well as any of them. She was elected president by vote of an all-male board of directors of the parent company, Associated Dry Goods.¹⁵⁰ They took their vote in December, 1945, elected Shaver, and were said to have chosen “the best man for the job.”¹⁵¹ She assumed the helm of the multi-million-dollar corporation, and six months later, she was asked to serve on the board of directors of Associated Dry Goods, the first woman to do so.¹⁵²

As president, Shaver experienced an ever-increasing profile, led the company in a period of expansion and growth that had international impact, implemented continued innovations, and became entrenched as an industry leader. This led to public acclaim, awards, and recognition.

When Shaver took office, Lord & Taylor underwent a considerable amount of reorganization and some turmoil. Outgoing president Hoving lured away vice president and high fashion expert Roy Rudolph, which was akin to the “departure of a brew master from a brewery.”¹⁵³ “Hardly had the store grapevine began to rattle with the news before Miss Shaver was having meetings with the buyers and executives, shifting command and briskly redeploying her forces against [any additional] possible raids,” one reporter wrote.¹⁵⁴ She managed to execute the major reorganization with little fallout. It is difficult to imagine what her competitors may

¹⁵⁰ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 117.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁵² “Join Associated Dry Goods Board,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 21, 1946, 31; “Miss Shaver Dead, Headed Lord & Taylor Since '45,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 29, 1959, 1.

¹⁵³ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 128.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

have been thinking or imagining about Shaver's entrée into their ranks and the resulting new retail pecking order on Fifth Avenue. If they "overlooked her as a serious competitor," the effect would be "deadly."¹⁵⁵

In spite of these rippings, Shaver experienced immediate success. By the end of 1946, sales were at \$40 million, up 30 percent from the previous year. Shaver was well on her way to continued success.

Shaver came to national attention for being retail's first elected female CEO and for her very publicly-reported and brow-raising salary of \$110,000. Although it should have been more widely and prominently heralded, her election was covered on page one of the *New York Herald Tribune*, page eight of the *Christian Science Monitor*, page fourteen of the *Washington Post*, and page twenty of the *New York Times*.¹⁵⁶ The Associated Press awarded her Outstanding Business Woman in both 1946 and 1947. *Life Magazine* wrote an in-depth piece on her in 1947, calling her the "No. 1 Career Woman."¹⁵⁷

Shaver's presidency was characterized by growth and expansion, most notably, in the establishment of seven branch stores. Her first foray into developing a branch store was in 1941 when, as a vice president she proposed the idea. She selected Manhasset, NY as the first site, and she oversaw the project. The plan was to try a branch store inside the city before they tried it in outlying suburban areas. Manhasset became the model for the suburban department store. It

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹⁵⁶ "Shaver to Head Lord & Taylor," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 20 1945, A1; "First Woman Heads Big Department Store," *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), December 19, 1945, 8; "Woman Is Elected Head of 32-Million Store Corporation," *Washington Post* (1877-1954), December 20, 1945, 14; "Miss Shaver Head of Lord & Taylor: Among Her Accomplishments Is Success in Fight for U.S. Fashion Designers," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), December 19, 1945, 20.

¹⁵⁷ Perkins, "No. 1 Career Woman," 116 – 128.

was a marvel in and of itself. With architecture by the famed Raymond Loewy, it featured a spacious interior design, and sixty-six shops within shops. It had an apple tree at the front of the store which architects, gardeners, and executives wanted to remove. But Shaver insisted it stay and that children be allowed to play under it – “definitely a Shaver signature,” wrote one reporter.¹⁵⁸

Expansions continued. Shaver opened a branch in Scarsdale, NY in 1948, followed by a location in Millburn, NJ in 1949. In 1953, she opened the West Hartford store in Connecticut, which was the first branch outside the New York metropolitan area and the first truly suburban location. The idea to put a location in the suburbs was an outgrowth of Shaver’s idea that a good location for a shop was outside crowded areas where women could shop with ease, quiet, and in pleasant surroundings. She also felt that she needed to peddle her wares where the customers lived.¹⁵⁹ This was a new idea for the time. Department stores, and any of their companion locations, were built in busy, high-traffic metropolitan areas. The notion of moving into the suburbs was not a popular one.

After West Hartford, came locations in Bala-Cynwd, PA in 1955, a branch in Garden City, Long Island, NY in 1956, and the final branch associated with Shaver was opened in Washington, DC in 1959.

With expansions ongoing, Shaver remained brimming with ideas on all fronts. In 1947, Lord and Taylor became the first store in New York to have a junior department. The entire sixth floor was dedicated to the apparel needs of the young girl aged seven to fifteen years.”¹⁶⁰ It

¹⁵⁸ Barbara E. Scott Fisher, “What New Ideas Are Ahead? The Question, With Miss Shaver at the Helm,” *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), February 9, 1946, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 88; “Connecticut Invasion,” *Time*, March 2, 1953, 88.

¹⁶⁰ Pope, “Floor Set Aside for Junior Girl,” 18.

included some merchandising innovations such as a hat bar where girls could get custom made hats for the outfits they had just selected.

In 1949, Shaver opened an Accessory Shop filled with jewelry, gloves, belts, and umbrellas. It was an “outgrowth of an idea conceived by Dorothy Shaver ... while on a trip to Italy and France,” and she fashioned it after the boutiques of famous designing houses in Paris.¹⁶¹

Her promotions continued to make news and generate interest. The opening of the New Jersey store in 1949 attracted 15,000 people and generated a traffic jam of four miles.¹⁶² It featured wire mesh animals, butterflies, and in the true style of “The Shaver Touch,” the apple trees at the store entrance showed blossoms even though it was the heart of winter -- Shaver had the blossoms waxed and wired to the tree. The opening of the Connecticut store in 1953 brought 35,000 visitors and featured 10 gallons of Arpege perfume sprayed into the air to showcase the scent.¹⁶³ It was another “Shaver Touch.”

Lord & Taylor Public Relations: A Gold Standard

The publicity, advertising, promotional, and public relations work of Lord & Taylor had, by now, become legendary. By 1947, retailers noted the importance of the modern shopping experience as a form of entertainment. They publicly and officially asserted at trade shows and professional gatherings, that the key to entrancing customers was to make the shopping

¹⁶¹ "Accessory Shop Like Jewel Box: Lord & Taylor's Fantasia Is Store-Wide Collection of Tastefully Chosen Items," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), September 28, 1949, 35.

¹⁶² "New Store to Open in Millburn Today: Preview of Lord & Taylor's Jersey Branch Jams Traffic as 15,000 Flock to Shop," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), February 9, 1949, 24.

¹⁶³ "A Business Woman in Hartford," 59.

experience as entertaining as possible.¹⁶⁴ In 1948, Lord & Taylor became a gold standard for retail public relations when it was featured in a book about best retail public relations practices.¹⁶⁵ The book was the culmination of a year-long study of the public relations of 300 department stores in the United States and was based on self-reporting. It singled out Lord & Taylor for more in-depth reporting, in a section called *How One Store Does It*.¹⁶⁶

In the Lord & Taylor administrative model for public relations, the vice president responsible for public relations had a seat at the management table. In 1946, the vice president for public relations was Alieda van Wesep, a woman. She had equal rank with the other vice presidents (merchandise and store operations). The public relations department was divided into the four sections of advertising, window display, interior display, and general public relations. Each section had a designated section head. The section heads met together with Shaver as a Projection Council. The general public relations section was composed of a staff of four writers. Two handled publicity (routine news about the merchandise) and the other two handled public relations (news regarding personnel, branch stores, the Lord & Taylor Design Awards, and media requests, of which they reportedly had at least one every day). The writers were required to read newspapers and trade publications, and to develop story ideas for placement. Store personnel were instructed to feed news and press inquiries to the public relations department. The staff of four writers apparently had plenty of news fed to them as they reportedly rarely had to go searching for story ideas. The staff had a very positive reputation with members of the

¹⁶⁴ M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 69.

¹⁶⁵ Tom Mahoney and Rita Hession, *Public Relations for Retailers* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 204-206.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

press and was known for its cooperation. The department also handled any unusual customer complaints. It was also responsible to screen requests for executive appearances such as attendance at functions and involvement with charities.¹⁶⁷ Shaver was extremely active in engaging in public relations for the store. She kept her team of writers churning out press releases. She was not shy about being responsive to media inquiries, always having plenty of ready material available for publicity purposes.¹⁶⁸

Lord & Taylor experienced few public relations problems that made any news. One involved boxes of candy with a picture of two African American children, bearing the label Blum's Li'l Darkies. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) brought a complaint to the candy manufacturer and to Lord & Taylor, to which Shaver promptly replied that she apologized for the "unintentional inference," and would have the candies removed from the shelves.¹⁶⁹ In another incident, Lord & Taylor went afoul of the rules of the Fifth Avenue Association, a merchant organization that upheld a quality shopping venue on Fifth Avenue. Part of the association's duties was to monitor for any displays that exhibited unnecessary motion or sound effects and that might be considered tasteless. In 1938, Shaver, in effort to stimulate the sale of winter clothing during a hot spell, decorated her store windows to simulate a blizzard by using bleached cornflakes, fans, and the sound effect of howling windows playing on the street. Hoving, president of the store at the time, appealed to the association for an

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Examination of the press releases and press clippings at the archives at NMAH contains reveal a very healthy collection of news releases and accompanying media coverage that spans her entire career.

¹⁶⁹ The story was carried by two African-American newspapers but no record of any other media coverage in ProQuest or LexisNexis. "Offensive Candy Label Removed At NAACP Urge," *Atlanta Daily World* (1932-2003), August 6, 1947, 6; "Offensive Candy Label Off Market" *Chicago Defender* (National edition) (1921-1967), August 16, 1947, 8.

exemption.¹⁷⁰ Lord & Taylor would have another incident with the Fifth Avenue Association in 1950 when Shaver was challenged for her use of the elevator windows to change the store mannequins every three minutes. Retailers complained that the rotating display was “a bit too commercial.” Shaver halted the changing of the mannequins but issued a statement that she did not feel that she was in violation and that she intended to continue this activity in the future.¹⁷¹

In spite of Shaver’s high profile, her “Shaver Touch” in promotions, her legendary and popular advertising style, and a spotlight in a public relations book, the public relations and advertising worlds paid little attention to her. In spite of all her accomplishments and even though she served on the Board of the Advertising Federation in 1942, it does not appear that she received any awards from this advertising group, or any other advertising group, during the peak of her career.¹⁷² Finally, in an overdue gesture, on November 12, 1957, she received an award for outstanding achievement in business from the Advertising Club of Washington. She was the first woman to receive this award.¹⁷³

Her experience with the Public Relations Society of America was similar. She received no attention from it during her career, but received an award later in life. This is particularly odd, since in 1945, when she was elected president of the store, the public relations industry’s major

¹⁷⁰ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 116

¹⁷¹ Dash, “Clearer Rules on Fifth Ave. Display Sought,” 1.

¹⁷² She did, however, give other people advertising awards. As early as 1939, she was recorded to have juried a black and white photograph contest for the 18th Annual Art Director’s Club Awards as cited in “Honors Awarded in Advertising Art: More Than 300 Items Selected for 18th Annual Show of Art Directors Club,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 29, 1939, 40; “Dorothy Shaver Director Of Advertising Federation,” *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), April 22, 1942, 20.

¹⁷³ “Miss Shaver To Be Feted By Ad Club,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald* (1954-1959), November 9, 1957, C11; Marie Smith, “To Succeed, Be Objective,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald* (1954-1959), November 13, 1957, C2.

publication, the *Public Relations Journal* was born, yet none of its early issues covered Shaver and her accomplishments. The journal was developed at 325 Park Avenue, exactly one mile from Shaver's offices at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 38th Street, so it is difficult to think that the journal's editors did not know about her. Yet, they did not cover any of her public relations achievements for which she had been consistently heralded as early as 1928, and for which she had received very public attention. Ironically, in March 1946, the first year of Shaver's presidency, the issue carried an article about women consumers entitled, *Women: The Forgotten Public*.¹⁷⁴ In an even more curious twist, the article was written by Mabel Flanley of Flanley and Woodward Public Relations in New York, regarded as America's first female-owned public relations agency. The October 1946 issue also called for an emergence of leaders for the newly developing field of modern public relations. "[We need] men and women with breadth and vision, deep understanding, and the power to impress their views upon members of the profession and the public at large" to "develop the profession"... "and its potential," wrote the editor.¹⁷⁵ Certainly, Shaver had proven such powers and would have been a fitting leader in support of this vision. Finally, on November 6, 1958, The New York Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America awarded her a citation for distinguished leadership.¹⁷⁶ The December issue of the *Public Relations Journal*, however, made no mention of it. Instead, there was an article commemorating fifty years of the Missouri University School of Journalism, which, in further irony, was applauded for advancing the cause of women as "the first program in

¹⁷⁴ Mabel G. Flanley, "Women: A Forgotten Public," *Public Relations Journal* 2, no. 4 (March 1946): 24+.

¹⁷⁵ Rex Harlow, "We Need Great Leaders," *Public Relations Journal* 2, no. 10 (October 1946): 1-2.

¹⁷⁶ "Miss Shaver Is Honored," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 7, 1958, 40.

the nation to accept a woman as a member of its teaching faculty, and the first to confer a degree on a woman.”¹⁷⁷ Additionally, the article touted the benefits of democracy to freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas. These were topics that were very publicly discussed by Shaver during this period.¹⁷⁸ It was a huge oversight.

Shaver certainly did brush shoulders with the elite of the public relations world and they did know her. She knew the Bernays’ since it had been reported in the social columns that she had been his dinner guest at least twice. She also received some correspondence from him – a letter dated 1958 wished her well in light of her recent illnesses.¹⁷⁹ She was also familiar with Arthur Page, a pioneer of modern public relations. Both served as executives on the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Committee for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Shaver was a vice chairman, and Page was Chairman of the Public Relations and Publicity Committee.¹⁸⁰

Shaver was more closely tied to the public relations and advertising community within the garment and retail circles. She received some recognition from these groups. The National Retail Dry Goods Association had devoted some attention to the public relations process for

¹⁷⁷ Samuel A. Montague, “A Stronger Press for a Better Free World,” *Public Relations Journal* (December, 1958): 6.

¹⁷⁸ By 1945, Shaver had already been promoting the war effort with her window displays, involvement with the US government on uniform re-design, and the Lord & Taylor Awards had already shifted toward themes of freedom and democracy. The Lord & Taylor awards was already one of the top social events in New York, attracting 1,800 guests at the Waldorf Astoria as cited in Clymer and Erlich, *Women Who Led the Way*, 234.

¹⁷⁹ "Dr. Isabel Knowlton Feted," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 14, 1935, 18; "Supper for Eight," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 2, 1936, N4; Edward Bernays, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), 1958, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 2.

¹⁸⁰ “Executives of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Committee,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series 4, no. 5, January, 1946, 122-123.

retailing and had developed a definition of retail public relations as early as 1948.¹⁸¹ Shaver wrote at least one article for the organization's newsletter, *The Buyer's Job*, very early in her career.¹⁸² Even though it was not common practice to recognize, The National Association of Blouse Manufacturers gave Shaver an award for a blouse promotion. She was recognized for her work in "energizing the industry." Representatives of the group said it was "high time that publicity was given to the efforts of merchandisers."¹⁸³

Shaver said that her favorite subject was employee relations.¹⁸⁴ She was particularly proud of her accomplishments in this area and she was careful to note her work in employee relations whenever she was asked about her accomplishments.¹⁸⁵ Executives at Lord & Taylor credited much of Shaver's success "to the fact that she ... worked hard and long for better relationship between employees and management," one journalist reported.¹⁸⁶ She instituted many new practices and promoted many changes to the employee relations of Lord & Taylor during her tenure. She added staff amenities, added employee benefits program, enhanced

¹⁸¹ It was defined as "the continuing coordinated process by which retail management evaluates public attitudes and earns the good will and understanding of its employees, customers, resource, and the public at large; inwardly through self-analysis correction, outwardly, through means of expression" as cited in Mahoney and Hession, *Public Relations for Retailers*, 2; Dorothy Shaver, "The Style Advisor as an Aid to Merchandising," 1-4.

¹⁸² Dorothy Shaver, "The Style Advisor as an Aid to Merchandising," *The Buyer's Job*, Eighth Article, circa January 1929, 1-4, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 12, Folder 2.

¹⁸³ "Store Received Plaque: Lord & Taylor Honored by Group for Blouse Promotion," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), August 23, 1939, 33.

¹⁸⁴ "Miss Shaver Praises Women In Retailing," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 8, 1949, 38.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Virginia Irwin, "Shopping Will Become Gay Affair," *The Post Dispatch*, n.d., n.p., in DSP, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

employee training and developed incentives programs.¹⁸⁷ Her executives publicly noted her keen ability in this area. Lord & Taylor employee relations practices were distinctive enough to be covered in the June 1947 issue of *Industrial Relations Magazine*.¹⁸⁸

Shaver had what was described as “an enlightened philosophy” to employee relations, providing pleasant surroundings, comfort, safety, support, and amenities, such that Lord & Taylor was one of the most desired places of employment for workers in retail.¹⁸⁹ Employees were described as “unusually interested and happy.”¹⁹⁰ Few were fired, and few left. One stayed for seventy years, another for forty-seven. Lord & Taylor was a desired employer.¹⁹¹

Lord & Taylor employee practices were at least on par with, and usually ahead of the practices of many of its peers. In 1950, Princeton University conducted a comparative study of personnel administration and labor relations in department stores in 1935 and in 1949. The study included fifty-seven stores in thirty-one cities, across twenty-one states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. Most of the department stores were located in cities with populations of more than 500,000, and had an average number of employees 3,500, about the size of Lord & Taylor. The study found that systems of job evaluation was an emerging trend, employee counseling services

¹⁸⁷ "Medical Benefits for Employees," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 11, 1948, 28.

¹⁸⁸ "Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," *Industrial Relations*, June 1947, 11+, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 21, Folder 22.

¹⁸⁹ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Huntington, "The Only Madam President," 6.

¹⁹¹ "Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," 11; "Veteran Employee of Store Honored: Gustav Jensen, 70 Years With Lord & Taylor, Gets Warm Reception From Staff," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), September 7, 1949, 32; Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

were getting more emphasis, twenty-three out of the fifty-seven had union contracts covering all or a majority of employees, thirteen had union contracts covering some employees or departments, and that twenty-one had no union contracts. Eight percent of the stores in the 1935 study had union contracts, compared to 63 percent in the 1949 study. In unionized stores, researchers determined that employees received an inadequate flow of two-way communication with management, there was only moderate expansion in employee training efforts, little change in methods of determining employee earnings, and substantial developments in retirement plans. There was a gradual expansion of medical plans with most covering only first aid and basic care. There were some reductions of medical services, and only minor increases in provision of medical plans and sick leave. There were substantial increases in life insurance protection. There was an increase in employee eating facilities with affordable meals, and there were no marked improvements with respect to employee recreation.¹⁹² In non-unionized stores, none had employee grievance procedures, only three utilized attitude surveys, wages were “the going rate,” wage policies were not generally put into writing, and management put high value on offering employees activities.¹⁹³

Shaver scored favorably. She was considerably ahead of the pack in most respects as compared to both the unionized and non-unionized stores. In 1948, Shaver arranged for medical benefits for those who had worked six months or more. They included 100 percent hospital and surgical coverage for all employees who worked for more than six months.¹⁹⁴ She initiated

¹⁹² Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores: An Analysis of Developments and Practices* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Industrial Relations Section of the Department of Economics and Social Institutions, 1950), 11, 29, 37, 59, 69, 78, 79, 80.

¹⁹³ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations*, 94-97.

¹⁹⁴ “Medical Benefits for Employees,” 28.

pension plans, staff bonuses, emergency leave plans, staff discounts, profit-sharing, and medical plans.¹⁹⁵ This was at a time, when, although somewhat more common in many of the larger department stores, employee benefits was not a well-developed field overall.¹⁹⁶ Shaver also provided employees with their own recreation floor, snack bar, game room and library. The library carried 1,800 titles and twenty-four magazine subscriptions, staffed with a fulltime librarian.¹⁹⁷ The lounge converted into a theatre, showed movies during the lunch hours, and employed an outside consultant to survey the staff about what they wanted to see.¹⁹⁸ She had many activities for employees. An art corner was set up where employees could exhibit their art or photography. There was a cafeteria where both executives and other workers ate. The cafeteria offered affordable lunches and was run at a loss.¹⁹⁹ Some of these types of recreational amenities were not tremendously unusual for department stores at the time, however. As early as the 1890s, department stores were providing such facilities for employees in response to bad

¹⁹⁵ Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role," 20.

¹⁹⁶ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 180 – 182; In 1935, only eleven stores offered life insurance plans; and in 1949, thirty out of fifty-seven stores offered pension and profit-sharing plans, and these changes were implemented only after 1940 as cited in Baker and France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations*, 82; Blue Cross Blue Shield was incorporated in 1938 as cited in Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, "Historical Highlights," <http://www.bcbsm.com/home/bcbsm/1930.shtml> (accessed July 14, 2009).

¹⁹⁷ "Miss Shaver Praises Women in Retailing," 38; "Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," 34.

¹⁹⁸ "Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," 15.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

publicity and negative images of wealthy department store owners.²⁰⁰ However, Lord & Taylor had not provided many of these until Shaver became president.

Employees had the benefit of ongoing training throughout their entire careers. The sales people of Lord & Taylor enjoyed such good training that they were considered among the best in New York and sometimes out-of-town customers would delay their shopping until they could get to New York and Lord & Taylor.²⁰¹ Training at Lord & Taylor was desired because it could provide entrée into a very good job elsewhere in retail, that is, if one could lure an employee away from the store.²⁰² Lord & Taylor was reported to have started the first system of employee evaluation in department stores.²⁰³ Under Shaver, in this system, employees were rated in the categories of special abilities (analytical ability, imagination, initiative and judgment), job operations (ability to work under pressure, organizational ability) and supervision (ability to develop those working under him/her).²⁰⁴ She also had a steady system of employee recognition programs that included medal awards, incentives and positive feedback.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Store owners were often portrayed as ruthless capitalists who took advantage of women clerks, offered sweatshop conditions, and cared little for their employees as cited in Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 179.

²⁰¹ Mahoney and Hession, *Public Relations for Retailers*, 29.

²⁰² Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

²⁰³ The system of employee evaluation and ratings most likely was developed by Reyburn and carried through by Shaver. Reyburn is credited for such in an obituary. Shaver did not take credit for it when given opportunity to do so, stating only that Lord & Taylor instituted the first professional training courses and rating system for employee evaluation as cited in "Samuel Reyburn, Retailer, 89, Dies: Ex-Head of Lord & Taylor Led Dry Goods Corporation," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 8, 1962, 31; Dorothy Shaver, "In Pursuit of Ideas," 5.

²⁰⁴ "Lord & Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," 12.

²⁰⁵ Huntington, "The Only Madam President," 7.

Shaver tried to put her employees first. She was known to have assisted them with personal problems, encouraged supervisors to be watchful for the personal problems of their staffs, and had a human relations counselor on staff at the store to help employees.²⁰⁶ A cafeteria worker who was constantly dropping dishes was spoken to by a superior who discovered she had trouble finding an apartment. The supervisor arranged contact with housing authorities.²⁰⁷ However, Shaver did not have a blind sympathy. She was judicious and tough-minded in her assistance. She once faced, “with agony,” the unpleasant job of telling an employee why she was not being promoted to a top merchandising post. “She simply did not have the abilities,” Shaver wrote. She agonized at how to respond. “How could I possibly tell her this? I called her to come to my office. With no adornment, I told the facts. She was disturbed, of course, yet her basic reaction was one of gratitude, gratitude at being told the truth, gratitude that I had told her myself,” Shaver recorded.²⁰⁸

Shaver had a policy of speaking with or notifying employees prior to making public statements. The public relations department was required to post news releases on the employee bulletin board before media received them.²⁰⁹ She showed concern for the health and welfare of her employees, even above their work duties. She insisted that salesclerks utilize stools or chairs to rest periodically during the day, in spite of common department store practice that discouraged clerks from sitting down. She encouraged female employees who had babies to take an extended

²⁰⁶ “Lord & Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home,” 14; Huntington, “The Only Madam President,” 8.

²⁰⁷ “Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home,” 14.

²⁰⁸ Dorothy Shaver, “The Best Advice I Ever Had,” (draft of text prepared for Reader’s Digest), n.d. 3, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Box 14, Folder 6.

²⁰⁹ Mahoney and Hession, *Public Relations for Retailers*, 204.

leave of absence.²¹⁰ The store was not open evenings out of sensitivity for the majority of employees who were women and who had family responsibilities.²¹¹

It is likely that such favorable treatment of employees accounts for the store's slow unionization. When Shaver became president in 1946, unions were just starting to solidify in the department stores of New York. Lord & Taylor did not unionize.²¹²

Shaver was very interested that her employees develop themselves as individuals and that they lead balanced lives. To this end, the store offered discounted tickets to events, and posted events and reviews on the employee bulletin board. Shaver encouraged employees to start their own interests. One employee started a Lord & Taylor chorus that entertained inside and outside the store. The chorus director eventually left the store to pursue music studies. Employees also put on exhibits on the employee recreation floor. They staged hobby shows, and flower and garden shows.

Shaver believed that the most effective employee was one who had a life full of variety. She once said that people could do better justice to their work if they could occasionally escape

²¹⁰ Irwin, "Shopping Will Become a Gay Affair," n.p.

²¹¹ Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role," 20.

²¹² The first major department stores in New York to come under union contract were Hearn's in May, 1937; Gimbel's followed in 1938, Saks Thirty-Fourth St. in 1939, Stern's in 1941, and The Namm Store in 1944. The United Department Store Workers of America directed unionization efforts at Lord & Taylor starting in 1951. The company was sued in 1954 by an employee for "coercion" in the form of persistent questioning of five employees by management as to union organizing activities. Lord & Taylor was cleared of any wrong-doing as cited in Baker and Robert R. France, "Appendix, Union Developments in Three Specific Areas," in *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations*, 127-144; See also *National Labor Relations Board v. Associated Dry Goods Corp., Lord & Taylor Division*, 209 F.2D, 593, (2d Cir. 1954). There were a few other similar skirmishes throughout the years, but Lord & Taylor has never unionized except for pockets of employee groups, such as electricians, according to the Public Relations Department of Lord & Taylor in phone conversation with author on July 15, 2009.

from it.²¹³ This was also her personal philosophy. She left the office usually every day by 5:30 p.m., unless planning a large event, and said she would give up her job if it meant she had no time to develop as a human being.²¹⁴ She played badminton many Monday evenings with sister Elsie, and fashion publicist Eleanor Lambert.²¹⁵ She enjoyed art, theatre, and dance. She spent her vacations travelling, often with her sister, and looking at museums in Europe.²¹⁶ She indulged her love of art by surrounding herself with fine art and furnishings both in her home, a penthouse apartment at 414 East 52nd Street, and at her office.²¹⁷ She had a sense of adventure, once flying to Russia when no one was even thinking about it. She learned to ski, climbed a mountain and lived on a chartered boat for six months.²¹⁸ She was very involved in charitable groups and philanthropy throughout her life, and encouraged employees to do the same. The person who had diversions and other interests in life besides work, and who did not consistently work long hours, made for a “well-rounded individual,” she once noted.²¹⁹ To Shaver, good employee relations was simply good business. Her commitment to progressive employee

²¹³ Mary Ann Callan, “Women Bolster Leaders Role: First Lady of Retailing Believes Man vs. Woman Idea Outmoded,” *Times*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 14, Folder 4.

²¹⁴ Irwin, “Shopping Will Become a Gay Affair,” n.p.

²¹⁵ Alice Hughes, "A Woman's New York," *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), November 25, 1938, X13.

²¹⁶ Taves, *Successful Women*, 144-146; Dorothy Shaver, “The Dance: What it Means to Me,” *Dance Magazine*, June 1957, 16-26.

²¹⁷ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p.

²¹⁸ Taves, *Successful Women*, 147

²¹⁹ Kathleen McLaughlin, "Single Good Idea Not Enough To Win Success, Says Expert: Dorothy Shaver, Department Store Executive, Points Out Road to the Top Jobs," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 17, 1939, 56.

relations was recognized when, although she did not receive this award, she was asked to be the presenter of the prestigious Tobe Award for Distinguished Service to Retailing. She presented it to Walter H. Rich, president of Rich's, Atlanta, GA., in recognition of his accomplishments in labor and consumer relations. Speakers at the event included Secretary of Commerce Averell Harriman, and former Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins.²²⁰

The woman brimming with ideas could sometimes wear people thin, however. "We don't need a new idea for Christmas every year" the staff once sang to Shaver lightheartedly in a Christmas skit, "Last year's is good enough for me."²²¹

By the 1950s Shaver had changed Lord & Taylor's not-very-chic image and branded it as the leader in tailored sophistication. Indeed, each of the major department stores of New York, by that time, had carved out their own niches. Jeane Saxer Eddy, a buyer at Lord & Taylor during the Shaver era said, "For Altman's it was house wares, for Best & Company, it was children's wear, for Saks it was glitz and glamour, and for Lord & Taylor, it was tailored sophistication ... Lord & Taylor was considered the best of the big department stores when Shaver was president It was doing pretty good before that, but especially when she was president. It was regarded as the best, and there was no store in its class," she said.²²²

With the American fashion industry now clipping along with ease, the model for "The Shaver Touch" firmly implanted in display, promotion, advertising, and public relations, and with the model for the branch store established, Shaver set her promotional vision, once again, to

²²⁰ "Atlantan Winner of Retailing Prize: W. H. Rich Gets Tobe Award for Service to Consumer and Labor Relations," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 16, 1947, 23.

²²¹ "Views and News of Display," *Women's Wear Daily*, December. 16, 1952, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 14, Folder 2.

²²² Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

other nations. “Shaver was very interested in other countries” and would often import in to feature at the store. For a time, she was particularly interested in goods from Italy and Great Britain. She was no doubt capitalizing on a growing imports market. American consumers were consuming foreign imports at healthy levels and business writers reported that by 1957, consumer demand for imports was at an all-time high of \$13 billion. One of the final promotions of her career was the British Fortnight promotion of 1958, a two-week exhibit of British products, much in the vein of her 1928 exhibit of French modern art. The British Fortnight promotion was complete with life-sized sentries stationed around the store, flower girls reminiscent of English flower peddlers, and a replica of an English pub. Shaver invested \$2 million worth of goods to display and sell at the store for this promotion.²²³ As a strong force in the growing imports market, she would receive the French Legion of Honor medal in 1950 for her work in stimulating the sale of French furnishings and accessories. She also received the Italian Star of Solidarity medal in 1954 for stimulating sales of Italian lingerie, sportswear, infants wear, women’s shoes, and Italian furnishings into the American market.²²⁴

She also reached out to women across borders and frequently entertained groups of visitors from abroad. One such visit was a group of about ninety prominent women, all members of the International Council of Women. The group included representatives from fifteen countries including Switzerland, India, Nigeria, Argentina, and New Zealand.²²⁵

²²³ “Surge in Imports: A Sea Change Has Occurred in U.S. Foreign Trade,” *Barron’s National Business and Financial Weekly*, August 25, 1958, 1, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 12 , Folder 1.

²²⁴ Dorothy Shaver Papers, 1947-1956, (press release written by Rea Lubar), November 19, 1954, in DSP, Harvard Library, Box 1, Folder 7.

²²⁵ Dorothy Shaver Collection, 1922 – 1959, (press release for the visit by the International Council of Women, prepared Elizabeth C. White), June 19, 1957, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 14.

By the end of her career Shaver would amass a host of awards (see Appendix B for a complete listing) that included the following honors:

- Horatio Alger Award, The American Schools and Colleges Association in 1948
- Cross of Chevalier by the French Legion of Honor; 1950
- Award for Feminist Achievement, American Women's Association, 1950
- Outstanding Support of American Design, New York Dress Designers Award, 1953
- Star of Solidarity by the Italian Republic, 1954
- Award of Achievement, The Advertising Club of Washington, 1957
- Distinguished Leadership, Public Relations Society of America, 1958

She also received a many honorary degrees from various universities including Syracuse University, New York University and Russell Sage (see Appendix B for complete listing). She eventually began turning them down due to a hectic schedule.²²⁶

End of An Era

By 1959, near the end of her tenure, Lord & Taylor was a \$100 million company. Under her direction, the store sales grew by more than 225 percent in a space of fourteen short years. Lord & Taylor never enjoyed as much success as when it was under the direction of Shaver. Sales grew from \$30 million in 1945, to \$50 million in 1951, and finally to \$100 million in 1959. Employees grew from about 2,300 in 1946 to about 5,000 in 1957. Store branches increased from one to seven.²²⁷ It was an impressive rate of growth. Comparatively, Bonwit Teller showed

²²⁶ Robinson, "Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring," 3.

²²⁷ Perkins; "Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home," 11; "Veteran Employee of Store Honored," 32; Dorothy Shaver, "Miss Shaver's Remarks for Executive Training Class," March 11, 1957, 1, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder

an increase of 100 percent, Macy's 85 percent, and Saks (Gimbel Brothers) 65 percent.²²⁸

Shaver's achievements brought a dowdy department store to international fame. By the end of her tenure Lord & Taylor was known as "one of New York's most luxurious stores."²²⁹ "The international renown Lord & Taylor has achieved is directly attributable to Miss Shaver's leadership," said Arnold Fine of the Advertising Club of Washington in an award presentation to recognize her achievements.²³⁰ While she was president, Lord & Taylor became one of the most prestigious department stores in New York, the city became the number one center of apparel in the United States producing approximately 80 percent of the national share in value of women's clothing, the fashion industry became the city's top industry, and fashion became a 8.5 billion dollar industry in the US ranking among the top ten industries in the nation behind coal, oil, and steel.²³¹

3; *Notable American Women, The Modern Period: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 646.

²²⁸ In these years, Bonwit Teller showed an increase of 100 percent in sales from 1946 to 1959 (\$17.1 to \$33.9 million), Macy's 85 percent (\$255 million to \$472 million), and Saks/Gimbel Brothers 65 percent (\$230 million to \$384 million) as cited in *Moody's Manuals on Microfiche: 1909 to Present*, Moody's Investors Service, Inc. New York, 1981; *1946 Moody's Manual of Investments American and Foreign Industrial Securities*, John Sherman Porter, Editor, text-fiche, pp. 18, 1518, 1600; *1959 Moody's Manual of Investments American and Foreign Industrial Securities*, John Sherman Porter, Editor, text-fiche, pp. 851, 2153, 2842.

²²⁹ Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," n.p.

²³⁰ Arnold Fine, president of the Advertising Club of Washington, in remarks given at luncheon in Dorothy Shaver's honor. Some 500 retailing executives were in attendance and she was presented with their Award of Achievement as cited in "Dorothy Shaver Gets Capital Club Achievement Award," n.p.

²³¹ Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role," 20; Malvina Lindsay, "Clothes And Democracy: Fashion's Leveling," *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), July 3, 1947, 12; Phyllis Levin, "Paris Sets Pace, but Creative Fashion Talent, Critics Agree, Exists in U.S.: Industry's Status in America Studied -- Remedies Offered," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 20, 1958, 7.

But, soon, the “Shaver Touch” would no longer be felt. She began suffering a series of strokes and on June 28, 1959, while at her summer home at Tannersville, NY, she suffered a third and final stroke and was taken to a nearby hospital where she died. On June 29, *The New York Post* declared “the death of Dorothy Shaver has closed one of the most brilliant merchandising careers ever achieved by a woman.”²³² “She built a mystique about the store,” said retailer Stanley Marcus, “[She] never wavered, she never tried to be a Bergdorf, or a Saks. She knew the part of the market she wanted.”²³³

At the time of her death, in addition to serving as President of Lord & Taylor, she also held positions as a vice president of Associated Dry Goods, President of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Chairman of the Board for the Girls Clubs of America.

After her death, Lord & Taylor experienced a slow descent and never recovered its former glory. Former employee and merchandise buyer, Jeane Eddy, anecdotally confirms the slow demise of the Lord & Taylor brand after Shaver’s death. “It never was quite the same after she died and I left the company shortly thereafter simply because she was no longer there,” she said.²³⁴ Lord & Taylor lost much of its market share to the rise of other department stores, particularly Bloomingdale’s. It also lost out to boutiques and it “lost heavily” in a fashion misjudgment of the midi skirt of the 1970s.²³⁵ By 1976, it was reported to have had “inconsistent

²³² “Death Ends Top Store Career,” *New York Post*, June 29, 1959, 26.

²³³ Stanley Marcus, *Quest for the Best* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 158.

²³⁴ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

²³⁵ Klemesrud, "At Lord & Taylor," 86; Robert Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 157.

sales and earnings since the innovative Miss Shaver died in 1959,” an increasingly “dowdy” image, and it was a “far cry from the powerhouse” it once was.²³⁶

It may have lost its power and prestige, but it made attempts at continued expansion and influence. By the 1980s, Lord & Taylor had increased to forty stores, but it had effectively ceded its postwar position as a fashion leader to Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdales, Neiman Marcus, and Nordstrom.²³⁷ By 2001, it grew to eighty-two stores but by the summer of 2003, in a downturn, it lost thirty-two stores and 4,000 employees. Stanley Marcus called these efforts “attempts at solving problems by building more stores in many markets.” The problem, he wrote, was that it was “with no apparent point of view except to be something to everybody – and nothing particular to anybody ... a mystique gone to seed.”²³⁸

Lord & Taylor was purchased in 2006 by NRDC Equity Partners. It now has forty-eight stores (about the same that it had in the 1980s) in nine states and the District of Columbia, and has overhauled 85 percent of its merchandise to target younger customers. It recently experienced some increased sales, but is largely viewed as “a problem child” and “a tarnished brand” “loaded with debt.”²³⁹ It unveiled a new look in 2007 with hope that these changes could put the store back on par with Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Klemesrud, “At Lord & Taylor,” 86; Kristina Dell, “Studying the Classics,” *Time* 170, September 18, 2007, 69-74.

²³⁷ *Wikipedia*, “Lord & Taylor,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord & Taylor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_%26_Taylor) (accessed January 8, 2009); Schneider, “F.Y.I. Patriotic Chic,” CY2.

²³⁸ Marcus, *Quest for the Best*, 158.

²³⁹ Dell, “Studying the Classics,” 69.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Even though it has struggled, to its credit, it has outlived many of its sister institutions. Many other department stores that rose with Lord & Taylor eventually collapsed, including Ohrbachs, Russeks, Franklin Simon, Gimbel's, and Saks 34th Street. Lord & Taylor has managed to hang on and is among the few to have survived a steady stream of mergers, acquisition, and bankruptcies.²⁴¹

Attempts at resurrecting the brand have shown a hint of copying the Shaver flair. In the 1970s, one strategy was to bring in high fashion at low prices and to once again feature the work of American designers.²⁴² Under its second female president, Jan Elfers, who was elected in 2000, one strategy was to feature the work of artists, painters, and musicians in its famed windows, and also to discover new design talent.²⁴³ In 2007, a \$10 million ad campaign aimed at re-branding, featured a series of surreal print ads reminiscent of the distinctive advertising of artist Hood.²⁴⁴ These efforts all hint at strategies effectively utilized by Shaver but none have been particularly successful.

There are few vestiges of Dorothy Shaver at Lord & Taylor Department Store besides her memory. One is the sign of the ever-present rose. Another is the slogan, "The Signature of American Style." Also, her portrait has a permanent place on the ninth floor in the president's

²⁴¹ James Brady, "Retail Name Doesn't Register," *Crain's New York Business News* 19, no. 32 (August 11, 2003): 9; Christina Zarrello, "Top 10 Oldest US Retailers," *Retail Information Systems News*, August 19, 2008. <http://www.risnews.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=MultiPublishing&mod=PublishingTitles&mid=2E3DABA5396D4649BABC55BEADF2F8FD&tier=4&id=220EFF13E74541C0A3FC9482DEE5F58D> (accessed November 5, 2008).

²⁴² Klemesrud, "At Lord & Taylor," 86.

²⁴³ Catherine Curan, "A Grande Dame, Charming Again: Lord & Taylor Reaches for Renewal, Plenty of Pitfalls," *Crain's New York Business News* 17, June 4, 2001, 1; Schlesinger, "Dear Lord & Taylor," 14.

²⁴⁴ Angela Voulangas, "Good Things in Store," *Print*, April, 2008, 62, no. 2, 81.

office which she occupied for many years.²⁴⁵ The famed “The Party of the Year” fund raiser for the Costume Institute became one of New York’s most prestigious events and is still celebrated. The Costume Institute retains its location on the ground floor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and exhibits about 7,000 articles spanning seven centuries and five continents. The Costume Institute has space named in Shaver’s honor. It has The Dorothy Shaver Designer’s Room in which it features a display of fashions. There is also a plaque at the base of a tree on Fifth Avenue between 38th and 39th Streets in front of Lord & Taylor, paying tribute to Shaver as a leader in the “Salute to the Seasons Program to Beautify New York City,” a promotion she started and which the city retained.²⁴⁶ As for her dream for American fashion, it would come full circle, and would be a fitting tribute when, in 1973, her colleague and partner in the vision for American design, Eleanor Lambert, the fashion publicist, staged the 1973 fashion show at the Palace of Versailles, in which five American designers stole the show over the French. From that point on, it was clear that American designers were world class.²⁴⁷

But many things simply died with her. The Lord & Taylor Design Awards, as she envisioned them, were discontinued after her death. By 1959, the use of awards and award dinners had become very commonplace in the fashion industry, and in New York social life,

²⁴⁵ Curan “A Grande Dame,” 1.

²⁴⁶ Victor Chen, “When the Gift Plaque Outlasts the Gift,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 23, 1997, A30.

²⁴⁷ The five American designers that stole the show were Bill Blass, Oscar de la Renta, Halston, Klein, and Stephen Burrows. The French designers represented that evening were Givenchy, Yves St. Laurent, Pierre Cardin, Emanuel Ungaro, and Marc Bohan of Christian Dior as cited in Enid Emy, “Eleanor Lambert, Empress of Fashion, Dies,” C17; Bernadine Morris, “When America Stole the Runway From Paris,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/10/arts/review-design-when-america-stole-the-runway-from-paris-couture.html> (accessed January 5, 2009).

such that executives of Lord & Taylor said they felt they were losing their significance.²⁴⁸ Indeed, as the fashion industry developed, many groups sprang up and instituted their own awards such as the Coty Awards, and the New York Society of Designers Awards. The manufacturing sector also developed its own awards. But, in 1976, as part of the store's 150th anniversary celebration, the Lord & Taylor Design Awards were revived in the form of the annual Dorothy Shaver Rose Award.²⁴⁹

Strangely absent, is any comprehensive record or discussion about the totality of Shaver's achievements and their significance. She was never the subject of a biography, never heralded by the next wave of feminists, rarely the object of scholarly study, and not written about in books except as brief mention and only in the context of her impact on the fashion industry. Shaver has "almost never been mentioned" and "only vaguely recalled" by insiders or outsiders, and rarely mentioned in the press since her passing.²⁵⁰ But, fortunately, there are artifacts. Shortly after her death, her papers fell into the hands of her sister, Elsie. Apparently, the succeeding president, Melvin Dawley, had called Elsie Shaver to let her know that the offices were being cleaned out and to please come and get anything she wanted of the records.²⁵¹ Thankfully, Elsie did that. In 1973, she donated the collection to the Smithsonian Institute. The papers at the Radcliff Institute

²⁴⁸ Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role," 20.

²⁴⁹ The first recipient was Diana Vreeland, former editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, former editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, and special consultant to the Costume Institute as cited in Enid Nemy, "As Private as a Party in a Store Can Be," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 30, 1976, 66.

²⁵⁰ Brady, "Retail Name Doesn't Register," 9. Interestingly, Shaver was wound into a piece of fiction in a 1988 fiction novel about four working immigrant Jewish women, one a dress designer in Meredith Tax, *Union Square*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

²⁵¹ Melissa Houtte, Shaver biographer, in phone conversation with author, November 15, 2008.

for Advanced Study were donated by Dorothy Shaver in installments from December, 1954 to January, 1956. It is one box of materials related to the Lord & Taylor Design Awards, and suggests what Shaver felt was most important about her career. These two collections provide many artifacts that have provided a window into the scope of Shaver's impact and the significance of her accomplishments.

CHAPTER 7 REFLECTIONS ON “AMERICA’S FIRST LADY OF RETAILING”

Significance of Her Accomplishments

From the beginning, Shaver was consistently at the forefront of women’s achievement. In the 1920s, when Shaver came to be a department head at Lord & Taylor, women were commonly employed at department stores, but not as department heads or supervisors. In fact, they rarely had any management positions in any industry. Women had just begun to fill these types of positions.¹ When Shaver was asked to serve on the board of directors in 1927, she became one of only two department store directors in the country. The other was Mary Lewis, an advertising manager for Best & Company.² There was also a woman manager of a new Hearn’s store in Connecticut. In 1934, Shaver was only one of only four women vice presidents in New York City department stores.³

These management achievements were all remarkable considering that in the 1930s, only 20 percent of women were employed, and usually in traditional jobs like teaching and

¹ Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class* (New York: Macmillan, 2006), 86-87. There is mention of a lively, and very effective, head of the book department at Chicago’s Marshall Field’s. Marcella Burns was named head in 1914. Within a few years, her department was generating sales of \$750,000 annually as cited in Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants: The Story of Marshall Field & Company* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1952), 303-304.

² Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 186.

³ *Ibid.*

nursing.⁴ By the end of the 1930s, women were popularly employed as secretaries, typists, and salesgirls and started to become employed as bond brokers, printers, and labor negotiators.⁵ Women were starting to make their mark as leaders. Ethel Puffer Howes had just started a program at Smith College to see how women could combine a career, marriage, and motherhood. Olive Beech co-founded Beech Aircraft Corporation in 1932, and Amelia Earhart would be the first female to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. Frances Perkins became the first woman cabinet member when she became Secretary of Labor in 1933.⁶ On the technological front, radio and talking pictures had just arrived.

In 1935, Shaver was named as one of the country's top ten business women by 500 leading business executives polled by the Bureau of Economic Research of the L. Baumberger and Company. She came in fifth behind Josephine L. Roche, (assistant secretary of the Treasury), Elizabeth Arden (entrepreneur), Mary Dillon (president of Brooklyn Borough Gas Company), and Nell Reed (a dress manufacturer).⁷ Also in that year, Hortense Odlum, wife of

⁴ NASA Quest, "Female Frontiers," NASA, <http://quest.nasa.gov/space/frontiers/activities/womanswork/chart.html> (accessed March 15, 2008).

⁵ William Henry Chafe, *American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 48,55; NASA Quest, "Female Frontiers."

⁶ NASA Quest, "Female Frontiers."

⁷ "Miss Roche Leads Business Women: Assistant Treasury Secretary Named Most Prominent in Nation-Wide Poll. Elizabeth Arden Second. Mary Dillon of Brooklyn Gas Company Is Third and Nell Donnelly Reed Fourth," *Special to the New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 11, 1935, 12.

the president of Bonwit Teller, was appointed by her husband to be the president of the store. This made her one of the industry's early female CEOs.⁸

One of Shaver's most important achievements is her reputation as one who shattered the glass ceiling before the term was even invented. By 1945, when Shaver became president, only 28 – 36 percent of women were in the workforce.⁹ Few were in management positions, and, fewer still, were CEOs. There was one other female CEO in retail – Beatrice Fox Auerbach, who directed the very successful G. Fox & Co. Department Store in Hartford, CT. (Odlum, CEO of Bonwit Teller retired in 1940.)¹⁰ Outside retail, there were a handful of female CEOs of multi-million-dollar companies, but they either had family ties or had started their own companies. The only known exception is Mary Dillon of Brooklyn Borough Gas Company, who had no family ties to the company, became a vice president in 1924, and then president from 1926 – 1949. The gas company had revenues of about \$2 million, compared to Shaver's revenues of \$35 to \$100 million.¹¹

⁸ In her autobiography, Odlum recounts that her husband approached her with the idea to become the president at a time when the store was experiencing considerable financial difficulty as cited in Hortense McQuarrie Odlum, *A Woman's Place* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1939), 102. One journalist noted Mrs. Odlum "had never held a job before" and "had never earned a penny in her life" as cited in "Woman in First Job Head Big N.Y. Store," *Washington Post* (1877-1954), October 9, 1934, 3.

⁹ NASA Quest, "Female Frontiers."

¹⁰ Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums*, 170; Bonwit Teller Post Given Up by Mrs. Odlum, *Christian Science Monitor*, (1908 – Current File), October 11, 1940, 3.

¹¹ "Woman Gas Head Started as "Boy": President Mary E. Dillon of Brooklyn Borough Company, Who Rose From Ranks, Has Specialized in Relations With the Public," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 28, 1926, XX6; Mary E. Dillon, *Annual Reports to the Stockholders of Brooklyn Borough Gas Company, 1919-1933* (New York: Brooklyn Borough Gas, [1919-1933]).

Shaver opened the way for other women to become presidents of department stores and other large corporations. In 1957, another female president joined the retail ranks in the form of Geraldine Stutz of Henri Bendel.¹² She was a vice president of I. Miller retail stores from 1955 to 1957, having spent some time as assistant to the public relations director of Chicago's fashion industry and then as an editor at *Glamour Magazine*. When I. Miller was purchased by the Genesco conglomerate, its chairman, Maxey Jarman, named Stutz to head Henri Bendel, an upscale women's boutique on Fifth Avenue.¹³ Other elected female CEOs of retail would soon follow. Mildred Custin became president of Bonwit Teller Philadelphia in 1958, a year before Shaver's death. Custin would then become president of all twelve Bonwit Tellers stores in 1965. Custin once thanked Shaver for "blazing a trail for us."¹⁴ Many years later, Helen Galland served as president of Bonwit Teller (1980-1983); Karen Katz would head Nieman Marcus (2002) and Jan Elfers would become Lord & Taylor's second female president (2001-2008).

Shaver led the way in commanding a handsome salary as a woman in business. During the 1930s and 1940s, women earned fifty-five cents per hour compared to an average man's earnings of one dollar per hour. As a vice president in the 1930s, Shaver earned \$75,000 a year

¹² Nan Robertson, "Rough Road For Women In Retailing," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), December 3, 1958, 47.

¹³ Time, Inc., "Changes of the Week," November 18, 1957, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,868065,00.html> (accessed June 12, 2008); Eric Wilson, Geraldine Stutz Dies at 80, *New York Times*, April 9, 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/09/business/09stutz.html> (accessed June 12, 2008).

¹⁴ Custin earned a salary of \$60,000, almost half that of Shaver's as cited in Time, Inc., "Bonwit's Lady Boss," January 22, 1965, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,940903,00.html> (accessed June 12, 2008); Mildred Custin in William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 315.

(approximately \$547,500 today).¹⁵ In 1946, when she became president and was named the highest paying business woman, she earned \$110,000 (approximately \$803,000 in today's economy).¹⁶ Her earnings were eclipsed only by those of movie stars, who made approximately two to three times that amount, with Bette Davis being the highest paid actress with earnings of \$328, 000 in 1945, and Humphrey Bogart being the highest paid actor of that year with earnings of \$467,361.¹⁷

It has been widely reported that Shaver earned only one-fourth the salary of a male CEO of the time. However, this is not entirely true. Her 1946 salary *did meet or exceed* that of many male executives of the period. The president of Boeing made \$50,000; the president of United Fruit Company earned \$54,591; the president of Reliance Manufacturing made \$62,248; the president of Arden Farms made \$75,000. Her salary *was exceeded* by that of the president of Lord & Taylor's parent company, Associated Dry Goods, who made \$130,000.¹⁸ Her salary was *not* on par, however, to her male counterpart of 1946. While she earned \$110,000 as the highest paid female business woman, the highest paid business man of 1946, Jacob W. Schwab, a New York textile manufacturer, earned \$440,452, four times what Shaver earned.¹⁹ At the time of her

¹⁵ Eleanor Roberts, "Her Rag Dolls Started Her on Road to Riches," *Boston Sunday Post*, February 3, 1946, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 1.

¹⁶ "Bogart's Pay Top for Film Players," *New York Times* (1857-Current file); February 6, 1949, 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ \$110,000 Earned by Arkansas Girl: Dorothy Shaver, Who Climbed to Lord & Taylor Presidency, Received Sum in 1946," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 24, 1947, 25.

¹⁹ "Bogart's Pay," 4.

death in 1959, she earned approximately \$125,000 annually (approximately \$913,500 in today's economy).²⁰

In 1960, the year after Shaver died, the United States released a census. It showed that there were 1.2 million people who were employed in jobs categorized as Officials, Managers, and Proprietors, and who earned \$10,000 or more. Of the 1.2 million, 25,000 were women; and half of those were in retail. Thus, at the time of her death, Shaver was numbered as one of only 12,000 women in the United States who earned more than \$10,000 a year working in retail.²¹

Shaver cognizant of women's rise through their ranks, providing support where she could. She made a way for women at Lord & Taylor as early as 1936 in her successful support of Alieda Van Wesep for vice president. Unfortunately, after Shaver's death in 1959, and Van Wesep's retirement in 1961, women faded from view on the board of Lord & Taylor until Elfers became president in 2001.²² Shaver's awareness of women in retail is also evidenced in that she kept on hand a list of women whom she felt were prominent in the retail field.²³ By the 1950s,

²⁰ Elizabeth Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," *Arkansas Gazette*, n.d., n.p. In DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

²¹ Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, *The Managerial Woman* (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), 87.

²² *Ibid.*, 87

²³ This list includes Grace Bamonte, personnel manager and member of the board of directors of B. Altman; Bess Bloodworth, vice president of personnel at Namm's Inc. Brooklyn (she became a vice president sometime between 1928 and 1932); Bernice Fitz-Gibbon, director of advertising and publicity for Gimbels; Helen Hyde, employment director at Macy's; Claire M. Lang, vice president of Franklin Simon & Co. (Lang was a head stylist at Lord & Taylor's in the 1930s before she went to Franklin Simon and became a vice president sometime between 1946 and 1947); Janet Taylor, promotion director at Saks Fifth Avenue; and Lord & Taylor's own Alieda van Wesep, a vice president since 1936 as cited in Dorothy Shaver, "List of Women Prominent in the Retail Field," n.d., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 2.

women began to be more prevalent on retail boards including the boards of Bullock's Wilshire, Arnold, Constable & Co., Rich's, Neiman-Marcus, Macy's, and others.²⁴

Shaver accomplished many other trail-blazing efforts for women. She was among the first women to serve on the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She was named to the board in 1954, after three others had been named in 1952.²⁵ At the time of her death, she was a lifetime trustee of the museum. She also became the first woman to serve on the board of Lord & Taylor's parent company Associated Dry Goods, a post she gained just six months after being named President of Lord & Taylor. She was also the first woman to consult with the Office of the General Quartermaster of the United States Army, and the first woman to receive an award from the New York Board of Trade.²⁶

In recognition of her support for women, she received many honors from women's groups including A Woman of Achievement Award from the Federation of Jewish Women's Organization in 1950, the Award for Feminist Achievement from the American Women's Association in 1950, and the inaugural Silver Scroll Award from the Women's National Institute in 1956.²⁷

²⁴ Whitaker, "Service and Style," 86.

²⁵ Hoover's, "Hoover's Profile of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," <http://www.answers.com/topic/metropolitan-museum-of-art> (accessed January 8, 2009).

²⁶ "Dorothy Shaver to Get Award," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), April 12, 1958, 24.

²⁷ The date of the Woman of Achievement Award is not recorded in published sources; however, it was held on January 11, 1950 at the Warldorf-Astoria at the Annual Convention and Luncheon of the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations as cited in Mrs. Albert J. May, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), December 14, 1949, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 4, Box 14, Folder 2; Shaver was one of seven to receive a Silver Scroll Award as cited in Guin Hall, "Seven Women Executives to Get Citations," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 6, 1956, n.p., in DSC, NMAH, Box 3, Folder 4. Other recipients of the Silver Scroll Award that year included Elsie Murphy, president of Strook & Co. Textiles; Bernice Fitz-Gibbon, president

Shaver was also significant for role in shaping public opinion. Within four years of joining Lord & Taylor, her 1928 exhibit was credited as being a key force in ushering in the modern design movement in the United States. Her most sweeping influence on public opinion, however, was convincing the US public that there was such a thing as American fashion and that they should buy it. It was a long struggle, with its conception in the design houses of Paris in the mid 1920s and its birth during World War II. But this effort changed the face of fashion and had a significant economic impact, not only on the city and state of New York, but also the entire country and the world. The scope of her influence was noted when she was asked to serve on the board of the Economic Development Commission of New York, and when Governor Harriman of New York appointed her to the State Commerce Department's Business Advisory Council, and also when she received medals from both France and Britain recognizing her impact on their respective economies.²⁸

Shaver obviously understood the process of opinion formation. It could also be said that her work promoting American fashion is an example of diffusion of innovation theory and that she demonstrated an understanding of the theory long before Everett Rogers popularized it in 1962. Rogers defined diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system."²⁹ The theory holds that innovations follow a pattern of adoption. When an innovation is introduced opinion leaders

of her own advertising and merchandising consultant firm; Margaret Rudkin, president of Pepperidge Farm; Millicent Carey McIntosh, president of Barnard College and director of Home Life Insurance, Co.; Anna M. Rosenberg, president of her own industrial relations firm; and Oveta Culp Hobby, publisher of *The Houston Post*.

²⁸ "Miss Shaver Dead; Led Lord & Taylor: Dorothy Shaver Is Dead at 66; Headed Lord & Taylor Since' 45," *Special to the New York Times* (1857-Current file), June 29, 1959, 29 .

²⁹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed., (New York: Free Press, 1995), 5.

exert influence about the innovation and then others follow. Rogers identified five categories of adopters which he named *innovators*, *early adopters*, *early majority*, *late majority*, and *laggards*.³⁰ Shaver's understanding of this process can be seen in her store training document, *Appreciation for Style*. She wrote that all style had three definite stages or categories of development. She identified them as the *sponsor*, the *experts*, and the *public*. She identified the sponsors as the fashion leaders, society women who set the pace, and the leaders in decoration. The experts, she noted, were the editors of magazines and publications, shop owners, people who study style, and those who want to keep up the leaders. And, finally, she wrote, the general public will follow. Her thinking mirrored Rogers.³¹

Shaver was also significant because she was a forerunner, pioneer, or a developer of many innovations. As has been discussed, her innovations covered retail sales, merchandising, advertising, employee relations, and promotions. In 1956, J. Gordon Dakins, executive vice president of the National Retail Dry Goods Association, said Shaver's contributions to the field of retailing were "outstanding."³²

Shaver's accomplishments can adequately be summed up in her own words. On November 12, 1957, she made an acceptance speech before the Advertising Club of Washington in which she espoused the value of creativity to the success of Lord & Taylor, and also gave a synopsis of her achievements.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dorothy Shaver, "Appreciation for Style: Buyer's Training Course," May 25, 1927, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 17, Folder 2; Ibid.

³² J. Gordon Dakins, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), November 14, 1956, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 2.

I have seen so much achieved at Lord & Taylor by creative thinking that I have really become its apostle. We instigated a revolution in advertising when we decided to break with tradition and move ahead using our own ideas. We evolved the basic concept that we should publicize rather than advertise. That we should sell the store first and merchandise second. That we should push ideas rather than items. With this in mind we found that the then current advertising practices where art was concerned were inadequate. In order to create moods, to achieve the 'indirect sell' about which you hear so much these days, we needed the softer subtler techniques of wash drawings versus the traditional hard line drawings. We believed that this technique told our fashion story with far greater impact and feelings. In copy also we dropped the detailed description and in its place announced the idea, the mood behind the style. Ironing out the technical problems with the newspapers, we launched the advertising style that now at a glance says Lord & Taylor to thousands.

How common an error it is to take our ideas and attitudes from others leaving dormant our richest possession, the creative instinct. As merchandisers, our goal at Lord & Taylor is to work as creators not imitators. Instead of accepting the established patterns of merchandising, we analyzed our customer's needs. We were the first to recognize that clothes should be specialized to fit the needs of different customer groups. As a result Lord & Taylor created the first College Shop, the first-ever Junior Department and a shop with clothes especially designed for women five feet four and under.

Believing that the fine arts have a vital place in the business world, Lord & Taylor has been a pioneer in incorporating them in its window and interior display. It was at Lord & Taylor that American designers got their first encouragement. We believed, and now see our faith well founded, that the American designer had great talent to contribute to the art of fashion.

The cornerstone of our employee relations is our respect for the individuality of each member of our staff and our belief that it is our duty to create a working environment where each can express his talent to the fullest. The result is an uncommon loyalty and spirit of vitality that radiates out to our customers. It is that intangible asset that the public calls "the Lord & Taylor personality."³³

In this speech, Shaver highlighted most of her accomplishments, but neglected to mention her role as the pioneer of the suburban branch store.

Shaver's accomplishments were felt in the fields of feminism, fashion, retail, and communications. Across each of these fields, she left major marks and enduring contributions.

³³ Dorothy Shaver, "America's Greatest Resource – The Creative Spirit: Delivered Before the Advertising Federation Club of Washington," November 12, 1957, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15 , Folder 5.

She broke barriers for women, was a key force in establishing a new and multi-billion-dollar industry in the United States, and she transformed her corner of the communications world. Her ideas were often “unorthodox” but they were effective. What some shopkeepers may have considered “less brilliant” ideas or “cuckoo scrawlings” for ads, turned heads and upturned pocketbooks.³⁴ Her impact on the evolution of merchandising was “simply enormous” said an admirer, and it earned her the title “America’s First Lady of Retailing.”³⁵

Keys to Success

There is no question that Shaver’s accomplishments were many and varied. She was a sort of Renaissance woman. But she was modest and nonchalant about her successes. Of her election to president she said, “It’s a great honor ... I have modest confidence that I will run it in the most distinguished manner possible.”³⁶ She abhorred success stories, particularly about herself, and she believed the world would be a better place if people stopped reading them and, better yet if people stopped writing about them, perhaps even in dissertations.³⁷

She thought it no big thing that a woman would head a multi-million-dollar corporation. She also felt that her accomplishment and the accomplishments of other women by the 1940s had essentially settled the question about the battle of the sexes, and they needed little

³⁴ Talmey, Allene. “No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist.” *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 159.

³⁵ She was also called “The First Lady of Fifth Avenue” as cited in Anne Robinson, “Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring to Fifth Avenue,” *Sunday Magazine, Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1956, 3; Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums*, 156-157.

³⁶ “Shaver to Head Lord & Taylor.” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 20 1945, A1.

³⁷ Bordages, Asa, “Stars of the Payroll,” *World Telegram*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 1.

discussion. She said the “man versus woman question has been dropped,” that it was an old issue “left over from the days when women were not considered equal with men” and she was, quite frankly, “tired of hearing about it.”³⁸ The abilities of women may have seemed pretty clear to Shaver, but, as it would turn out, they were not so clear to the rest of the world. Women would continue their struggle to get positions at the highest levels. It is possible that Shaver’s impact was limited because she was too far ahead of her time.³⁹ In keeping with her time, she obtained a high position, as a result of a family connection. In this, she was fortunate. The relationship presented her with opportunity. She had not even had the vision to become president, or vice president, she once stated.⁴⁰ Because the opportunity came so easily to her, and because she did not have to fight for it, she was possibly overly dismissive about the feminist struggle. In this sense, Shaver was possibly somewhat naïve.

She was not totally oblivious to the realities surrounding the struggles of women and their achievements. When she was elected president, she granted very few interviews because “I knew exactly what the interviewers would write. They would tell what I wore, how much

³⁸ Mary Ann Callan, “Women Bolster Leaders Role: First Lady of Retailing Believes Man vs. Woman Idea Outmoded,” *Times*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 4.; S. J. Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures the Store of Tomorrow,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 5, 1947, SM18.

³⁹ There were only three women presidents of retail establishments prior to 1970 – Shaver, Mildred Custin of Bonwit Teller, and Geraldine Stutz at Henri Bendel. By 1984, after the advent of the feminist movement of the 1970s, there were many more. A dinner hosted by The Fashion Group to honor female heads of retail stores identified nine female heads of retail stores including Hanne Merriman of Garfinckels, Sally Frame of Ann Taylor, Gloria Johnson of Hutzler’s, Pamela Grant of Goldwaters, Judith Hofer of The May Company, Dawn Mello of Bergdorf-Goodman, Eve Rich of Contempo Casuals, Geraldine Stutz of Henri Bendel, and Cheryl Nido Turpin of Weinstock’s as cited in “New Ground for Women in Business,” *The Washington Post* (1974-Current file), November 4, 1984, 113.

⁴⁰ Virginia Irwin, “Shopping Will Become Gay Affair,” *The Post Dispatch*, n.d., n.p., paragraph #20, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

makeup I used and all the rest about a woman who has happened to make good,” Shaver recalled.⁴¹

When pressed about the reasons for her success, her responses were varied. She attributed her success to many difference factors, but she usually noted for quest for new ideas and her enthusiasm for her work. Many other agreed, and some additionally noted her skill in administration, her adeptness at human relations, and her creativity.

Shaver was known as a woman “sizzling with ideas” who “delighted in the new and the untried.”⁴² “I love ... new ideas, new approaches,” she said.⁴³ She brought new and fresh ideas to every position she occupied. “We strive to make Lord & Taylor a world animated by new ideas... encouraging the imagination,” she once said.⁴⁴ Eleanor Lambert, fashion publicist, called her a “vanguard of new thought.”⁴⁵ “Ideas packed against ideas, backed up by ideas, followed by an army of ideas – these are the bricks in the structure of Dorothy Shaver’s success, and were the prime cause of her rise,” noted a journalist.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures,” SM18.

⁴² *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, s.v. “Dorothy Shaver,” <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=1762> paragraph #7 (accessed November 18, 2008).

⁴³ Dorothy Shaver, “Statement for ‘What’s Your Secret Ambition?’” Symposium for McCall’s, 1956, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 18, Folder 4.

⁴⁴ Dorothy Shaver, “Excerpts of Speeches and Articles,” prepared by Elizabeth W. Christenson, Public Relations Director, September 1957, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 3.

⁴⁵ Eleanor Lambert, (unpublished letter to Dorothy Shaver), January 19, 1945, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 4, Box 14, Folder 2.

⁴⁶ David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way: Eight Pioneers for Equal Rights*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 223; Lucille L. Huntington, “The Only Madam President in the Department Store World,” *Personal Efficiency: The Success Magazine*, January, 1948, 10, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

Because she believed in the power of good ideas, she constantly pursued them. She hounded her staff for them. She scoured the world for them. She “pumped and pecked at people for them [ideas],” encouraged people to share ideas, and could spot a good one when she saw one.⁴⁷ Since her early days in the Bureau of Stylists, she encouraged her staff members to openly share their ideas and to think boldly and creatively. “Stretch,” she would say, “Play the whole piano, not just a few keys.”⁴⁸ When she became president, she created a team that met regularly to brainstorm in her office. They shot out ideas “like machinegun fire.” Shaver expressed disapproval with the phrase “Oh, that’s so 1920s modern.” Her favorite ideas were rewarded with her signature slogan, “Tops, tops, tops!”⁴⁹

Her ideas were sometimes considered “daring” and sometimes “mad,” but she believed that success was intrinsic to a good idea.⁵⁰ “If I cannot sell the idea it is evidently no good,” she declared.⁵¹

Shaver believed that good ideas came from a spirit of freedom and creativity. “My belief in the power and potential of creative thinking has been the most dynamic principle behind my career ... To me, it means taking off the blinders of custom and habit and looking with fresh

⁴⁷ Helen Leopold, “A Top Executive Without Goals, Won’t Be Pressured,” *Louisville Kentucky Times*, January 13, 1955, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5. Leopold’s article describes her observations of a typical day in Shaver’s life as President that included an appointment “with a woman from the outside with an idea” which Shaver would call “a darned good idea.”

⁴⁸ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 227

⁴⁹ Eleanor Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p., col. 5.

⁵⁰ Irwin, “Shopping Will Become Gay Affair,” n.p.; Leopold, “A Top Executive Without Goals,” n.p.

⁵¹ Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” n.d., 2, item 8, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 17, Folder 1.

eyes,” she said.⁵² Because she valued freedom and creativity, she was careful to provide an environment that would foster these qualities.

Shaver also once attributed her success to the power of art. “Any conversation with Dorothy Shaver [was] bound to touch upon art,” wrote Virginia Pope, acquaintance, colleague in the fashion industry, and fashion editor for *The New York Times*.⁵³ Shaver indicated that every idea she ever vetted was subject to the question, “Is it artistic?”⁵⁴

Whatever success I have achieved in business is due to art and its universal appeal. I have learned from dollars and cents returns ... that it touches the hearts and minds of people. There is no man who does not respond to some form of art. The form may not be a painting or a piece of sculpture. It may be a chair or a dress or a window display. In those latter forms it isn't called art. It is called design. But, to me, good design is simply art applied to living.”⁵⁵

“It is because of my great love for art that I concern myself so much with the artistic appearance of the Lord & Taylor stores,” she additionally said.⁵⁶

Shaver was regarded for her instincts and intuition. She reportedly had a “knack for knowing what people wanted,” and “knowing instinctively what appeals to women.”⁵⁷ She attributed this to her powers of listening. “I listen constantly to what women want. I follow

⁵² Dorothy Shaver, “In Pursuit of Ideas,” (unpublished draft of text written for Playbill Magazine), August 1957, 5, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 4.

⁵³ Virginia Pope, “Happy Birthday, Dear Dorothy,” *Town & Country*, n.d., 88, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, “The Shavers Show the Big City,” n.p.

⁵⁵ Dorothy Shaver, “Excerpts of Speeches and Articles.”

⁵⁶ Barnett Saschever and Nat Sestero “Art, Retail Selling Major Interests of Famed Lord & Taylor President,” no source, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, Series 3, NMAH, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁵⁷ Bordages, “Stars of the Payroll,” n.p.

trends and guess what they are going to ask for next. The combination simply means – that I recognize something good when I see it.”⁵⁸

Shaver was also a keen administrator. She was called a “strategist” and a “tactician.”⁵⁹ Once Shaver spotted a good idea, she needed to apply good planning and strong execution for it to become a reality. To Shaver, an idea without execution was worthless. The “woman with ideas a mile a minute” was described as having a “relentlessly analytical business mind” and “sound merchandising and organization [that] would underlie her selling ideas.”⁶⁰ She was particularly fond of meetings as one of the best ways to get things done.⁶¹ Shaver called her strategizing ability “strong mental processing.”⁶² “I had a five-year plan before the Russians did,” she once said.⁶³ Without proper planning and execution Elsie’s dolls would have just been family entertainment, the 1928 Exhibit would have stayed in Paris, American fashion would have come along only eventually, and department stores would have delayed their journey into the suburbs. Perhaps that is why she had no problem taking other people’s ideas. To her, an idea was worthless without execution.

⁵⁸ Isabella Taves, *Successful Women and How They Attained Success* (New York: P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1943). 143.

⁵⁹ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 198.

⁶⁰ Kathleen McLaughlin, “Single Good Idea Not Enough to Win Success, Says Expert,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file); September 17, 1939, 56.

⁶¹ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 198.

⁶² McLaughlin, “Single Good Idea,” 56.

⁶³ Jeanne Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” *Life*, May 12, 1947, 118.

The woman who foraged for ideas was also especially adept at pitching them. She would eventually be described as “able to sell people back their own face.”⁶⁴ Shaver dedicated a lot of time and effort to the selling process of merchandise. Employees underwent constant training, and much effort was put into interior display, promotional campaigns, and advertising. “Selling ... requires as much, if not more time and effort as selecting fashions,” she wrote in an employee directive, “and no Fashion Forecast will work without proper selling force behind it.”⁶⁵

But she preferred to sell ideas over objects. “My technique is to sell, sell, sell” [and] ... “I like to sell ideas.”⁶⁶ As she viewed it, she did not sell *dresses*, she sold *fashion*. She sold images, impressions, and concepts. She did not sell Lord & Taylor Department Store, she sold the *idea* that Lord & Taylor knew fashion and was the arbiter of style. She also sold the country on the idea that there was such a thing as American fashion, that people should buy it, and that it should matter. It required a grand plan of “showing people what was good, creating a taste for it and at the same time convincing the creative artists that a new field was open to them in which they could gain not only remuneration but also recognition.”⁶⁷ But, she recognized that, in order to be successful, one had to sell *both* ideas and objects. “Style leadership is an invaluable asset ... if you have it, hold it. If you haven’t it, and want to get it, make the job of

⁶⁴ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 194.

⁶⁵ Dorothy Shaver, “A Few Basic Points to be Watched and Weighed in Merchandising Fashion,” n.d., 2, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 3.

⁶⁶ Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures,” SM18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

getting and holding it apart from the retaining and increasing of your present volume. They are two separate jobs,” she wrote.⁶⁸

Shaver was a visionary. Her visions were large and they were pointed directly into the future. “Who cares about the past?” she often said.⁶⁹ She cared so little for the past, in fact, that she didn’t even hold store anniversary sales.⁷⁰ She called herself a “big picture” person, preferring the “broad stroke” and said she abhorred details.⁷¹ “Don’t give me dibs and dabs. Give me four big ideas a year and you can relax the rest of the time,” she often said to staff members.⁷² She had vision from the start. It was her vision for her own sister’s artistic talent that created a business that would put her in the retailing world. “All my life I have been hoping that Elsie would make a doll,” said Shaver, “I always have known she would be a success at making artistic playthings.”⁷³ When she arrived at Lord & Taylor, she had a specific vision for the store, creating an entirely new environment and carving out a new customer. She also had new visions for promoting the store and new visions for communicating with customers.

Shaver’s vision ultimately took her beyond her duties as a shopkeeper and out into the world. Her greatest vision was for a US fashion industry on par with Paris. This dream rested on another vision – Shaver’s goal to merge the worlds of art and industry. She believed that

⁶⁸ Dorothy Shaver, “A Few Basic Points,” 2.

⁶⁹ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 198.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Bordages, “Stars of the Payroll,” n.p.

⁷² Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 211.

⁷³ Hannah Mitchell, “‘Little Shavers’ – A New Race of Dolls for Every Member of the Family,” *New York Tribune*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 11, Folder 1.

industry supplied content and art supplied form.⁷⁴ If American technology merged with American design talent, then a truly American industry could emerge and develop.

It seems to me the marriage of art and industry was made by heaven. The wedding took place the first time anything was ever manufactured ... and it is a marriage of necessity ... for better or worse. I have always tried to help make it for better.”⁷⁵

Her visions extended into the future. She was eager to share her ideas about the future of the world of retailing. She envisioned a myriad of possibilities for the department store. She declared that there was “no limit to new ideas that may be put to retail business in the future.”⁷⁶ She accurately predicted that the stores of the future would have parking decks, that stores would have branch stores all around the country, that structures would be very large and mostly windowless, and that stores would not have permanent walls so there could be greater flexibility with interior display (in her time department stores were a conglomeration of fixed rooms with permanent walls). She predicted that roofs would be large, expansive, and suitable as helipads. She believed that there would be movie theatre inside stores, that there would be attempts to combat shopping fatigue, and that television would become important inside stores.⁷⁷

For such large and sweeping visions to materialize, Shaver needed the trust and cooperation of many other groups. She worked successfully with manufacturers, designers, other retailers, stylists, economists, bankers, members of the press, and also government leaders for the City of New York.⁷⁸ She was a member of the Economic Development Bureau of New

⁷⁴ Dorothy Shaver, “Excerpts of Speeches and Articles,”1

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶ Dorothy Shaver in Irwin, “Shopping will Become Gay Affair,” n.p.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 117.

York and she had a close working relationship with Mayor LaGuardia who recognized the impact that the fashion industry was having on the city.⁷⁹

Studies about successful public relations show that the most effective public relations efforts are those in which the practitioner has access to management or a seat at the management table.⁸⁰ Shaver had direct access to management in each of her posts. As the Head of Comparison Shopping and Head of the Bureau of Fashion and Decorating, she was directly answerable to upper management in the form of Reyburn. Once she was appointed to the board of directors in 1927, she was solidly in the inner circle of the highest levels of management. Her ideas had a direct hearing by those who had the means and resources to implement them. She served with three presidents – Reyburn, Priddy, and Hoving. There is nothing to suggest that she had anything but positive relationships with at least two of the presidents. She had Reyburn’s support from the beginning, and the two worked closely together on the Bureau of Stylists, and also on the 1928 Exhibition. She and Hoving were often seen walking together along Fifth Avenue in deep conversation.⁸¹ Little is known about her relationship with Priddy. She nurtured these important relationships and was always close to the highest levels of the management functions. Shaver held her own at the management table. This was probably because she believed in the power of information. “Don’t ever get in a position where you can

⁷⁹ Product Design Discussed," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 23, 1949, F10; *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. 56, 1975, s.v. "Shaver, Dorothy Yeiser."

⁸⁰ David M. Dozier, Larissa A. Grunig, and James E. Grunig, *Manager’s Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).

⁸¹ Roberts, "Her Rag Dolls," n.p., col. 3.

be knocked down,” she said.⁸² “Nobody could get away from the facts I marshaled,” she once said.

Another key to Shaver’s success was that she operated from a set of pre-determined values. It would be difficult to study Shaver’s career without encountering her strong sense of citizenship and philanthropy, both on the personal and corporate levels. She served on the boards of many nonprofit groups such as The Greater New York Fund, The Menninger Foundation for Psychiatric Education and Research, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, the American Women’s Volunteer Service, the American Association for the United Nations, Public Information on Civil Defense in New York City, and Crusade for Freedom, among many others (see Appendix B for a more detailed listing). She also promoted charities and public service organizations through the store. As early as 1938, when she was a vice president, she was allowing charitable groups to use her windows. One charity worker wrote,

Back in 1938 when I was personally interested in an exhibition of Spanish children’s drawings for the benefit of the Quakers’ work in Spain, there was considerable timidity on the part of the public and nonprofit institutions to exhibit these pictures, but it was Dorothy Shaver who had the courage and generosity to turn over a conspicuous section of Lord and Taylor for this exhibition. It was all in her day’s work but it brought out, in a way that her friends are able to illustrate time and again, her vision, generosity and range of interest.⁸³

Shaver received some criticism for allowing nonprofit groups to use her valuable window space. She responded,

⁸² Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 122.

*⁸³ Unknown author, text of speech written on letterhead of Office of the President of the Men’s City Club of New York, “Miss Dorothy Shaver,” n.d., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 13, Folder 3.)

There are those who contend such a gesture is far from the straight and narrow path of buying and selling merchandise. But if buying and selling were Lord & Taylor's sole function, its path would be a narrow one indeed ... Lord & Taylor is a citizen of the community. We enjoy the privileges of citizenship. And if we accept its privileges, we must also assume its obligations.⁸⁴

Shaver's values resounded loudly and were consistently reiterated throughout the entirety of her career. The most basic theme was her sense of human dignity. She believed that quality human relationships were the keys to both personal and corporate success.⁸⁵

Whatever small success I have achieved is because I have become involved ... in extra work, in extracurricular activities, in the ideas, the problems, the joys of other people ... [It has] brought me much more in return – unexpected inspiration, deeper human understanding, heightened pleasure, stronger faith ... I have usually found help for my own problem ... often I have stumbled upon an idea which I had long been seeking, or a situation which gave me insight into a personal problem ... Always, by lifting myself from my own path, I have come back to it with truer perspective and renewed hope ... The most important reason for getting involved ... is the chance to make some personal contribution to a better world ... As the poet Edgar Lee Masters put it, "The branches of a tree spread no wider than its roots. And how shall the soul of man be larger than the life he has lived?"⁸⁶

She encouraged other business leaders to look beyond profits and to not neglect people. "Today's business leader cannot justify his existence by profit statements alone. He must also render service to his local, national, and world community," she admonished.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Dorothy Shaver, "Address by Miss Dorothy Shaver to the American Women's Association," November 28, 1950, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 5.

⁸⁵ Woolf, "Miss Shaver Pictures," SM18.

⁸⁶ Dorothy Shaver, "This I Believe," Speech, Edward R. Murrow's "This I Believe" program, March 14, 1955 aired on CBS, March 13, 1955, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 18, Folder 6.

⁸⁷ *Building News*, April 12, 1951, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

The importance of human dignity was evident in almost all of her activities. She decried the undignified spy system of the comparison shopper and advocated for better customer service. Her belief in human dignity elevated a dowdy, dull store to one that provided comfortable and appealing surroundings, ease of shopping, and entertainment to lift the spirit. She also expressed her belief in the power of human dignity through her program of employee relations. It was marked by efforts to promote health, safety, comfort, quality of life, personal development, professional development, and psychological well-being. Even her choice of profession was an outgrowth of her values. She believed that beauty and style contributed to human dignity. Fashion, after all, was not about clothing a body. It was a pathway to esteem.

Shaver also believed that people achieved their highest dignity when they were allowed to be creative and when they had an environment that supported creative thought and activity. So she valued, nurtured, and upheld the creative spirit. She fought for fullest expression for the American designer. She provided the best working environment possible so that employees felt free to accomplish their jobs in the manner in which they saw fit, and in which managers had autonomy. “Our employees should express themselves creatively in their work ... we are ever on the alert for the creative spark that is the basis for truly distinguished achievement,” she said.⁸⁸

Shaver understood the value of creativity to corporate success.

This [a creative environment] is the environment that has made an art out of window and interior display at Lord & Taylor, attracting national and international acclaim. It [also] produced a completely new advertising style that started a widely popular trend in retail advertising throughout the country.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Dorothy Shaver, “Statement on Lord & Taylor’s Corporate Image,” October, 1958, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Box 17, Folder 2.

⁸⁹ Dorothy Shaver, “Statement on Lord & Taylor’s Corporate Image.”

Shaver believed that for creativity to have its fullest bloom, it required freedom from all constraint. So, she railed against any perceived enemies of creativity, which she identified as any forms of conformity or uniformity. During the war years she espoused the value of democracy as the best condition for full freedom of expression. But, she was opposed to conformity of any kind, whether it occurred through the dictates of restricted societies or through the mass production of open societies.⁹⁰

Lest she be painted as totally altruistic, Shaver was a wise and practical merchant. She was keenly aware that good citizenship was good business.

If they [people] are affected adversely, our business declines immediately. If we suffer losses, so do they. It is therefore not only to their advantage, but to ours as well, if we help improve economic, cultural, and social conditions. Let us remember that free enterprise is a two-way street.⁹¹

“Dorothy, the merchant,” and “Dorothy, the citizen [were] one,” wrote Virginia Pope of the *New York Times*.⁹²

Some felt Shaver was successful only because of her connection to Reyburn. One sales clerk said, “[She’s successful because] she knew the boss.”⁹³ She “could never be considered the poor little working girl who made good,” wrote one reporter.⁹⁴ Shaver did acknowledge the role of good fortune in her connection to Reyburn. She said she was fortunate to have “started in

⁹⁰ “Conformity Held Peril To Freedom: Dorothy Shaver, Getting Gold Brotherhood Award, Urges Independent Expression,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), April 14, 1954, 21; Samuel Feinberg, “Don’t Be a Rubber Stamp!” *Women’s Wear Daily*, April 19, 1954, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, series 3, Box 12, Folder 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 106.

⁹³ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 118.

⁹⁴ Huntington, “Shopping Will Become Gay Affair,” 8.

the right direction ... with Lord & Taylor.”⁹⁵ She was additionally fortunate in that Reyburn had fairly progressive views about the role of women in society. He believed that a woman could be successful in business and once stated that a mother with a good business mind had much to offer her children.⁹⁶ But Shaver equally emphasized that good fortune was never enough. “One gets jobs in many ways, but what one does with them is the difference between success and failure,” she said.⁹⁷ “Success depends upon hard work and ability, together with a certain amount of luck, or opportunity, or whatever else you want to call it” but “all the luck in the world is not anything without ability.”⁹⁸

In many respects, perhaps as an additional stroke of good fortune, Shaver was successful because she was the right woman, for the right time, in the right place. Shaver was a good fit for the fashion industry, a good fit for the department store culture of the time, and a good fit for Lord & Taylor.

Shaver was a good fit for the fashion industry because she came to her job with both keen business intelligence and also an artist’s imagination.⁹⁹ When she entered the world of fashion, she already understood what the French knew – that fashion was undergirded, nurtured,

⁹⁵ Phyllis Cerf, “Dorothy Shaver’s First Job,” *Good Housekeeping*, October 1956, 150.

⁹⁶ Reyburn in William Leach. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 315.

⁹⁷ Cerf, “Dorothy Shaver’s First Job,” 150.

⁹⁸ Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures,” SM18.

⁹⁹ Eleanor Clymer and Lillian Erlich, *Modern American Career Women* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 72.

and informed by art. She was probably one of the few people of the time who could see that relationship and who was in a position to do something about it.¹⁰⁰

Shaver was a natural for the department store setting. Both were embodiments of culture and fine breeding, Shaver from her Southern genteel background and training, and the department store for its mission to promote fine living. It was a fitting union. Particularly from 1890 – 1940, the retail store fostered bourgeois gentility and lavish consumption.¹⁰¹ Department stores were promoting the consumption of goods and services not to meet basic needs, but as a way of enhancing well-being and social standing. Those who ran department stores, and those who frequented them, contributed to a bourgeoisie culture based on good taste and genteel behavior. Clerks often brought their working class culture to the department store and needed training in this new culture and how to perpetuate it.¹⁰² As a child of the South from a privileged family in a good social class, Shaver already had many of these behaviors and qualities and so she was well-prepared to lead others in this mission. She could bring her trained gentility to an industry that was selling it. Shaver proved this when a journalist later observed that “you begin to meet Dorothy Shaver’s personality the minute you enter her store” with its “flowered

¹⁰⁰ Others were perhaps Edna Woolman Chase, editor of *Vogue* and fellow member of The Fashion Group, and also Virginia Pope, the fashion editor of *The New York Times*. Both were strong supporters of the American design movement, lending their editorial access to media coverage. Pope also played her role by convincing her newspaper to change its policy and to give credit to all -- stores, manufacturers and designers -- underneath the photos of their designs, culminating in the September, 1940 first. She also staged a production of American designs called “Fashion of the Times” which was a Broadway stage show production of upcoming fashions, produced in high theatrical style reminiscent of the Ziegfeld Follies. The productions ran from 1942 – 1951. As cited in Bill Cunningham, “Our Miss Pope: The Ladylike Journalist Who Gave American Designers a Forum: Fashions of the Times,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), October 24, 1993, SM82.

¹⁰¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 128.

awnings ... red cushions on the glove counters ... and happy employees.”¹⁰³ Her personality was projected onto the Lord & Taylor landscape. Her office looked more like a living room, or “the library in a wealthy home,” wrote a journalist. This was because Shaver wanted people to feel at home.¹⁰⁴ At the opening of the first branch store in Manhasset, it was reported that the new structure resembled a “gracious suburban home” more than a department store.¹⁰⁵

Shaver was a whole-hearted supporter of this concept of having and promoting fine taste. She was driven by the need to promote fine breeding in her customers, her employees, the country, and the world. During the early part of her career she worked with the Fashion Group, sponsoring lectures about good taste and style. They were held regularly at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹⁰⁶ She also promoted fine living in her executive training class.

Now, what is the Lord & Taylor concept? Simply put, we want to run a series of Lord & Taylor stores for well-bred citizens who have a purchasing power that would fall into the middle to high income level. In order to run such a business we must have well-bred people to do the job ... A well-bred person is a person who has an innate feeling for quality of personal being, personal manners and bearing – an innate feeling for quality of taste ... [who knows how to] live gracefully and intelligently ... it affects our selection of personnel and selection of merchandise ... If we are well-bred, our relationship with each other will evoke that well-bred spirit across each counter or corridor or departmental barrier to the customer and we will attract well-bred customers ... I will turn down the most skillful operator if we have no hope of making him a fine human being – a well-bred person – for then we would be moving away from the kind of store we are building.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Huntington, “The Only Madam President,” 7

¹⁰⁴ Irwin, “Shopping Will Become a Gay Affair,” n.p.

¹⁰⁵ Barbara E. Scott Fisher, “What New Ideas are Ahead – The Question, with Miss Shaver at the Helm,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 6, 1946, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Clara Louise Avery, “Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” March, 1932, 27, no. 3, 80-85.

¹⁰⁷ Dorothy Shaver, “Miss Shaver’s Remarks for Executive Training Class,” March 11, 1957, 2, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 3.

This influence of good breeding was apparently felt in New York in the 1920s. A young publisher named Conde Nast said he noticed a “great Renaissance of good taste” prevailing in New York by 1929, and that it inspired him to expand his ever-increasing magazine empire around the idea.¹⁰⁸ He began his publishing career in 1909 and his most famous publications were *Vogue*, *House and Garden*, and *Vanity Fair*.

This enculturation into gentility was an industry-wide phenomenon at department stores, but it was particularly strong at Lord & Taylor, such that a modern-day writer and critic noticed sales clerks who were “unfailingly courteous” and who consulted customers’ credit cards to thank them by name. The journalist said these gestures, and the atmosphere it promoted, felt like “faded gentility.”¹⁰⁹

Part of Shaver’s southern gentility included a call to participate in causes. Women of the South have been historically noted as women devoted to causes.¹¹⁰ Shaver did so throughout her life as has been discussed. She believed wholeheartedly that people should support causes, and that since people ran corporations, corporations should likewise be philanthropic and show good citizenship. To her, charitable work was simply a way of life and an extension of her upbringing.

¹⁰⁸ Phyllis Lee Levin, *The Wheels of Fashion* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 58.

¹⁰⁹ Angela Voulangas, “Good Things in Store,” *Print*, April, 2008, 62, no. 2, 81.

¹¹⁰ Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 78.

Shaver's social standing growing up in her small community of Mena prepared her to be an administrator. She said that being store president was much like being the mayor of Mena in that wanted to make sure employees were treated as "important citizens in the town."¹¹¹

Shaver was a good fit, not only for the fashion industry and the department store culture, but specifically for Lord & Taylor. Both were consistently ahead of the times and preferred to lead. Lord & Taylor was one of the first businesses to establish itself on Catharine Street after the Eerie Canal which sparked trade and commerce in the area. The store moved five times before it came to its final resting place. Whenever it moved, it was usually to an "ahead-of-the-times location."¹¹² It was among the first businesses to migrate steadily northward towards central Manhattan and settle into the Garment District, the first department store on Broadway, the first department store on Fifth Avenue, the first iron-framed building in Manhattan when it moved in 1872, and is recorded as the first store in the city to use a steam elevator.¹¹³ When it moved to Fifth Avenue in 1914, its architectural design marked a first for a design in that it was "both commercial and dignified."¹¹⁴ Shaver was not an unfitting representative of Lord & Taylor's pioneering spirit. As it turned out, she, too, had a pioneering spirit and would continue

¹¹¹ Carpenter, "The Shavers Show the Big City," n.p.

¹¹² *History of Lord & Taylor, 1826-1926* (New York: The Guinn Company Inc., 1927); Patricia Coffin, "The Department of Utter Illusion," *Promenade Magazine*, May, 1951, 47, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

¹¹³ Coffin, "The Department of Utter Illusion," 46; Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums*, 34, 41; Lord & Taylor may have been the first to use a steam elevator in New York, but Marshall Field's of Chicago used a steam elevator as early as 1868 as cited in Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants*, 86.

¹¹⁴ Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *New York City Guide* (New York: Random House, 1939), 217.

the tradition of charting new territory. “Traditions have been bouncing off her sprightly Arkansas foot ever since she set it down in New York,” wrote one journalist.¹¹⁵

And Lord & Taylor needed Dorothy Shaver. Even though it was an established store, it lacked luster. “It was “an important store, but one with no more showmanship than a high school play” and “did not have a flair for selling.”¹¹⁶ It was falling behind in the merchandising race and, in a highly competitive industry, it was important for Lord & Taylor to remain competitive. With Shaver’s penchant for promotion, Lord & Taylor, while never the largest department store, was able to distinguish itself with “The Shaver Touch.” It carved out a distinctive customer, had distinctive promotions, developed a reputation as the arbiter of style, became known as an innovator, and gained international renown. “It’s now a vibrant, gay-looking store, playing straight theatre to keep its customers’ attention, a store full of pioneering ideas ... Pretty much of what’s happening to Lord & Taylor is pretty much Dorothy Shaver,” wrote a journalist.¹¹⁷ The relationship between Lord & Taylor and Dorothy Shaver was a fitting union and a good marriage.

¹¹⁵ Fisher, “What New Ideas are Ahead,” 14.

¹¹⁶ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

A Copycat?

One of Shaver's keys to success was in her penchant for collecting ideas. Her "talent for pecking away at other people's ideas, seizing them for her own, and setting them in motion" was "widely noted."¹¹⁸ But was she just an insatiable copycat who had no ideas of her own?

Her tendency to copy others was evident from the beginning and held true throughout her entire career. "The Five Shavers" were, admittedly, copied from the idea of the Kewpie doll. Each Shaver doll even came with a little verse, similar to the Kewpie doll merchandise.¹¹⁹ Her 1928 Exhibition was a spin-off of the 1925 Exhibit she attended in Paris. As for her sensation in the world of advertising, her idea to use artists' drawings was not a new one. Artists were being used as early as 1929 out of a growing realization that ads needed to be distinguishable. But artists were "not plentiful" and "their services commanded a high figure" so most advertising managers of department stores couldn't afford the service often and purchased syndicated drawings from stock commercial art companies.¹²⁰

Shaver is noted for her use of theatrical and sometimes merchandise-less use of the window display; however, if Shaver had taken a look into department store history, as she likely had, there were forerunners. Macy's, in the early part of the century, created a stir when it unveiled a theatrical scene in its window. It was an elaborate ballroom scene with mannequins

¹¹⁸ Levin, *The Wheels of Fashion*, 217; Edward Drayton, "Ad-Angles of Reconversion," *Women's Wear Daily*, February 6, 1957, n.p. in DS, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 3, Folder 5; Woolf, "Miss Shaver Pictures," SM18.

¹¹⁹ Mitchell, "'Little Shavers' – A New Race of Dolls," n.p.

¹²⁰ William Nelson Taft, *Department Store Advertising* (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Company, 1929), Part Two, 4.

dressed in gowns.¹²¹ The first merchandise-less window display can be traced to 1896 when, after the sons of a German Jewish immigrant peddler named Straus acquired a controlling interest in Macy's, they expanded and remodeled the store, presenting a lavish Christmas window display of toys moved by hidden machinery.¹²²

By the time Shaver entered the retail scene, department stores had passed through their golden period. A simple examination into their history of being entertainment palaces could have supplied Shaver with much inspiration as a source of ideas. Department stores have a long history as entertainment venues.¹²³ They were known for their grand buildings, spectacular displays, and luxurious goods, and their importance as a social destination. A.T. Stewart's Emporium, established in 1846, and which later became Wanamaker's in 1896, was particularly noted for offering amenities, featuring its own restaurants, libraries, clinics, pension plans, and a gymnasium. It also conducted fashion shows that were society events and which were recorded in the press. Wanamaker educated his customers, giving them tours of the basement power plants that ran his store. He expressed a philosophy of retailing in his advertisements such as a customer's right to know. He believed that a retailer's responsibility to his employees went beyond that of wages.¹²⁴ These were also philosophies that Shaver espoused.

¹²¹ Rita Kramer, "Cathedrals of Commerce," City Journal, Spring 1996, http://www.city-journal.org/html/6_2_urbanities-cathedrals.html (accessed October 10, 2008).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums*; Mark Moss, *Shopping as an Entertainment Experience* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

It could also be said that Shaver's reputation for promotion was copied from earlier retailer John Wanamaker. In the 1870s, his promotional stunts earned him the title, "The Father of Advertising," and "The Greatest Merchant in the World."¹²⁵

Shaver may also have copied many of her retail ideas from Marshall Field's in Chicago. At the time that she lived in Chicago in 1917, the city was home to the magnificent new 1 million square foot Marshall Field & Company Department Store. It was unmatched in eloquence and was the "grandest of the grand emporiums, in the opinion of many." It was developed in the 1850s and was patterned much after A. T. Stewart's Emporium.¹²⁶ In the 1860s, it was calling itself the "A.T. Stewart of the West."¹²⁷ By 1915, just prior to Shaver's entry to Chicago, the store had expanded to encompass an entire city block and at twenty stories high, it was the world's largest department store for a time. It was a landmark and public spectacle worthy of a trip to simply view. It featured architecture that included the 6,000 square-foot Tiffany dome erected in 1907 with mosaic glasswork by the famed Tiffany; it had many restaurants, men's and women's lounges, and was an important gathering place.¹²⁸ Undoubtedly, the two young Shaver women, as daughters of an upper-middle-class family, joined the masses going to the fabled site. They likely enjoyed the myriad of shopping experiences that Marshall Field's had to offer. Shaver could have roamed those elegant floors and gleaned many ideas. Perhaps she even caught a vision for herself in a retail career.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 75, 77.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 82.

¹²⁷ Kramer, "Cathedrals of Commerce," paragraph #14.

¹²⁸ *The Encyclopedia of Chicago 2005*, s.v. "Department Stores" (by Jeffrey A. Brune), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/373.html> (accessed June 23, 2008).

It is possible that Shaver got her idea for the personal shopper service from Marshall Field's. The store was a pioneer in the move to make the shopping experience as stimulating as possible.¹²⁹ It had a strong reputation for pampering its customers, even sending its elevator operators to charm school and offering a check-cashing service for schoolteachers. It was a place where the "customer was always right."¹³⁰ By 1908, the Personal Service Bureau of the store was widely noted by customers and visitors in the city. It was a trend that started in 1890, when the store arranged for a team of interpreters to be available to assist shoppers who were visiting the World's Fair. They were personally escorted about the store and offered personal assistance. The locals soon began demanding this service, asking for someone to do their shopping for them, or delivering a gift or ensemble. Men began calling to have the store make gift selections for their wives. Baby buggies appeared to help mothers with their babies, and soon, people were calling for special orders and requests for particular merchandise, for which buyers were sent on the hunt. Sometimes the services ranked in the bizarre such as having Marshall Field's look for missing pets or missing persons, or allowing men to leave alimony checks at the customer service desk for ex-wives to pick up. The demand for personal service grew such that it became its own department. It was a profitable department, sometimes selling entire wardrobes with one phone call.¹³¹

Marshall Field's also had progressive employee relations for its time. Executive Harry Selfridge, much like Shaver, "teemed with ideas." Under Selfridge, Marshall Field's employees were kept as happy as possible. There were special employee restrooms, a lunchroom,

¹²⁹ Moss, *Shopping as an Entertainment Experience*, 35.

¹³⁰ *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Department Stores;" Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady*, 223, 225, 275

¹³¹ Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady*, 276, 352-356.

recreation rooms, a library, and a school for the cash boys.¹³² Interestingly, Selfridge also employed a window trimmer extraordinaire in Arthur Fraser, whose show windows became world famous and helped to launch a frenzied craze for the color red in 1897.¹³³ When the store erected a new building in 1907, one of its focal points was Fraser's windows. On opening day September 30, 1907, 8,000 customers witnessed an uncharacteristic display of twenty-seven windows, each paying tribute to merchandising through the ages. One window showed nothing but a Greek amphitheatre with foliage, a chair, and draperies. It was so novel that customers were confused. They had to read the next day's newspaper to understand the meaning of it all. Fraser employed a staff of twenty display artists, painters, carpenters, and plaster molders to create window displays that were designed "to make people think." They were grand displays that moved beyond featuring merchandise against authentic backgrounds, to creating abstract and symbolic displays which brought him world-wide attention.¹³⁴

Shaver may have also taken a cue from old Marshall and Field's ads. To advertise the opening of the new store in 1907, president John Shed purchased full page ads with reproductions of original drawings by fine artists. The ads utilized "dignified text" that was devoid of the expected "raucous hullabaloo" or "shouting their heads off" style of advertising that one expected of a grand-opening announcement by a retail establishment of the time.¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid., 202, 237.

¹³³ Ibid., 225.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 169, 304.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 267.

Marshall Field's also had a tea room as early as 1890. On opening day, it served corned beef hash, chicken pie, chicken salad, punch, and "there was a red rose on each plate." This was the same symbol that Shaver would adopt for Lord & Taylor.¹³⁶

As for the concept of the branch store, Marshall Field's was opening small branches elsewhere in Chicago and in the outlying metropolitan area in the 1920s. Best & Co. also experimented with branch stores as early as 1928 and established out-of-region stores by 1938.¹³⁷ There were also boutiques that experimented with this kind of expansion. Even Lord & Taylor, itself, had companion stores at different periods in its history.¹³⁸

Some of Shaver's advertising ideas hinted at earlier times. In a promotion for retail's first-ever Juniors Shop, she developed an advertisement that showed manikins dressed in junior styles, moving among the customers. Interestingly, an early Lord & Taylor advertisement depicted mannequins mingling with shoppers.¹³⁹

As for the idea of the American designer, Shaver was not the first to speak of it. In 1912, American silk makers tried to convince stores that they could make silk as well as France. But retailers responded that their customers just wanted the French styles.¹⁴⁰ During World War I, Edna Woolman Chase of *Vogue* saw the potential implications of a blocked-off Paris and urged

¹³⁶ Roberts, "Her Rag Dolls," n.p.; Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady*, 213. It was also reported that John Shedd, president of Marshall Field's at the early part of the century, perpetually kept two red roses on his desk as cited in Wendt and Kogan, *Give the Lady*, 261.

¹³⁷ Ibid; *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Best & Company," from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best & Co.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_%26_Co) (accessed November 12, 2008).

¹³⁸ *History of Lord & Taylor, 1826-1926.*

¹³⁹ Virginia Pope, "Floor Set Aside for Junior Girl: Her Wardrobe Needs From Head to Toe Amply Provided For in Display," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1947, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 62.

manufacturers and custom retail shops to create their own designs. But, for some reason, designers simply did not rally around the cause.¹⁴¹

The most serious charge of copying comes from Best & Co. On May 29, 1932, Best & Co. took out an ad in the *New York Times* and accused Shaver of stealing *many* of her ideas from *them*, including the idea to promote American designers.

Who was first to award recognition (as long ago as 1929) to American designers? ... The fashion for “little shops” with a theme was originated by ? ... The idea of taking the mountain to Mahomet, in the form of the suburban store, was introduced to the East by ? ... The colorful interiors and friendly informality that most stores cultivate today, were first done by? ... Who is that has steadfastly adhered to the “Fashion First” – let the price fall where it may” principle? ... Of course, you’ve guessed! Best.¹⁴²

Shaver did not deny that she foraged for ideas. She cared little where she got them. Her gift, she felt, was in her ability to spot a good idea and then properly execute it for success. “I often do nothing but to recognize, or organize, the idea when it is presented to me ... to bring a fresh point of view ... and to correlate all the ideas that are fed to me.”¹⁴³

In her defense, from wherever Shaver may have received inspiration for her ideas, she certainly gave them new application, or took them to new heights. Her exhibit of 1928 was not the same as the one in Paris in 1925. Hers was a particular selection of French goods, hand-picked by Shaver over the course of a year. She took the fledgling idea of utilizing artists in advertising, put the full force of the Lord & Taylor brand and resources behind it and then put her own twist on it – she allowed the artists to sign their works. She caught a vision for the overlooked and underutilized concept of the theatrical window display and brought it into the new century using the new technologies. Her idea ignited a trend. She took the idea of a

¹⁴¹ Levin, *Wheels of Fashion*, 211.

¹⁴² "Display Ad 6 -- No Title." *New York Times* (1857-Current file), May 29, 1932, 7.

¹⁴³ Taves, *Successful Women*, 147.

window display without merchandise, popularized it, and further applied it to nonprofit themes in support of causes or charities. She took the idea of the companion store and transplanted it into the newly-developing suburbs to create the model for the suburban branch store. Her vision for the American designer was the grandest, most far-reaching, persistent, and consistent effort – and the one that had permanent results. Yes, Shaver’s ideas were based on past ideas, but they were modified and contemporized for her specific setting and use. Plus, she executed them so well that people copied *her*. As late as the 1950s, stores were still copying Shaver’s idea of staging a promotion as a theatrical premiere.¹⁴⁴

Why was she continually on the hunt for new ideas and pecking other people’s brains? Why did she utilize copying as a strategy? Perhaps, in her search for ideas, she reflected on the world of fashion and her belief that all fashion was simply cyclical. It was a re-hash of former fashions. “No style will ever be an important style that doesn’t come out of a preceding style,” she trained her assistant buyers.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps she was further operating freely in the existing reality of the fashion industry in that there were no dress copyright laws either in the United States or France.¹⁴⁶ Or perhaps she reflected on her beloved world of art, and believed as the artist Salvador Dali who said that “those who do not want to imitate anything produce nothing.” Or perhaps she believed as Pablo Picasso who said about the world of ideas and inspiration, “If

¹⁴⁴ M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 69.

¹⁴⁵ Dorothy Shaver, “Appreciation for Style.”

¹⁴⁶ France had only a loosely worded policy regarding unfair trade and competition, which may have subjected one to police court at the very worst. There were no dress copyright laws in the United States, but violators may have been subject to civil suit as a misdemeanor as cited in William P. Carney, "Says Paris Drives Off Style Buyers," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 5, 1933, E2.

there is something to be stolen, I steal it.”¹⁴⁷ Evidence and business practice suggest that Shaver was not a copycat. She was simply drawing inspiration from the free flow of ideas in the same way that companies today have standard industry promotions (e.g., frequent flyer miles) or similar customer service programs (e.g., satisfaction guarantees), or draw from the past (e.g., diners that are reminiscent of 1950s era, or fashion ideas).¹⁴⁸ Ideas were her currency in trade, and she used them for inspiration and innovation.

Shaver and Men: “Thought Has no Sex”

Shaver did not encounter a great deal of resistance as a woman in a position of leadership. Early in her career, she successfully averted this as a result of her relationship to Reyburn who brought her in, supported her during her rise, saw her as a board member, and then resigned in 1931 when Shaver became a vice president. So, she was on a firm footing as a result of this relationship and it paved the way for positive relationships with Reyburn’s successors. But, she also had to be able to hold her own. Shaver was proud of the way she negotiated her way in the corporate world. “I’ve survived three changes of management,” she once said, “and got a promotion every time.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Charlie Scheips, *American Fashion: Council of Fashion Designers of America*, (New York: Assouline Publishing, 2007), 11; Love Quotes, Life Quotes and Sayings, “Art Quotes,” <http://www.soundoflife.net/art-quotes/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

¹⁴⁸ For example, many businesses and industries offer frequent user programs; the idea to cross-promote businesses and services is widely used, etc. Also, it is not uncommon for advertisers, for instance, to resurrect old advertising campaigns or ideas or to base a new campaign on an old idea.

¹⁴⁹ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 118.

Overall, she seemed to have enjoyed relatively easy working relationships with men. She met with her vice presidents, four males and one female, regularly.¹⁵⁰ On one particular day, she took the time to leave work and simply enjoy the company of a male journalist who later wrote about his day spent relaxing with the president of the department store, noting her laughter and ease.¹⁵¹

Men did not mind working with her probably because they knew that any man who worked for Dorothy Shaver could leave at any time and “command a high price from a number of competitors.” It just wasn’t good business sense to resist her.¹⁵² “Many men, mostly the creative ones, were in awe of her,” said a biographer.¹⁵³ If any men resented her, they did so quietly. This was possible because as former employee Jeane Saxer Eddy recounts, “Miss Shaver called the men by their last name and they did not like that very much.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Shaver’s female vice president was Alieda van Wesep, appointed publicity director in 1935, named a vice president in 1947, and served as such until her retirement in 1961 as cited in “Mrs. van Wesep Named: Appointed Publicity Director of Lord & Taylor,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 12, 1935, 38; “New Vice Presidents of Lord & Taylor,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 10, 1947, 28; “Mrs. Alieda van Wesep Dead: Led Lord & Taylor Advertising: Vice President, 70, Retired Last Year Aided Girl Scouts and Charities,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), February 23, 1962, 30.

¹⁵¹ Kenneth Collins, “Today and Yesterday in Retailing,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, July 9 1958, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

¹⁵² Huntington, “The Only Madam President,” 8.

¹⁵³ Melissa Houtte, Shaver biographer, in email message to author, December 2, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

There was some doubt, at first, about whether Shaver could gain the respect of the men who were answerable to her. “They said a woman couldn’t build an organization; couldn’t get smart men to work for her,” Shaver said.¹⁵⁵ But, in the end, there was no public problem.

Shaver was not intimidated by men. Early in her career, before she had even reached the inner circles of top management, she exercised independent decision-making, even going against orders from her male superior. She often told the following story to reporters,

[Once, on a buying trip] in an old English home, I found this paneling. Its great age was fully authenticated. I knew immediately it was a treasure. I also knew its dimensions were perfect for the president’s office, here at the store. But instead of buying it, I made the error of cabling the general manager for permission. He cabled back, ‘no.’ I was greatly upset. I knew I was right and the general manager was wrong. I thought it over and bought the paneling, against orders. When I got home I had some explaining to do, but my reasoning was accepted. I told the general manager that I should never have asked him in the first place. He hadn’t seen the paneling, so he couldn’t possibly make a proper decision about it. I had been sent to buy – so, I bought.¹⁵⁶

Brazenly, instead of calling her decision an act of rebellion or defiance, she referred to it as an act of good judgment.¹⁵⁷

Shaver seemed to know to handle men and how to communicate effectively with them. “I never try to persuade a man to adopt my point of view, but I do encourage him to argue himself into my way of thinking,” she explained.¹⁵⁸ Being a particularly good saleswoman, she utilized her powers of selling in her communication with men. She would use phrases like, “Of course, I don’t have to sell this idea to you,” affirming the listener’s keen mind. Her goal was

¹⁵⁵ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 128.

¹⁵⁶ Dorothy Shaver in David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 225-226.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Cerf, “Dorothy Shaver’s First Job,” 150

¹⁵⁸ Dorothy Shaver, “The American Look – How I Did it,” (paper describing the process she went through in developing the campaign), n.d., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 8, Folder 5.

usually the same. “The best way to sell an idea is to make the other person think he thought of it first.”¹⁵⁹ She also said she tried to keep in mind, when dealing with men, “their need to feel superior ... That’s how they love to feel,” she said.¹⁶⁰

She advised women on the matter of dealing with men. In one address, she emphasized the need for women to retain their composure as a means to success, noting that men did not have the same emotional makeup and that women had greater sensitivities, but that these sensitivities needed to be guarded. She suggested that women control these sensitivities in order to control their own environments. “If she [a woman] remains calm and keeps her perspective, so do the men about her.”¹⁶¹

Shaver’s view on the whole topic of the battle the man-versus-woman question, was that men and women were absolute equals in their ability to be corporate executives. “An executive is an executive, whether a man or a woman,” Shaver once said when she was a vice president.¹⁶² However, she acknowledged that the sexes were different in what they brought to their positions, revealing a female bias. “It is women’s sensitivity to the human personality, their adaptability to changing situations, their practicality, and their basic optimism in facing

¹⁵⁹ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 118.

¹⁶⁰ Alexandra Kropotkin, “A Woman Who Takes Her Husband Shopping,” unnamed newspaper article, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

¹⁶¹ Dorothy Shaver, “Address by Miss Dorothy Shaver to the American Women’s Association.”

¹⁶² Amy Vanderbilt, “Are Lady Bosses Bad?” circa 1930, n.p. in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 4.

problems that especially qualifies them for business positions,” she said.¹⁶³ But, aside from that, she saw no major differences in ability.

There is no difference in brains ... There are good and bad executives of both sexes and the vices advertised as belonging to women alone apply just as fairly to men. Women have no corner on pettiness, love of detail, tale-bearing, or tyranny. There are as many small-minded men as women.¹⁶⁴

As for her methods of persuasion, she was not outwardly aggressive and she preferred more subtle approaches. Friends called her a “diplomat.” Detractors said she was a “Southern soft-soaper, playing the clinging vine.”¹⁶⁵ She was known to bring a group to her point of view, and then back down to leave the others to seal the deal, thinking it was all their idea. “After she has persuaded a group to her position, she frequently backs down a foot, saying, ‘Darned if I know whether we ought to do that or not,’ leaving her ex-opponents to battle for the idea, making it theirs in the process. They tie the string around her package,” explained a professional acquaintance.¹⁶⁶ She once confronted some rowdy stock boys by inviting them to her office to talk things over. They embarked upon a discussion of the pros and cons of their behavior, and then she had them leave thinking their new-found repentance was all their own idea.¹⁶⁷

Her greatest recorded tribute from a man is revealed in the story about a meeting between Shaver and one of her male executives. A secretary sat in on the meeting to take notes.

¹⁶³ Dorothy Shaver, *Personal Philosophies*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 4.

¹⁶⁴ Vanderbilt, “Are Lady Bosses Bad?”, n.p.

¹⁶⁵ Allene Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist,” *Vogue*, February 1946, 198.

¹⁶⁶ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 198.

¹⁶⁷ Huntington, “The Only Madam President,” 8.

When Shaver left, the secretary looked at the executive and declared admiringly, “What a woman!” To which the executive replied, “Thought has no sex.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way*, 236.

CHAPTER 8

SHAVER IN COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

Task Orientation Versus Human Orientation

The literature about gender effects on leadership indicates that while males tend to be higher on task orientation rather than human orientation, females tend to be higher on the use of *both*.¹ “If we take the entire research literature into account, women's leadership styles emphasize both interpersonal relations and task accomplishment to a slightly greater extent than men's styles.”² Shaver is consistent. She was well attuned to the duties of running a department store, and also very concerned with the human elements of interpersonal relations. Her abilities in planning and administration were noted and her abilities to tend to needs of her customers and employees were hallmarks.

“Pink” Versus “Blue”

Those in leadership face the realities of stereotyping and bias rooted in gender schema theory and social role theory.³ Both men and women are expected to exhibit the traits that are

¹ Virginia E. Schein, "Relationships Between Sex Role Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics Among Female Managers," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60, no. 3 (June 1975): 340-44. Alice H. Eagly and Blair T. Johnson, "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 2 (September 1990): 247.

² Eagly and Johnson, "Gender and Leadership Style," 247.

³ Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau, "Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders," *Psychological Review* 109, no. 3 (July 2002): 573-98; Sandra L. Bem, "Gender

stereotypically assigned to them, men with agentic traits such as dominance, mastery, and control, and women with communal traits such as harmony, cooperation, and community.⁴ When people lead in a manner that is perceived to be outside of their assigned roles, their leadership is not accepted. Studies showed that women who exhibited agentic traits in leadership were not evaluated as positively as the male leaders.⁵ Additionally, the concepts of ‘leader’ and ‘male’ are so intricately bound that female leaders must be able to exhibit agentic traits in order their leadership to be accepted. However, she must also be able to exhibit communal traits or her leadership is not accepted. So, the female leader is in a double bind. She must exhibit the “male” characteristics associated with leading, but must not neglect to display communal traits associated with femininity. Shaver managed to do this successfully. She apparently had this wonderful and effective mix, which can be referred to as to as “the blue” and “the pink.”

It could be said that Shaver’s “blue” qualities were her no-nonsense attitude, her formal manner, and imposing physical appearance. She was given to formalities, called men by their last names, and was relaxed but self-assured. She dressed in suits, either navy or black, often wore styles that had boxed and squared shoulders, and always wore close-toed shoes, “dressing as conservatively as a movie banker.”⁶ She would stride the sales floor “like a general” and people

Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing,” *Psychological Review* 88 ,no. 4 (July 1981): 354-364.

⁴ Sandra L. Bem, “The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42 (1974): 156; David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence: Isolation and Communion in Western Man*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

⁵ Eagly and Karau, “Role Congruity Theory,” 573-98.

⁶ Allene Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist,” *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 159; Eleanor Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls Started Her on Road to Riches,” *Boston Sunday Post*, February 3, 1946, n.p., “Best Pair of Legs,” col. 4, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 1.

would come to attention. Her presence commanded respect and those around her knew that she expected nothing but the best from them.⁷ People felt, when they entered her presence, that they were confronting a ruler of a domain.⁸ She was described as “imperious,” “a daunting figure,” “given to formalities in speech and manner,” and sometimes “the office iceberg.”⁹ She was also called “ruthless” and “sobersides.”¹⁰ She was outspoken and forthright when she felt she needed to be.¹¹ But even though she communicated such agentic qualities as strength and command as are stereotypically expect of a man, she was never accused of lacking in femininity. She may have been an imposing figure with “distinctively carved features,” but she was also described as having “warm brown eyes,” “rich brown hair,” and “beautifully put together.” Her stark navy and black suits with close-toed shoes always carried a touch of the feminine, such as a string of pearls, floral earrings, a charm bracelet, and sometimes a netted hat. She was known to have consistently carried a lace handkerchief.¹²

⁷ Eleanor Clymer and Lillian Erlich, *Modern American Career Women* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 80; Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

⁸ Sonja Bernadotte, “Sigvard Bernadotte’s Handwoven Rugs in America and Paris.” Transcript of interview in the Danish Weekly Magazine *Tidens Kvinder* (Contemporary Women), June 13, 1950, No. 24, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 2.

⁹ James Brady, “Retail Name Doesn’t Register,” *Crain’s New York Business News* 19, no. 32 (August 11, 2003): 9; Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 198.

¹⁰ Kenneth Collins, “Today and Yesterday in Retailing,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, July 9 1958, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

¹¹ Brady, “Retail Name Doesn’t Register,” 9.

¹² Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159.

Evidence of her femininity extended to her office. It was described as charming and serene, and appointed with a small vase of flowers.¹³ She was known to resist aggressive styles and outwardly aggressive behaviors, particularly in women.¹⁴ She had a calm, relaxed, and easy manner. She addressed the staff in a direct, but warm, manner and retained a very slight Southern drawl.¹⁵ Some called her “charming and wise.”¹⁶

She not only had the “pink” and the “blue,” she had them in just the right mix. Her office was somewhat feminine, but not *overly*.¹⁷ A journalist wrote that “her mind is definitely masculine” and “her personality is very feminine.”¹⁸ Even though her manner of striding the floors of Lord & Taylor was reminiscent of a “general,” she was once spotted outside of Lord & Taylor, “dodging traffic timidly.”¹⁹ “To most of the store’s employees she’s an awesome figure, wrapped in impenetrable glamour; to some she was known as a ‘damned difficult woman.’”²⁰ Oleg Cassini, a designer whom Shaver promoted in 1951 and featured in the store windows, called her “stern, but polite and encouraging.”²¹ One journalist noted that Shaver was “incisive and direct” at the store, but “rather romantic-looking” and “helpless” at home.²²

¹³ “Your Office is Your Silent Partner,” *House and Garden* 91 (January 1947): 69-70.

¹⁴ Helen Leopold, “A Top Executive Without Goals,” *Louisville Kentucky Times*, January 13, 1955, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

¹⁵ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159.

¹⁶ Sonja Bernadotte, “Sigvard Bernadotte’s Handwoven Rugs in America and Paris.”

¹⁷ “Your Office is Your Silent Partner,” 69-70.

¹⁸ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p., “Famous for a Memory,” col. 5.

¹⁹ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

²¹ Rosemary Feitelberg, “L&T Windows Reflect Cassini’s Career,” *Women’s Wear Daily* 189, no. 14, January 21, 2005, 2.

Raymond Loewy, famed architect, created a depiction of Shaver that is a fitting metaphor for her style and provides an excellent picture of how many must have experienced her. His depiction was a steaming locomotive with lace curtains on the window -- a picture of stereotypical masculine strength and stereotypical feminine softness.²³ This is likely how she was perceived by others and a large part of the reason why she was accepted as a leader.

Shaver, at her core, was almost all lace. A view of her home proved that the “submerged nine-tenths of the ‘office iceberg’ was purely feminine.”²⁴ She enjoyed being surrounded by things beautiful, delicate, soft, and serene. The Shaver women’s apartment was adorned with art, fur rugs, French furnishings, yellow and chartreuse satin chairs, terra-cotta and white walls, floral patterns painted on the walls, and three white plaster doves perched on the shower curtain rod; her bedroom had color schemes in pink and lavender.²⁵ Others noted her core femininity.

The typical career woman encountered nowadays in metropolitan cocktail or dinner circles rattles off Toynbee and Sartre, never removes her hat, consumes numerous cocktails, requires continuous attention, and on the whole is very difficult to get along with. Miss Shaver, in contrast, belongs to the Little Woman School. She makes a feminine fuss over thunderstorms ... abominates open-toed shoes, and carries prettily in her sleeve, a fine lace handkerchief.²⁶

If Shaver encountered any struggle as a woman in leadership, it was most likely the struggle to mask her marked femininity. She was apparently successful at the juggling act.

²² Talmey, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 150.

²³ A photo of his depiction shows in Jeanne Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” *Life*, May 12, 1947, 128.

²⁴ Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun,” 192.

²⁵ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p.

²⁶ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 118.

Juxtaposed against the *blue*, was an adequate array of *pink*, without which, theoretically speaking, Shaver would not have been successful. It is possible she could have gone the way of Helen Galland, president of Bonwit Teller who served from 1980 to 1983 and was said to have had a reputation for being “hard-headed,” being fired from her position, in part, because she was not well-received for her tough and brusque manner.²⁷

Type of Industry

Another gender effect on leadership is the gender of the leader in relationship to the industry context. Men were perceived as being more effective when they had a leadership position in an industry considered to be masculine; women were judged as more effective when they had a leadership position in an industry considered to be feminine.²⁸ Shaver’s leadership was likely more readily accepted because she was in an industry that was considered to be feminine. From the time of their early development, particularly 1850 and onward, department stores were frequented by women and had at least some female staff members. By 1890, retail selling was established as a woman’s occupation, and by the 1920s women began to replace men

²⁷Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

²⁸ Alice H. Eagly, Mona G. Makhijani and Bruce G. Klonsky, “Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 111, no. 1 (January 1992): 3–22; Alice H. Eagly, Steven J. Karau and Mona G. Makhijani, “Gender and the Effectiveness of Leaders: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 1 (January 1995): 125-145.

as the majority of department store clerks.²⁹ Shaver said she recognized that she was fortunate to be in an industry that welcomed women.³⁰

Leadership style

As has been discussed in the literature review, leadership style in scholarship is studied in terms of transactional, transformational and laissez-faire styles. Transactional styles are concerned with directing, controlling, and a system of punishment and rewards. The dominant leadership style of department store managers of the era was transactional. Managers of department stores at that time were not known for their gracious treatment of employees.³¹ They typically employed a style of leadership known as a “carrot-over-the stick” style of leadership, “often all stick and no carrot.”³² Salespersons were often subject to harsh words, fines and penalties for even the slightest errors surveillance, spying, the presumption of guilt, strict dress codes, and very particular standards of behavior. By the 1920s, however, there was a movement toward more gracious treatment of employees. Retailers started to provide training, relax strict standards, and end arbitrary practices.³³ Shaver’s style was very much in keeping with this new movement and it farthest from the transactional style. She was not known to issue an order and did not have a reputation for dictating. She believed more in the powers of persuasion. “I will

²⁹ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 23.

³⁰ Kathleen McLaughlin, "Single Good Idea Not Enough To Win Success, Says Expert: Dorothy Shaver, Department Store Executive, Points Out Road to the Top Jobs," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), September 17, 1939, 56.

³¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 138.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 139. A survey of twenty-two department stores in New York in 1929 indicated that all but one specified the color of clothing a salesperson needed to wear.

never give an ultimatum – ideas must be sold to be effective, therefore the company is not run by orders,” she wrote.³⁴

It could be argued that Shaver’s leadership style encompassed some aspects of the laissez-faire style since she preferred not to become involved inasmuch as possible.³⁵ She was a strong supporter of local autonomy and a proponent of delegation.

I believe so sincerely that every executive in Lord & Taylor should stand on his own two feet and is no one person’s man, but is responsible only to himself for his development. For that reason I set in a policy that no person can be removed from his job without the consent of four officers --- on staff it must be three executives’ agreement and one of the three must be an officer. I like freedom of action of the individual and will protect it all costs.³⁶

She also believed in freedom of actions commensurate with responsibility, allowing department managers local control over their domains. Store associates reported that when a problem arose within their department, Shaver was apt to say, “It’s yours to decide.”³⁷ “I do not believe in having a finger in every pie in the store.” Shaver once said, “I believe in naming executives to do certain jobs and then I don’t fuddy-duddy around on their jobs. I let them do their work”³⁸

Shaver was a big believer in delegation and so she was passionate about finding, recruiting and retaining only the best people. She preferred to trust the talents of others as much

³⁴ Dorothy Shaver, “Miss Shaver’s Remarks for Executive Training Class,” March 11, 1957, 5, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 3.

³⁵ Dorothy Shaver, “Remarks for Executive Training Class,” 4.

³⁶ Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” n.d., 1, item 4, in DSC, Archives Center, Series 3, NMAH, Box 17, Folder 1.

³⁷ Virginia Pope, “Happy Birthday, Dear Dorothy,” *Town & Country*, n.d., 88, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

³⁸ Virginia Irwin, “Shopping Will Become Gay Affair,” *The Post Dispatch*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

as possible. “I only want to work with people of quality of mind and spirit. Give me enough of that kind of associates and Lord & Taylor will grow even greater.”³⁹ Jeane Saxer Eddy, special assistant to Shaver, affirms Shaver’s selection in employees. “She had only the best people working for her. Lord & Taylor had the best and the brightest – the best managers, the best buyers, and, of course, the best fashion artist in Dorothy Hood, with her fabulous wash drawings. That’s part of what made it so exciting to work there—all those great people.”⁴⁰ Shaver often applauded the fact that she felt confident in her hires. “I am content to have ideas and to put them to the point of execution; for the execution I am surrounded with a group of women to whom I leave the responsibility.”⁴¹ She was not threatened by the talents of others. She utilized them. “I insist that everybody around me shall be as smart as I am, or smarter. The best way to lose your job is to be afraid of hiring smart people,” she said.⁴² Once she had good people, she demonstrated that she was willing to do everything in her power to retain them. Eddy recounted her experience.

I was once offered a job as a fashion editor at Mademoiselle at triple the salary I was making at Lord & Taylor. I didn’t want to leave Lord & Taylor, but that was quite an offer. I talked to Miss Shaver about it. She asked me if I wanted to stay. I said ‘yes.’ She picked up the phone, called in Mr. Dawley [a vice president] and told him to triple my salary. And they did.”⁴³

³⁹ Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” 1, item 1.

⁴⁰ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

⁴¹ Gisele D’Assailly, “The Great Granddaughter of LaFayette Discovers the USA,” draft of a feature story, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 4.

⁴² “Leading Career Woman Dies,” *Berkley Daily Gazette*, June 29, 1959, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 13, Folder 1.

⁴³ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

Shaver may have met her match, however, with Helen Galland. Galland was a former employee at Lord & Taylor who eventually left to become president of Bonwit Teller. The nature of Shaver's and Galland's relationship and the circumstances surrounding Galland's departure from Lord & Taylor are unknown. Shaver did write once that she dismissed an employee who went on to good success as an executive at another store.⁴⁴ But even though Shaver exhibited some aspects of laissez-faire leadership, it would not be a fair characterization to say this was her overall style. The laissez-faire style is associated with "an overall failure to take responsibility for managing," and is not a style of leadership associated with effectiveness.⁴⁵ Shaver was very successful. She exhibited aspects of this style, but it was not her dominant style.

Shaver's dominant style was the transformational style. As has been discussed, the transformational style is marked with a human orientation versus a strict task orientation. It is associated with effective leadership. It is described as being focused on human dynamics of leadership, marked by such characteristics as mentoring, coaching, participation, collaboration, motivation, creativity, innovation, encouraging, empowering, and charisma.

As has been demonstrated, Shaver mentored others, built community, exhibited care, and promoted psychological and emotional well-being. She could articulate vision with passion. She was innovative in achieving company goals. She preferred to convince rather than coerce, was futuristic, intuitive, and very aware of others. They are all aspects of the transformational style.

⁴⁴ Helen Galland was known as a woman with a rather brusque manner. It could be that the two were a mismatch; Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009; Bruce Weber, "Helen Galland, Former President of Bonwit Teller, Dies at 83," *New York Times*, September 12, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/13/business/13galland.html> (accessed January 5, 2009); Dorothy Shaver, "The Best Advice I Ever Had," (draft of text prepared for Reader's Digest), n.d. 3, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁴⁵ Alice H. Eagly, "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (March 2007): 2.

Fundamentally, Shaver valued people over policies and relationships over tasks.⁴⁶ She was very interested in the welfare of people as an avenue to mutual success. “I do not believe that anybody, man or woman, ever succeeds at anything unless he or she can get on well with people,” she said.⁴⁷ Shaver was called “kind and caring” and exhibited many acts of concern. Eddy, a former employee, recounted her own personal story.

I was on a buying trip to Europe and had gotten very sick. I needed medical attention and should have returned home, but I knew I had a job to do and I wasn't finished and it was a long way and tremendous expense for me to have to come back. I had very, very bad stomach pain, but I just pushed through it. When I got home and told Ms. Shaver about it, she was very cross with me and told me I should have come home and made my health the priority.⁴⁸

Also in keeping with the transformational style, Shaver was flexible and willing to make adjustments. She did not regard organizational policies as unchangeable or permanent. She held them lightly, believed they were organic and dynamic, and that they should be changeable in order to serve people and situations. She treated policy manuals as living, breathing documents that served the people for whom it they were written and were subject to change.⁴⁹

I do not believe in an organization run by so-called ‘policies.’ It is a mentally lazy approach to administrative responsibilities ... We have no policies at Lord & Taylor that can't be changed overnight, if it is right to do so ... I don't want to work with an army, nor do I wish to see suppression of individual attainment by army ‘channel’ procedures.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Executives at Lord & Taylor credited her success to her efforts at employee relations efforts as cited in Irwin, “Shopping Will Become a Gay Affair,” 7.

⁴⁷ Doris Blake, “Person’s Own Attitude Has Greatest Influence on Attainments,” *Tampa Tribune*, February 13, 1936, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5 .

⁴⁸ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Shaver, “Miss Shaver’s Remarks for Executive Training Class,” 5.

⁵⁰ Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” 2, item 10.

Shaver was an avid mentor. Her mentoring to designers built an entire industry. Her mentoring also extended to employees. She liked to spot and promote talent among her employees. She used employee art exhibits to spot talent for design or advertising, and she also kept a watchful eye on the window decorators in the sub-basement. She once spotted a young architecture student on a summer job doing window display for Lord & Taylor, and encouraged him to pursue a career in fashion design. Luis Estevez became an award-winning Hollywood designer with such clients as Eva Gabor and Betty Ford.⁵¹ “When we find true talent in an individual, we do all in our power to encourage it, stimulate it and give it freedom to grow,” Shaver said.⁵²

Additionally, in the transformational style, Shaver was noted as being a good listener who was interested in the welfare of her employees and who had a “sensitive feeling for what is running through the minds of the people under her.”⁵³ She could often be found walking the floors and chatting with employees. “Her leadership ... was based on a respect and liking for people and an understanding of their need to find satisfaction in their work. When she became president of the store she often would station herself at one of the doors at quitting time so she could see the faces of the employees as they went home,” a reporter wrote.⁵⁴ To explain her

⁵¹ History Wired, “Luis Estevez,” from <http://hisxstorywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=516> accessed Feb. 1, 2009.

⁵² Dorothy Shaver, “Statement on Lord & Taylor’s Corporate Image,” October, 1958, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Box 17, Folder 2.

⁵³ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 128; See also Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 72.

⁵⁴ David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way: Eight Pioneers for Equal Rights* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 226.

action, Shaver said, “People don’t work only for money. That’s important, but they also want to express themselves, to be accepted and recognized. I can see by the looks on their faces when they have obtained these satisfactions.”⁵⁵

Also consistent with the transformational style, Shaver encouraged, inspired, and empowered. She attributed a good deal of the success of the American Designer Movement to the power of encouragement. The movement produced better designs, she said, because “no human being can do his best work without encouragement and appreciation ... anonymity makes for slipshod, unimaginative, mediocre work.”⁵⁶ “She inspired ideas and cultivated the extraordinary touch,” said Paul Vogler, display director at Lord & Taylor.⁵⁷ Henry Callahan, window designer said, “She sponsored artists, craftsmen, and writers. Through her encouragement of display people, she gave work to thousands of young minds who needed this area of expression.”⁵⁸

She also actively encouraged her employees. When the store received affirming letters from customers, they were posted on the employee bulletin boards.⁵⁹ Each Christmas, she visited all the branches and greeted each employee personally.⁶⁰ Each year, she gave out seventeen gold

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Asa Bordages, “Stars of the Payroll,” *World Telegram*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 1.

⁵⁷ Lester Gaba, “Lester Gaba Looks at Display,” *Fashion in Display, Women’s Wear Daily*, July 7, 1959, 44.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home,” *Industrial Relations*, June 1947, 15., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 21, Folder 22.

⁶⁰ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 106; Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

medals to those who performed above and beyond their duty, which, to Shaver, meant that they had expressed a particular or ongoing kindness, consideration, or benevolence in the course of their work.⁶¹ Shaver felt it was the role of management to empower and contribute toward the success of its employees. “In every human being there is a creative urge. It is management’s job to see that the individual is placed where a fuller expression of that urge can blossom.”⁶² She had high expectations but she also provided support. “We expect excellence in job performance,” Shaver once wrote.⁶³ A worker agreed. “She expects you to do your best, but also gives you confidence that you can do it.”⁶⁴

In the transformational style, the Lord & Taylor organizational culture was marked by openness. She spoke with employees personally; she had an open-door policy, and used suggestion boxes.⁶⁵ She encouraged debate and did not shy from controversy. She once allowed Parisian fashion designer Elsa Schiapelli to expound on reasons why New York could not replace Paris as the center of the fashion world. Shaver allowed this to occur before a crowd of 2,000 people inside the walls of Lord & Taylor.⁶⁶ “I welcome discussion, differences of opinion

⁶¹ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 106.

⁶² Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” 2, item 7.

⁶³ Dorothy Shaver, “Statement on Lord & Taylor’s Corporate Image.”

⁶⁴ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern Career Women*, 80.

⁶⁵ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 88.

⁶⁶ “Paris Still Held Center of Fashion,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file); September 25, 1940, 30.

even to the point of controversy – I think it spells out individual thinking and results in better balanced judgments. I think it is healthy ... It is my safeguard,” she said.⁶⁷

Shaver was gracious and tolerant. This was best evidenced in her treatment of employees. When one employee of seventy years retired, she personally served him cake in her office and then escorted him around the store to collect his congratulations from employees in various departments.⁶⁸ When they got to the Television Department, she asked him to select a unit for himself. Then, she allowed him to spend the rest of his last day greeting his colleagues to say his goodbyes. When Luis Estevez, the window designer she had spotted and nurtured, left Lord & Taylor to work for the specialty shop of Lilly Dache, Shaver apparently remained unphased. She would later personally present Estevez with a Coty Design Award.⁶⁹

Shaver was very participative in her management style. She stayed in active contact with her vice presidents and department heads. In fact, her style was described, in her time, as “conference” style.⁷⁰ As president, she formed councils, had twice-monthly meetings with executives, and allowed departmental autonomy as much as possible.⁷¹ She relied upon her employees as co-managers of the company. Interestingly, the literature on gender and leadership, showed that women, slightly more than men, enjoyed participative styles of leadership.⁷²

⁶⁷ Dorothy Shaver, “Miss Shaver’s Remarks for Executive Training Class,” 4; Dorothy Shaver, “Just a Few Basic Beliefs I Hold to Thick and Thin,” 1, item 2.

⁶⁸ “Veteran Employee of Store Honored: Gustav Jensen, 70 Years With Lord & Taylor, Gets Warm Reception From Staff,” *New York Times* (1857-Current File), September 7, 1949, 32.

⁶⁹ Melissa Houtte, Shaver biographer, in email message to author, November 20, 2008.

⁷⁰ Pope, “Happy Birthday,” 106.

⁷¹ Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” 122.

⁷² Eagly and Johnson, “Gender and Leadership Style,” 233-56.

Shaver seems to have received the favor and loyalty of the majority of employees, indicating a positive management approach. “The only thing that could lure us away was money,” said a former employee, “and it had to be a lot.”⁷³ Employees tended to stay for long periods of time and were reportedly happy. “A cheerful atmosphere seems to pervade the place,” wrote one reporter. [It’s as] “friendly as a pot-bellied stove in a country store,” wrote another.⁷⁴

In a fitting conclusion, researchers on a study of successful female leaders concluded that successful female leaders were those who

did not emulate a military command-and-control style of leadership ... did not think they knew all the answers ... did not believe they were solely responsible for their companies’ success ... did business plans but were gifted improvisers ... were more focused on improving the future than correcting the past ... placed values at the center of their business ... poured enormous resources into building healthy, [had] vibrant company cultures ... viewed mistakes as part of the learning process ... regarded passion as a strength ... and valued asking for help.⁷⁵

Shaver was most, if not all, of those. She was not known as a militaristic leader; she surrounded herself with “smart people” and did not feel threatened by them; she valued planning but demonstrated flexibility; she was not overly concerned with the past; she was motivated by certain core values at the center of her business practices; she spent energy and resources on developing employee relations, took mistakes in stride, and was passionate about her work.

⁷³ Jeane Saxer Eddy (buyer for Lord & Taylor and assistant to Dorothy Shaver), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2009.

⁷⁴ “Lord & Taylor Wants its Employees to Feel at Home,” 11; Patricia Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” *Promenade Magazine*, May, 1951, 47, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁷⁵ P. H. Werhane, M. Posig, L. Gundry, L. Ofstein and E. Powell, *Women in Business: The Changing Face of Leadership* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), xii.

Shaver's Path to Power

The study of paths to power in the twentieth century, identified seven paths to positions of power and leadership – birthplace, nationality, religion, education, class, race, and gender. The survey of 1,000 leading business people of the century revealed that the majority were born in the US, lived in the Northeast or Midwest, did not necessarily have a college education, were fair-skinned, Protestants (usually Episcopalian or Presbyterian), from the middle to upper classes, Caucasian, and male. Shaver was on the traditional pathway to leadership in all categories except birthplace and gender, but overcame these barriers.

She was born in United States. Most of the leaders were born in the US, mostly the Northeast and the Midwest, and had strong American roots. Shaver was born in the South, in Arkansas. Her family, through the Borden line, can trace its roots to the United States from the 1700s.

She left the South. Most of the leaders did not come from the South, but of those born in the South, nearly half left the area and ventured into other regions to experience their success. This was true of Shaver. In 1917, she moved from Arkansas to Chicago, and then to New York City.

She was Protestant. Religion played a major role in the success of the leaders from early to mid-century. Religion was a social network of opportunity. Leaders in the early to mid part of the century were most likely to be Protestant, more specifically, Presbyterians or Episcopalians. Shaver's family roots were in the Episcopal Church, so her religion was a factor in her favor.

Higher education was not necessary. Education played a non-existent role for leaders in the first half of the century. Most leaders of this period did not have a college education. Shaver had two-and-one-quarter years of higher education.

She was from the upper-middle class. Social class played an important role in corporate ascension during mid-century. Most leaders in the period came from the middle class (50 percent) and upper-middle class (20 percent). As the daughter of a judge and attorney, the

granddaughter of a newspaper editor and also the granddaughter of a Confederate war hero, Shaver enjoyed good social standing and a certain degree of wealth and privilege. Her social class worked in her favor.

She was Caucasian. Business leaders in the middle of the twentieth century were Caucasian. Shaver was Caucasian, born in the United States, to parents of European descent.

She was not male. Shaver had gender working against her; however, she broke this barrier. The demographic study had noted that the leaders who were female managed to find their success in the Northeast, particularly New York, and in the fashion and advertising worlds.⁷⁶ This was true of Shaver. So, even though Shaver was not male, she was on a traditional path to power as a female with respect to her chosen industry and her decision to move to New York.

Hennig, Jardim, and Hackman's Combined Studies of Female Executives

In the combined studies of female executives of the period, Shaver is consistent on the majority of characteristics.

Hennig and Hackman 1963 Study of Twenty-five Female MBA's.

In Hennig and Hackman's 1963 study of twenty-five women enrolled in the MBA program at Harvard Business School, Shaver's case is very consistent. Shaver's experiences were compared against the experiences of the 1963 study with the following results:

- Twenty out of twenty-five of the women in the study were either first-born or only children.

The other five were *like* first-borns through the death of a sibling, or through age differences.

⁷⁶ Anthony J. Mayo, Nitin Nohria and Laura G. Singleton, *Paths to Power: How Insiders and Outsiders Shaped American Business Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), 209, 216-217.

Shaver was “like” a first born in that she was at the end of a set of boys and at the beginning of a set of girls.

- All had close relationships with their fathers and had joined them in what would be considered traditionally male activities.

This is unknown with regard to Shaver; however, she wrote warmly of her father and stated that she respected his advice. She did play baseball.

- They all felt they had strong support of their families to pursue their own interests without regard to their gender.

This is indicated in Shaver’s case. She was allowed to go to college at a time when women did not customarily attend college. The Shaver girls were allowed to travel to Chicago. When they moved to New York, their mother was reticent about the move, but supported it.

- Most indicated a preference for the company of men versus the company of women.

This is unknown of Shaver, but it was noted in an account of her early life that she played well with boys.

In Hennig and Jardim’s 1970 study of twenty-five women who held management positions in the Northeast, Shaver is also largely consistent.

- All were first-born, either the eldest or only-children and they were all only-children for at least the first two years of their lives.

Shaver was not a first-born, nor was she an only child; however, she fits in with Hennig and Hackman’s earlier study of twenty-five female MBA’s, where five were like only children.

She was the middle child at the end of a set of boys and at the beginning of a set of girls.

- All came from upper-middle-class families. All the fathers had management and administrative positions in business.

This was true of Shaver. Her father was a judge and her grandfather was a newspaper editor. They had a plantation home in Mena, Arkansas, and enjoyed a privileged life.

- All were American-born Caucasians and there was no pattern in religious preference or ethnic heritage.

Shaver was Caucasian, born in Arkansas. She was Episcopalian.

- The education level of twenty-three of the mothers of the subjects was equal to or greater than that of the fathers; twenty-four of the mothers were housewives.

*The education level of Shaver's mother, Sallie Shaver, could not be confirmed. But, it is likely she did **not** have the same formal education level as her attorney husband. However, she was the daughter of a newspaper editor, fond of literature and the arts, who encouraged her daughter to read, and, therefore, likely to have had at least a **similar** intellectual ability as her husband. Sallie was a full-time homemaker and mother.*

- All reported having happy childhoods and having experienced closeness and warmth with family members, particularly their fathers.

Shaver's reports of her family life all pointed to warm, happy and positive relations. "We, as children, always went to them [our parents] with our problems," Shaver once wrote. "I led a perfect, normal childhood." In her later life, she wrote glowingly of her father when she said she respected his advice. After Shaver became president, visits with the family were exchanged annually and family members were given entrée to the offices at Lord & Taylor.⁷⁷

- Fathers and daughters enjoyed activities that were traditionally assigned to boys and fathers supported their daughters by affirming that activities need not be gender-specific.

⁷⁷ Dorothy Shaver, "The Best Advice I Ever Had," 1; Anne Robinson, "Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring to Fifth Avenue," *Sunday Magazine, Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1956, 3.

This is unknown about Shaver, however, accounts of her early life indicated she did play baseball and that she played with boys.

- Their experiences with their mothers were described as warm, caring, and feminine in the traditional sense.

Shaver complimented her mother's support in allowing her and Elsie to live in New York in 1917.

- All reported that, by adolescence, the concept of the inferiority of women did not apply to them as individuals.

Shaver wrote about the equality and achievements of women as early as 1931 when she was a vice president. Even then, she wrote as one who was rather incredulous that this was even an issue.

- All had records of school achievement and memberships in clubs and church groups.

Shaver graduated salutatorian of her class. She sang in the church choir. As a high school student, she once put on a program about civic responsibility.⁷⁸

- All had aspirations to marry and have children. None married until at least thirty-five years of age.

Shaver did not explicitly say if she wanted a family or not. She was engaged to a young man at one point, so she was not totally against the idea. She reportedly once said, and in apparent contradiction, that she "believed every woman should marry eventually" but that she was "wedded to her work."⁷⁹ She never married and she never had children.

⁷⁸ Shaver, "The Best Advice I Ever Had," 1.

⁷⁹ "Fifth Avenue's First Lady," *Time*, December 31, 1945, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,886788,00.html> (accessed May 20, 2008).

- All indicated they learned about traditional sex roles from school or from others and not from family.

This is unknown of Shaver.

- In college years, they rejected sororities and lived in residence halls.

This is unknown of Shaver.

- They all began to show different career aspirations while in college that differentiated them from their peers. Their choices often reflected some rejection of the traditionally female role in some sense, and it often produced some hostility and conflict in their relationships.

Shaver embarked upon studies in English and a career in teaching. This was a traditional choice for the time. However, her choice to move to New York City and work in retail was a rejection of the traditional role of a Southern woman.

- In their first ten years on the job, all twenty-five indicated their priority was to get to know the company, to establish solid working relationships with other employees and to excel at their jobs.

This was also likely of Shaver since she was on the management track almost immediately, a board member by her third year, and a vice president by her seventh year.

- All indicated that they were working toward positions in middle management. None envisioned themselves as president or CEO.

Shaver said that she had no aspirations or expectations to be president or vice president.⁸⁰

- Almost all obtained their jobs through their fathers' connections or through friends of the family. In the majority of cases, the job was created especially for the candidate as a favor to the father or friend.

⁸⁰ Irwin, "Shopping Will Become Gay Affair," paragraph #20.

Shaver got her job as a result of a family connection. Her affiliation with Reyburn, her third cousin, provided entrée to Lord & Taylor. Shaver often declared that her first job was Head of the Comparison Shopping Department, but she told one reporter that she worked for a short time in the shoe department before going to Comparison Shopping. She said her assignment was to discover the reason for lagging shoe sales. This job in the shoe department could have been created especially for her since she did not give the position a formal title and the duties, as she described them, seemed rather nebulous and scant.

- All indicated that they enjoyed warm supportive relationship with their bosses and that they had progressed up the corporate ladder with him and always at his request.

She enjoyed a supportive relationship with Reyburn and progressed up the corporate ladder under his watchful eye, but the details of their relationship and his specific role in her rise is unknown. She had a close professional relationship with Hoving while he was president, and reportedly did “almost all of her work” with him.⁸¹

- During the first ten years their management style was factual, direct, task-oriented, and emotionally distant.

This was not true of Shaver. She was consistently known as a warm and people-oriented person.

- After the first decade, they became much more independent of their bosses. At the ten-year period, they indicated that male associates considered them to be serious and ambitious. They reported that they felt their male associates responded to them distantly and with aloofness but felt that bosses, customers, and clients responded warmly to them.

⁸¹ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p.

For Shaver, the point of the first decade would have been approximately 1934, and she would have been a vice president for three years at this time. Reyburn left in 1931. Shaver was entirely in charge of the public relations and advertising by 1936. So, it is likely that she was independent of any bosses at or near the ten-year point. While she got on well with her male associates, it is likely that they wondered about her as their superior and they were somewhat aloof. Bosses, employees, and customers regarded her with general affection.

- All achieved their highest post at mid to late 30s.
Shaver became president at fifty-three years of age.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This study provides analysis of an understudied historical figure. It is a fairly exhaustive study; however, there are other materials that were not analyzed that could possibly shed further light on her life and leadership. These could also be studied. There are additional materials housed at the following locations:

- the Irene Lewisohn Library at The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
- the Lord & Taylor Archives at Lord & Taylor Department Store in New York¹
- the records of the Fashion Group International, located in the Manuscripts and Archives Division at the New York Public Library
- the Print Archives of the Museum of the City of New York
- the Fashion Institute of Technology, specifically in the organization's scrapbook collection, and also in the Oral History Project of the Fashion Industries in Special Collections at the Gladys Marcus Library housed within New York's Fashion Institute of Technology

¹ Inquiry was made, however, in a letter dated January 22, 2009, Lord & Taylor representatives stated that there were no archives available for public viewing. It is noted, however, that Tiffany Webber-Hanchett, as part of her research for her master's thesis, utilized some archives at the store, and biographer Melissa Houtte said she briefly viewed some archives there and had concluded that they were "minimal." Melissa Houtte, email message to author, December 2, 2008.

Restrictions in time and funds did not allow for study of these artifacts. It is possible that they would reveal new or confirmatory information of particular significance to the focus of this study. These artifacts could be examined either to expand this study or provide the basis for future studies.

The nature of the source of the two manuscript collections should be noted. The Smithsonian collection was collected and donated by Dorothy Shaver's sister, Elsie. It is extensive, but complimentary and non-controversial. The collection at the Radcliff Institute was donated by Dorothy Shaver and likely reflects what she deemed most important about herself and her career. Of the myriad of materials from which Shaver could have selected, she chose to donate a collection of programs, speeches, and newspaper articles about all of the Lord & Taylor Design Awards. These awards were likely her proudest achievement. Even though much of the material in these collections is complimentary, this study relies on other sources such as books, personal quotes, and fashion industry sources, written both during and after Shaver's time period.

Additionally, it should be noted that during Shaver's time, Lord & Taylor and the press seemed to have enjoyed a fairly cooperative and collaborative relationship. Not only were many of the newspaper and magazine articles complimentary, they also carried similar sets of information, and they were consistent with many press releases that came out of Shaver's office. This indicates that journalists based much of their writing on previous reports and relied heavily on Shaver and Lord & Taylor sources for information. This collaborative relationship is confirmed by the presence of drafts of some major stories found in Shaver's collection; it is as if the journalist had submitted a copy to her prior to publication. Also, Melvin Dawley, Shaver's successor, authored a piece about the store which was published in the *Christian Science*

Monitor.² Shaver obviously enjoyed positive media relations and was able to successfully control her public image and the image of the store both during and somewhat after her tenure. She was adept at impression management.

This conclusion discusses the keys to Shaver success, the major influences on her life, and then closes with an interpretation.

The keys to Shaver's success appear to have come from her family influences. Since Shaver came to Lord & Taylor with limited work experience, and apparently led a fairly sheltered and privileged life, the primary influences on her life came from her upbringing.

From her extended family, Shaver was imbued with the concept of leadership and appreciation for the fine arts. There were attorneys, soldiers, editors, and respected businessmen in her lineage. She also had a cousin, Mary Stotsenburg, who was secretary of the Louisville Community Chest, an agency dedicated to mental health and psychiatric work for the city of Louisville.³ She was surrounded by leaders, and this, undoubtedly, permeated the atmosphere and culture of the family. Many members of her family were scholars, literary-types, and artists. These all likely influenced Shaver toward the artistic and the literary, which provided her with an appreciation for art which was the foundation of many of her professional activities. The Shaver's home was characterized by conversation and serious discussion, sometimes over dinner, and sometimes with guests. There "was a great deal of talk about world events and social

² Melvin Dawley, "Retailer Fills 'Citizen' Role. Window Display Used Attention Focused Fund-Raising Aided Services: Important Benefits Afforded," *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current File). December 11, 1959, 20.

³ It is likely that this family connection to the work of mental health led to Shaver's volunteer work with the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and the Menninger Foundation for Psychiatric Research. See Helen Leopold, "A Top Executive Without Goals, Won't Be Pressured," *Louisville Kentucky Times*, January 13, 1955, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 5.

issues of the time” and this likely fostered Shaver’s social consciousness and emphasis on personal and corporate philanthropy.⁴

Individual family members made their marks on her life. Grandfather Shaver likely instilled in her a sense of adventure and imagination. He also provided the Shaver sisters with the key to good fortune in the form of his fairy tales, which inspired “The Five Little Shaver” dolls.

From her attorney father, she likely received tough mindedness.⁵ Shaver once directly credited her father as her source of inspiration during the American Look Promotion. In a draft of an article prepared for *Reader’s Digest*, entitled “The Best Advice I Ever Had,” in which she described the personal process she went through on the campaign and lamented the enormity of the task at hand. She wrote “Then, as though my father were sitting across the desk, came the words, ‘The only way to get a hard job done is to start doing it.’ I started ‘doing it.’”⁶ She also credited this piece of advice as her source of guidance and encouragement when she had to in break a piece of bad news to an employee. “[It was] a task I simply could not do ... but my Father’s words came to mind again,” she wrote.⁷

Her mother likely influenced both Dorothy and Elsie in the tradition of the Southern belle, whether consciously or unconsciously, with her charm, love of writing, love of books, and learning. Reading was highly encouraged in the home and Shaver carried a love of reading throughout her life. In Shaver’s office, next to volumes of *Retail Organization and Accounting*

⁴ Eleanor Clymer and Lillian Erlich, *Modern American Career Women* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 73.

⁵ “Fifth Avenue’s First Lady,” *Time*, December 31, 1945, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,886788,00.html> (accessed May 20, 2008).

⁶ Dorothy Shaver, “The Best Advice I Ever Had,” (draft of text prepared for Reader’s Digest), n.d., 2, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

Control and Problems in Business Finance, were *Plato's Republic*, and *Bacon's Essays*.⁸ Shaver encouraged her employees to read because she said, "you can travel far and wide sitting in a chair with books."⁹ Her love of reading formed the basis of her writing ability, which was a foundational skill in her media relations. Her mother's influence also likely played heavily into Shaver's choice to take English classes in college. These would serve her well in her advertising and communications work. "She [Shaver] was a stickler for good English," wrote an early biographer.¹⁰ Her mother's love of books and learning may have influenced Shaver's interest in the liberal arts. She advocated for a strong education in the liberal arts supplemented by training in a retail specialty, as some keys to a successful retail career.¹¹

Sallie's influence may also have included other cultural forms consistent with the tradition of the Southern belle, such as a strong sense of the feminine, a love of music or art, socializing, supporting causes, demonstrating patriotism, having family honor, an interest in physical appearance, and taking up domestic duties only if absolutely necessary.¹² Shaver was known to have been fastidious about her appearance, always had time for a social life even at the peak of her career, cultivated a love of the arts, demonstrated civic involvement from the time she was a child, supported social causes her entire life, and was never known to have inhabited a

⁸ Bordages, Asa, "Stars of the Payroll," *World Telegram*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 1.

⁹ Dorothy Shaver, "Miss Shaver's Remarks for Executive Training Class," March 11, 1957, 6, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 16, Folder 3.

¹⁰ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 75.

¹¹ Dorothy Shaver, "Your Career in the Retail World," draft of text prepared for Book of Knowledge Supplement, 1949, 3, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 5.

¹² David Boynick, *Women Who Led the Way: Eight Pioneers for Equal Rights* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 212-213; Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 55.

kitchen. “There was nothing domestic about Dorothy Shaver,” wrote a journalist. She had two maids in her Manhattan apartment since her early days in New York.¹³ Shaver was always gracious in the style of Southern gentility, in marked contrast to women of her day. This training in Southern gentility would play an important role in her success in the world of the department store. It may also have played a part in her views about women. She believed in the strength of women as the backbone of democracy, especially through their work in women’s clubs.¹⁴ She may likely have been reflecting on her own history as a Southern woman, where her women forebears, and possibly her mother, as a young girl, helped organize societies or benefits to raise money for the Confederate war effort.¹⁵

Sallie’s “greatest gift was said to be in the field of human relations ... she made instant contact with every other human being she met.”¹⁶ This was a likely a very key influence. Shaver would study psychology in college. She was conscious about the importance of human relationships throughout her life and enjoyed positive relationships with many people. After her death, members of the Fashion Group paid her tribute calling her “warm, wise and witty.”¹⁷ An employee penned a handwritten note to Elsie Shaver after Dorothy’s death, saying, “Every

¹³ Eleanor Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls Started Her on Road to Riches,” *Boston Sunday Post*, February 3, 1946, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 10, Folder 1; Jeanne Perkins, “No. 1 Career Woman,” *Life*, May 12, 1947, 117.

¹⁴ Dorothy Shaver, “The Contribution of Women’s Clubs,” draft of speech, n.d., 1, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 5.

¹⁵ Roberts, *The Confederate Belle*, 78.

¹⁶ Clymer and Erlich, *Modern American Career Women*, 73.

¹⁷ Fashion Group, “Tribute to Dorothy Shaver,” no source, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 13, Folder 2.

employee here mourns with you ... Our lives are richer for having known a gracious and human woman.”¹⁸

Elsie fostered Shaver’s interest in art, which she was able to translate to the fashion industry.¹⁹ In Elsie, she also found a lifelong companion. The two often attended art events together and toured the museums of Europe together.²⁰ “We are inseparable and entirely different in personality and looks, but we get along wonderfully,” said Shaver.²¹

From her brothers, Shaver experienced training in dealing with men. “Every woman must battle against an inbred feeling of inferiority. If she is brought up in a family of boys, as I was, she soon learns to be as self-confident as they and has mastered the trick of direct thinking,” she said.²²

Shaver was also tremendously influenced by her small-town upbringing. She likened strolling the aisles of Lord & Taylor to the mayor walking the streets of Mena. She viewed small-town life as a model for administration and human communication. “Growing up in a small town gives a good, over-all picture of how communities work,” Shaver said.²³

¹⁸ Margaret MacKinnon, (unpublished letter to Elsie Shaver), in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 13, Folder 3.

¹⁹ Virginia Pope, “Happy Birthday, Dear Dorothy,” *Town & Country*, n.d., 88, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

²⁰ Roberts, “Her Rag Dolls,” n.p.

²¹ Mary Ann Callan, “Women Bolster Leaders Role: First Lady of Retailing Believes Man vs. Woman Idea Outmoded,” *Times*, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, Series 3, NMAH, Box 14, Folder 4.

²² Amy Vanderbilt, “Are Lady Bosses Bad?” circa 1930, n.p. in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 4.

²³ Anne Robinson, “Dorothy Shaver Brought Spring to Fifth Avenue,” *Sunday Magazine, Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1956, 3.

Interestingly, Reyburn also credited his small-town upbringing in Little Rock, as a key to his own success. He once said,

All business is largely a matter of human contacts and human relations. A man in a small community has a better chance to learn those relations. Life spreads out more, so he can see it in perspective better than in a big town ... And the answer to whether the small town has advantages in this respect is the fact that this is where so many of these future leaders are coming from.²⁴

Shaver was, above all else, an innovator and independent thinker. She was filled with ideas and possibilities. She did not succumb to the traditional thinking of her time, although she respected it and embodied some of it. She was a markedly Southern woman, fermented in Southernness, genteel and feminine, from among the upper class, with all the graces that upper class Southerners lay claim to, who successfully transplanted herself into the bustling industrial center of New York, a region ripe with opportunities for anyone with vision and persistence. Underneath her gentility lay the tough-mindedness of her forebears, unsoftened by gracious living – a tough-mindedness she would need to negotiate the world of high commerce.

In the true spirit of her Southernness, she relished in her idle passions of art and literature and, when combined with her love of selling, ignited her career as a merchant. “The pattern of my life has been to pursue the arts,” she said, “I’m [just] a frustrated producer and a frustrated publisher.”²⁵ And in pursuing the arts, she found herself an unlikely candidate to excel in the bourgeoisie culture of department stores. The department stores were frequented by women, rugged from the effects of dealing with mass immigration, industrialization, and urbanization,

²⁴ “Small Town Men Who Succeed Here: Cities Throughout the Nation Yield Leaders for Business in New York -- Little Rock, Ark., Alone Has Provided Many,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), November 27, 1927, XX10.

²⁵ Bordages, “Stars of the Payroll,” n.p.

yearning to become examples of fine breeding and in search of any experiences of a comfortable and beautiful life.

At Lord & Taylor, Shaver created an elegant home from which to work. She occupied a beautifully, and artistically, appointed office. She ensured that beauty, style, and grace would exude from the merchandise and the displays. She transformed it into an elegant home suitable for fine entertaining. She entertained her guests from the moment they entered her space. People were greeted with food and drink in her vestibule, an exotic lunch at The Bird Cage, and delicious displays of entertainment at her windows. Children were tended to at the Milk Bar while mothers shopped. Sometimes she sent customers loving messages from her windows. She would wish them a merry Christmas, or let them know the war was over, or suggest they support the New York Philharmonic. Every promotion was a ball or a production to which members of the public were invited. People were loved and lured inside the granite halls of Lord & Taylor, to generous displays of style and beauty and guidance in the art of fine living. She walked among the classes like the mayor of her town, ensuring everyone's comfort, security, and happiness. She noted the shop girls in training and the upwardly mobile customers, and extended them all a kind and gracious hand. She enjoyed interacting with people and liked all sorts "except [for] loud ones. They irritate me more than anything in the world," she said.²⁶

Not only did she create beautiful surroundings, she created beautiful collaterals. Her ads were akin to pieces of art. Her window displays were theatre. Her merchandising promotions were journeys into other worlds, like walking books. Her interior displays were titillating adventures to all the senses.

²⁶Bordages, "Stars of the Payroll," n.p.

The employees who came to her “home” every day were her perpetual guests, like family on extended stay. They needed to be especially tended to. They spent so much of their waking hours there that an employer is simply “obligated in return to do everything he can to make employees as comfortable and happy as possible,” one reporter wrote of the Shaver philosophy.²⁷ After all, it is the duty of the mistress of the house to provide such amenities as is fitting for those in her employ.

From her estate, she directed the affairs of the state of her industry like a “queen in a kingdom.”²⁸ She was gentle, but tough-minded with a steely determination. She positioned herself among the powerful and the influential of her world and began to rule. She introduced the country to the beauty of modern design; she edited fashions – deciding what would be ‘in’ and what would be ‘out,’ hand-picked designers, promoted them, and watched as the country followed her lead. She ran all the affairs of her operation, much like the Southern woman whose husband is away at war, with a keen eye on penny, people, and profit. She utilized all of her charm and business acumen to maintain a stately and lavish enterprise.

Shaver was acutely aware of the power of her own femininity. Historically, women of the South, while they had no positional power, held great influence and sway in the affairs of men and state. They were highly regarded, even revered. They were held in great regard for their virtue because women represented everything good and pure in a society filled with violence, drinking, and gambling.²⁹ Women were to be honored, protected, adored and fought for. They

²⁷ “Lord and Taylor Wants Its Employees to Feel at Home,” *Industrial Relations*, June 1947, 12, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 1, Box 21, Folder 22.

²⁸ Patricia Coffin, “The Department of Utter Illusion,” *Promenade Magazine*, May, 1951, 47, in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 6.

²⁹ Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 2, 6.

were persons of privilege, who, while unable to vote or hold office, were acquainted with politicians and opinion leaders. And so they wielded their power indirectly.³⁰ Once, Shaver was asked if women should rely on their charm for advancement. “It may help some,” she replied, “but even if it does, a woman never reaches the top by relying on [it].”³¹

She minded her business well. Minding her business meant serving well, serving with charm, and, of course serving with the necessary element of laughter.

And one simply must be charitable, both personally and professionally. One must be busy about the job of “public housekeeping,” establishing libraries, sponsoring art exhibits, and staging plays and concerts to promote culture, as was the practice of women in the antebellum South.³² One must be busy building the ideals of patriotism, family, and culture. And so, she was. She contributed to the war effort, tended to the needs of the many wives and mothers that formed the majority of her sales force, and actively promoted fine living.

She was perfectly suited for her job and she was fortunate enough to have found her way to her ideal position. If one were to have examined her life at the time, her rise would have been predictable and inevitable. “Her promotion to presidency was no surprise to those who knew her best” wrote one journalist.³³ Her rise was only unlikely in that she was a woman. In answer to this, and perhaps in Southern style, a distant family member provided some relief and assistance.

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹ S. J. Woolf, “Miss Shaver Pictures the Store of Tomorrow,” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), January 5, 1947, SM18.

³² Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South*,” 3.

³³ Allene Talmey, “No Progress, No Fun: Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor – Unorthodox Store Strategist,” *Vogue* 107, February 1946, 192.

In spite of her accomplishment, and perhaps partly because she was forgotten, women continued to struggle. Decades after her death, there would only be two female CEOs on the Fortune 500 during the 1980s and 1990s, only six in 2002, and fifteen in 2009.³⁴ Shaver would have been surprised at this. She had great confidence in women and great hope for their role in a positive future. In an address to the International Council of Women in 1957, she said she believed that by 1960 there would be many more women CEOs.³⁵ She additionally predicted that by 2002, women would have made their full force known and have made tremendous contributions in the world to counter many social ills such as intolerance, poverty, disease, and famine.³⁶

An examination of Shaver's life and career provides a fascinating study of an unlikely and seemingly untimely rise. It also provides a refreshing look at some of the lost ideals of leadership. At a time when store executives had more power than they do now, with relatively free reign unconstrained by onerous policies, regulations, restrictions, and the limitations of shared power, Shaver was relatively free to wield her influence and create the kind of establishment she envisioned, encountering little resistance.

As a leader, she exemplified many of the characteristics that we yearn for today in our own leaders. Her touch, the "Shaver Touch," is a record to demonstrate that leaders can be financially successful and still be very human, that profits can co-exist with values, and that

³⁴ Catalyst, "2002 Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners"; <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/174/2002-catalyst-census-of-women-corporate-officers-and-top-earners-of-the-fortune-500> (accessed March 30, 2008); Fortune, "Women CEOs," CNNMoney.com, <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2009/womenceos/> (accessed June 2, 2009).

³⁵ "Dorothy Shaver Sees Women Gaining," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 21, 1957, n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 14, Folder 3.

³⁶ Dorothy Shaver, "The Contribution of Women's Clubs," 2.

attention to human dignity is preferred, and even necessary. She put the “public” into public relations. Her example carries a message for any public relations practitioners who view themselves as self-appointed consciences of their organizations.

Shaver is an exemplar of successful female leadership. Her case is in keeping with recent theory that states that in order for female leaders to be perceived as effective, they must have a proper mix of the stereotypical traits associated with males (and therefore, with leadership), and those stereotypical traits associated with females. That is, a successful female leader must exhibit a proper mix of the “pink” and the “blue.” Shaver was able to do this. She managed this impression very well. She exhibited a stereotypical power and strength associated with males and a stereotypical softness associated with females.

Werhane et al. (2007) made the following statement about the successful female executives they interviewed, and which, in a fitting conclusion, is also true of Shaver.

In the end, I have come to believe that their success stems from a very particular mindset: one that sees companies not as machines but as living organisms. What is the test of a healthy organism? That it can sustain itself and that it can sustain others. When sustainability is the goal and test of leadership, the nature of leadership changes ... What makes all of them (the women executives studied) so exciting is that together they are re-defining what we mean by leadership and what we mean by success ... These are inspiring ways to work and to lead ... Values don't have to be a trade-off for profit, and humanity is central, not peripheral, to growing a business.³⁷

Hopefully, Shaver's life and career will be more than just a footnote in history, or some passing reference of vague recall. Hopefully, her example of leadership will be known, her contributions acknowledged, and her life appropriately remembered. Shaver believed in the

³⁷ P. H. Werhane, M. Posig, L. Gundry, L. Ofstein and E. Powell, *Women in Business: The Changing Face of Leadership* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), xii – xiii).

importance of human dignity as the core of successful activity. Hopefully, this belief will become a guiding principle for future leaders.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DSC	Dorothy Shaver Collection
DSP	Dorothy Shaver Papers
NMAH	National Museum of American History
SLRI	Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, Boston, MA

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APPENDIX A

FEMALE CEOS ON THE FORTUNE 500, 2009

In 2009, there were fifteen companies on *The Fortune 500* who elected female CEOs.¹

Avon, Andrea Jung

Archer Daniels Midland, Patricia A. Woertz

BJ's Wholesale Club, Laura J. Sen

DuPont, Ellen J. Kullman

Kraft Foods, Irene B. Rosenfeld

PepsiCo, Indra K. Noohyi

ReynoldsAmerican, Susan M. Ivey

RiteAid, Mary F. Simmons

Sara Lee Corp., Brenda C. Barnes

Sunoco, Lynn L. Elsenhans

TJX, Carol M. Mevrowitz

Wellpoint, Angela F. Braly

Western Union, Christina A. Gold

Xerox, Anne M. Mulcahy

Yahoo, Carol A. Bartz

¹ Fortune, "Women CEOs," CNNMoney.com, <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2009/womenceos/> (accessed June 2, 2009).

APPENDIX B

DOROTHY SHAVER - HONORS, AWARDS, AND SERVICE¹

Board of Directors and Vice President, Associated Dry Goods Corporation*
Board of Directors, Advertising Federation of America
Board Member, National Conference of Christians and Jews
Board of Directors, Federation of Protestant Welfare Councils*
Board Member, Greater New York Fund*
Board of Governors, The Menninger Foundation for Psychiatric Education and Research*
Board of Trustees, Committee for the Economic Development New York*
Chairman of the Board, Girls Clubs of America, Inc.*
Board of Trustees, National Jewish Hospital, Denver
Board of Trustees, Parsons School of Design in New York*
Board of Trustees and Honorary Fellow, Metropolitan Museum of Art*
Corporate Member, Crusade for Freedom
Director, Advertising Federation of America
Director, House of Italian Handicrafts Institute
Director, Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation
Director, Color Association of the United States
Director, Greater New York Fund
Director, House of Italian Handicrafts Institute
Director and Board Chairman, Girls Club of America
Founder, Lord & Taylor Awards for Creative Achievement*
Member of Advisory Committee, Fashion Group International*
Member of Advisory Committee, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston
Member of Advisory Committee, Museum of Modern Art of New York
Member of Advisory Committee, Recruiting and Public Information on Civil Defense in New York City
Member of Advisory Committee, Women in the Services in Washington
Member of Advisory Council to the Director of Civil Defense
Member of the Advisory Council, New York School of Applied Design for Women
Member, American Women's Volunteer Service

¹ This listing is not exhaustive, but fairly complete as cited in National *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. 56, 1975, s.v. "Shaver, Dorothy Yeiser;" Fashion Group, "Tribute to Dorothy Shaver," no source, n.d., n.p., in DSC, Archives Center, NMAH, Series 3, Box 13, Folder 2. Asterisk (*) indicates position held at the time of her death.

Member, Business Advisory Council, State Commerce Department
Member, Governor's Temporary State Commission on Economic Expansion
Member of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene
Member, National Council of the National Planning Association*
Member, Organizing Committee for New York, National Association of Mental Health
Member of the Women's Council, The New York Public Library
Member, New York Public Library Women's Council*
Member, France-America Society
Member, Sponsoring Committee, The American Association for the United Nations.*
Member, Writer's War Board
President, Lord & Taylor*
President and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Costume Institute of the
Metropolitan Museum of Art*
Special Consultant, US War Department

HONORARY DOCTORAL DEGREES CONFERRED

Syracuse University, LLD, (Laws), 1947
Bates College, LLD (Laws), 1949
New York University, DCS (Commercial Science), 1950
Russell Sage College, LHD (Humane Letters), 1951
Lafayette College, LHD (Humane Letters), 1952
Wheaton College, LHD (Humane Letters), 1957

AWARDS

Outstanding Woman in Business, Associated Press, 1946
Outstanding Woman in Business, Associated Press, 1947
Horatio Alger Award, American Schools and Colleges Association, 1948
Woman of Achievement Award from the Federation of Jewish Women's Organization,
1950
Seward Award for Feminist Achievement, American Woman's Association, 1950
Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor, Republic of France, 1950
Outstanding Support of American Design, Society of New York Dress Designers, 1953
Star of Solidarity, Republic of Italy, 1954
Brotherhood Award, National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1954
In Support of Art Directors, Art Directors Award, 1955
British Leather Goods Export Group Award, 1955
Silver Scroll award from the Women's National Institute, 1956
Distinguished Service Award, National Jewish Hospital of Denver, 1957
Award of Achievement, Advertising Club of Washington, 1957
Mercantile Award, Mercantile Section of the New York board of Trade, 1958
France's Golden Cup of Taste Award, 1958
Distinguished Leadership, New York Chapter of Public Relations Society of America,
1958

