

**BECTU History Project**

**Interview no: 176**

**Interviewee: Cynthia Moody**

**Interviewer: Margaret Thomson (1)/Manny Yospa (2)**

**Duration: 02:01:50**

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CITATION: Women's Work in British Film and Television, Cynthia Moody, <http://bufvc.ac.uk/bectu/oral-histories/bectu-oh> [date accessed]

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[discussion between interviewers about the introduction above]

*2: Yes, well the number is 176. Right, you can start interviewing now.*

[01:01]

*1: ...like to be asked about your background.*

Okay.

*1: So I'll ask you... what I'll say is, would you like to tell us about your background, just about that. I know you were born in England, were you not?*

Born in London.

*1: Born in London. But you came from the Caribbean? So take it from there.*

My father's from Jamaica, my mother was Welsh and I went to Jamaica when I was six and a half.

*1: We're not recording this. I haven't set it yet.*

[pause in recording!]

[01:43]

*1: Now, Cynthia, would you like to tell us about your background? Your family background and your own personal background?*

Well, it's... family, basically a medical family that I'm from. My father was born in Jamaica, his father was a chemist. All the rest... all his brothers and sisters were either lawyers or doctors. He came to England, he taught at Guy's Hospital, King's Hospital,

and I was born in Hackney in the... a nursing home of a doctor friend, and lived in England until I was six and a half.

*I: And your mother is English I think?*

My mother is half Welsh and half Scottish.

*I: Oh right, sorry! No English at all!*

No English at all, no. My father was partly Scottish too.

*I: Then you went back.*

In Jamaica I was very lucky because I had a very, very strong classical education which I found has helped me enormously in all sorts of analytical areas.

*I: Did you learn Latin, for example?*

Latin, yes. Drummed into me. One didn't have... one wasn't asked to write lines when one was naughty and instead one had to learn parts of 200 Latin verbs. And I learnt a lot of Latin verbs as a result.

*I: I know you speak several languages very well.*

Well, really French is pretty fluent, a little bit rusty at the moment. Italian is very much of a sort of 'get by' variety, it's fluent-ish, but pretty bad.

*I: Would you speak Spanish in Jamaica?*

Well no, Spanish is very much in the area, Jamaica, no. I think at school one had a choice of speaking either Spanish or French as a second language.

*I: You must have had, if I may – sorry to interrupt you – you must have had extremely good French teachers because your accent's so wonderfully good, much better than most*

*English people's French accents are. Certainly better than a New Zealand French accent, I could say that.*

Well I think I can... that is not really the way I was taught. What had happened was that when I suddenly, when I was working for André Sarrut in Paris and I was plunged into Paris something like twenty years after having had school French, which I'd completely forgotten, so that I had to literally learn French by ear, and that is why I've got the accent.

[both speaking together]

*I: I see. I'm sorry, I interrupted you.*

No, I was a little bit worried because it isn't a school accent.

*I: No, I see, right. So school in Jamaica?*

Yes. And then I came here and I went to a secondary school in Honor Oak in London and was of course evacuated, to Reigate.

*I: Oh yes?*

Yes. And then I finished my schooling there. I wanted to go on and take an arts degree, but this was not possible because at that particular time during the war you had to undertake to teach if you took an arts degree, and I just couldn't see myself as a teacher.

[05:07]

*I: I see, yes. Your parents were both in England here though?*

Well, my father died. I came back to England when my father died, when I was thirteen.

*I: Ah, I see, yes. Oh, that was sad, mm, yes. And your mother, I gather, had a pretty tough time didn't she?*

She had a difficult time because she didn't really have much in common with the family – well, my father's side of the family – and her mother was, when we came back her mother and father were both alive, and her mother was quite an extraordinary woman, I mean up to in her eighties she was going round canvassing for Lena Jeger and things like that. So there was a lot of very... clear she was a very political, active person and in fact I felt closer to her than I did to my mother, somehow. Something interesting happens to people, you know, people get much closer to their grandparents than they do to their actual parents. There's too much between mother and daughter, particularly, don't... aren't a good combination usually.

*I: How did you manage to get on when you came back at thirteen and were faced with London schoolgirls en masse?*

Well, I got on very well. I don't know why I didn't... at that point I had, and until very much later, I had no feeling ever of dis... I mean I seemed to work on myself, I seemed to plumb myself in pretty quickly, I wasn't thrown by strange circumstances and things.

*I: Because you're very outgoing and always have been.*

The thing that I did find most peculiar is because in Jamaica I was preparing to do my, I suppose it would have been called senior school certificate then, and because it was all based in Jamaica on age as opposed to... not age, but on to ability rather than age. And I came here and I was too young, so I had two years marking time, because I wasn't allowed to take school certificate because I was too young and therefore I was sort of too young where I was coaching people to take school certificate and wasn't allowed to take it myself. That was baldly...

*I: So you went on at school till you were sixteen, I think you said?*

No, until I was eighteen.

*I: Eighteen? I beg your pardon. Oh yes.*

Because I just had enough.

*I: And you hoped to go to university, but the war...*

Well, that was impossible because of the arts degree and I mean I could have taken, I could have gone into science but I didn't want to.

*I: Because, you've explained, that the arts degree, you had to have a...*

You had to teach. You had to teach then.

*I: Had to have a guarantee, yes.*

And I particularly, as I wanted at that moment for some reason that I will never understand, wanted to do fashion art.

*I: Did you?*

I don't know why. I mean I think it was probably partly to do with my uncle and, you know...

*I: Yes, we'll come to your uncle later.*

But I was very attracted to fashion art, which of course would be totally out of the question. Anything less useful in wartime, you can't imagine. [laughter]

*I: Yes, give us some dates now. You left school at eighteen and you would be?*

That was, let me see, 1947... what did I do then? That would have been...

*I: You'd better say when you were born, if you don't mind.*

Twenty-three.

*I: Twenty-three, right. And you'd left school, the war had just about started, had it?*

In about, hang on, I can tell you... forty... Let me look at my... I left school in, probably beginning of '43, which I walked out actually.

*I: Did you? Yes.*

I wasn't going anywhere, I couldn't go anywhere at that point.

*I: So, then you had to think about a job.*

Yes. And what I knew I didn't want was to go into an office, I didn't want a nine to five. I wanted something that gave me freedom that I could find as an alternative to fashion art, which was my then passion. And I didn't know anything about films at all, but I sort of felt that documentary films seemed to offer me something that interested me. But I didn't know anybody in films and I had nobody who had any connections with anybody who knew anybody in films. So I thought well, I'm going to be called up shortly, can I use this time before being called up to try and get myself some connections in the film industry so that when I'm discharged I'll have some connections. And there was an advertisement in the paper for a telephone operator at Shell Film Unit. [laughter] And I got the job, heaven knows why, I made complete spaghetti of the... because it was one of those switchboards that had got those spaghetti cords, you know. I think it was very traumatic for the people who were at Shell at the time. I was there until December in '43 when I went into the Wrens.

[10:25]

*I: Now, I know you went back to Shell later, but...*

I didn't go back to Shell.

*I: Oh, you didn't go back to Shell, I beg your pardon. Well, tell us who was at Shell at that moment.*

Well, at that moment in time...

*1: How long were you there?*

I must have been there probably about four or five months, something...

*1: Oh yes. So tell us who was there, because they're a very distinguished lot. I remember Elton was in charge wasn't he, Arthur Elton?*

Arthur Elton from Film Centre was in charge and Stuart Legg. There was... and Arthur [Edgar?] Anstey.

*1: Was he?*

Yes, Anstey was around at the time. I don't know whether he was...

*1: He was probably producing Film Centre...*

Film Centre, yes. Edgar was around too, at the time. And then there was Graham Clark, Geoffrey Bell, Sam Napier-Bell.

*1: Oh yes.*

Kay Mander, Rod Baxter. A cameraman...

*2: Sid Beadle.*

Sidney Beadle.

*1: Rodker? Rod...?*

Yes, Francis, Rodker, who did animation. Lionel Cole. Ralph Elton was around, he wasn't with Shell but he was very much around in that particular group of people. There was, Betty Lurid [ph] was the production manager. Who else was there there? I really don't remember, you know.

*1: You've done very well for four months. Very well.*

*2: The telephonists always know everybody.*

[laughter]

*1: So then you went into the navy?*

Went into the Wrens, I had a short... but I still wanted to pursue, so that I did my initial training in Scotland on the corner of a disused, or... army barrack, an American army barrack with Nissen huts and mud, over Christmas. It was really terrible.

*1: This was your basic Wren training?*

Basic Wren training, but I wanted to get, because there was a thing called a semi-op course, which was held in... not Portsmouth, Chatham, which was projectionist.

*1: Did you know about that before you went into the Wrens?*

I knew about it.

*1: I think you're pretty cunning somehow.*

The thing is that I knew that at certain points I had to direct myself into a certain line and what I was directing myself towards was the Naval Film Unit on Whale Island.

*Oh yes. Where's...*

Portsmouth. Off Portsmouth. And so it meant that I had to do very, very well in my initial training because that let me have to some extent a choice of what my next move was. And then I had to do fantastically well in the semi-op course in order to say I want to go to...

*1: Semi-op was to do the projection and...*

Projection.

*1: ...running the mobile units and things, yes.*

And, you know, I mean I still remember the wretched formulas, you know, the formula for making film cement and all those things. But the thing is that one just put one's mind to it and said well, if I want to get where I want to get I've got to do certain things. And so I did get to Tipner. Tipner? Tipner? It was called Tipner, the naval colony, it was at Tipner wasn't it?

*2: I can't remember.*

Anyway, I didn't stay long, I think about a few hours.

*1: A few hours? [laughter]*

Well, I always felt it was terribly pretentious. It was very strange, there were not many people there because a lot of people were on location, I mean at the time Max Anderson was there, he was on location and lots of people, and Terry Bishop was there, he was on location. And the people there, having sort of worked, so to speak, even though I hadn't actually worked as a film person I'd been with what I regarded as real film people, but it seemed to be the people who were there seem to have been very pretentious. It was run by a navy person, not a film person, there was a commander in charge, it was run like a ship, it just seemed total nonsense to me. It just seemed...

*1: So how could you extricate yourself?*

Well, a...

*1: After all that training.*

[14:57]

That's the point of being in the Wrens, you see, because the one service that was not, which I discovered, was not under military law, was under civil law, was the Wrens.

*I: The Wrens were under civil law?*

So if a Wren was intransigent they could only be taken to court through the civil courts, they could not be taken...

[laughter]

*I: Is that true today?*

I don't know. I have no idea.

*I: That's a very interesting point isn't it?*

[laughter]

*I: How extraordinary.*

And I did my homework before I went in, you see. Because what I wanted to do was to work in film, it was as simple as that. And eventually after many ups and downs I was discharged.

*I: What date would that be now?*

I was discharged, I did make a note of that because I thought it...

*I: Just to keep us on the straight and narrow.*

Yes, because I did... 1944, June '44.

*I: I see, yes.*

And then I had a runaround because I was told I had to go into a factory and I said no, I don't want to go into a factory, I have to be more in... not in a factory. And there was probably about a six months runaround with the Labour Exchange in Camden Town. I can't imagine why it was Camden Town, but it was Camden Town.

*I: Perhaps you were living near there.*

Albany Street, I think it was, from Albany Street, which was probably the nearest. And then I thought what do I do now, so I got in touch with what was then the Colonial Office and...

*I: Because they ran, in fact, the GPO Film Unit didn't they?*

No...

*I: They were the inheritors of it.*

But I rang them to say, you know, I did pull a bit of family rank in that sense, the only time I've ever done it in my life, but it was too important not to do, and said look, I want to go into film, these are the problems being put in my way, I'm totally wasted in a factory, whereas I can be... And there was a directive that I should be allowed to go into films, into documentaries specifically, and I went to Merlin Films with Mike Hankinson, where I did my initial basic editing training.

*I: Splendid. Tell us about Merlin now, I just know the name.*

Merlin were opposite Savile Row police station, it was a modern building – modern for the times – it was run by Mike Hankinson.

*I: I expect they were making...*

The usual films that were being made at that time: the training films, the propaganda films, the sort of documentaries of the...

*1: Do you remember who else was there at that time?*

Roger MacDougall was writing there. Cyril Bristow was the cameraman. I really don't remember. I only remember the cutting room people. I was being trained by Ralph Kemplen and then when he left Frank Clark [ph] took over. There was another trainee alongside me, called Pam Bosworth, who I think I've seen her name on credits for the BBC. I was there about a year. I got restless because there was nothing I could do there beyond what I was doing and it was a sort of very early primitive days of, you know, one was just really... it was very mechanical. I remember, ah I do remember we... ah, I remember some of the films we were doing, just a little list.

*1: Yeah, do.*

We did a series for UNRWA and we did one...

*1: That would be after the war was over wouldn't it?*

It was towards the end of the war. I mean I was there...

*1: What was UNRWA? United Nations?*

*2: United Nations.*

It wasn't UNRWA then, that must have been... I must have been there longer than I thought...

*1: You may have been.*

Because...

*1: Or you may have gone back even.*

No, I must have been there longer, I definitely did it. I'll tell you why, it was on Yugoslavia with all the... and it was based on the Yugoslav, the resistance in Yugoslavia and the... Maybe that wasn't an UNRWA film. Why do I get UNRWA on the brain?

*I: But that must have been after the war.*

But this film then was to do with the resistance in Yugoslavia, to do with Tito and the sort of folksongs and the partisan songs and the things like that. And one of those, I've never forgotten this, Handel's *Water*... it was cut to Handel's *Water Music*, it's all I can remember of this whole thing, I'll never forget [laughter]. But it was basically those sort of public relations films. One didn't use the phrase then, but it would have been basically propaganda.

[20:10]

*I: Who directed this UNRWA film – do you remember?*

I honestly can't remember. You know, I remember very little outside the, I mean I remember Mike Hankinson, I remember Roger McDougall very well and Cyril Bristow, I can see him surrounded by all the camera gear in the camera room but I can't, I can't... no.

*I: Could we cut for a second? Sorry.*

[break in recording]

[20:32]

*I: So you left then?*

I left then and I then went, was out of work for a bit, and then I went and worked for De Lane Lea that was just... because...

*I: Explain about De Lane Lea, because people might not remember them. Are they still going?*

2: *Yes, they're still going.*

1: *They are? Anyhow.*

De Lane Lea was... he was often known as the Major, and I very much suspect the 'Major', because he was one of those people who if you name anywhere he said he was born there, including little islands in the Pacific. But, he had been working in France on dubbing with a partner called Richard Heinz [ph] and he had come over to... he had a French wife and he came over to England and he started up in... it was in a basement at 86, one of those things where Crown Theatre was, one of those basements there in Wardour Street. And they were dubbing what name films into English.

1: *What, different languages?*

Different languages. I was there for a very short time because then I got offered an editing job which was of more interest to me, obviously. Well, editing assistant job with... on some second features, made by a company that only lasted for the two films, with Ben Arbeid and Alan Cullimore. Alan Cullimore's I think in Toronto now, he went to... after. And they were making these second feature films and they had I think an editor called... and it was Freddie Ross – does that name mean anything? And poor old Freddie had, we had the rushes and they saw the first rough cut and for some reason he kept on cutting to an ashtray.

[laughter]

In the sense of, you know, the Fox cat. Because the Fox cat is Twentieth Century Fox, they had lots of footage of a cat and whenever they got into difficulty with the cutting, they cut to the cat and it's known as Fox cat! [laughter]

1: *I see.*

So he turned his Fox cat into an ashtray. Anyway, there was a bit... and he left and I literally, after a year of training, I was given the job of editing and I edited two of these second features.

*I: Do you remember what they were called?*

They were just really quota quickie, run-of-the-mill thrillers, you know. I mean one can physically remember... there was one with Frank Muir and Denis Norden, which was a comedy. The second one was... the first one was a thriller, the second one – I'd forgotten that one, yes – Frank Muir, and everybody was falling around on the stage and nobody fell around on the film, isn't that funny, you know. I mean this is going back. This goes back to, I can tell you when that was because it was just before I went to... this was about '48, '47/48. And so I edited those and then went to Antigua, because I got married in... [laughter] I'd better check when I got married. Forty-five. So I went to Antigua and literally had a big break.

*I: How did you like going back?*

I mean I'd never been to Antigua. It was the most terrible shock I'd ever had in my life because in Jamaica, when one learnt anything, one knew nothing about the other islands, nothing absolutely at all. And I just assumed that Antigua was a small version of Jamaica. It was appalling, it was the worst backward, colonial... it had...

*I: You mean it was run by the British still?*

[24:59]

It was still run by the British, as Jamaica was then, but you see I remember at school in Jamaica being told about, you know, the Ruhr and the Transvaal and the, you know, and all the sort of, the economy of eastern France and western Germany and all of that, but one was never told anything about the islands around one at all. And it was 108 square miles.

*I: Oh, tiny.*

Tiny, tiny, tiny. And water, really they still had night soil carts going around. And they had... this is the first time I really came across this really divide between the rulers and the ruled, in a sense.

*I: Did your husband come from Antigua?*

He came from Antigua, that's why I went.

*I: I see. And he had a job to go to did he?*

Well, he was a lawyer and he went back to... or he'd been over here with the RAF and he'd gone back to open, start a practice. I arrived one day and left the next day. I was persuaded back, so I was there for three and a half years, but I just found it one of the most extraordinary places to live. I wasn't geared for that at all.

*I: No. Because you had nothing to do yourself?*

Well, I mean I ended up by being his solicitor's clerk and running the office and taking the briefs and doing, well one had to do something, one couldn't do nothing. And I was chairman of the Library Committee and things like that, because I was asked to be because they wanted to... I mean they had a... one small example of the way... The government gave the library a grant of 1100 West Indian dollars a year to run a library, which should have been a public library. It... 1100 dollars, I suppose you divide by about four to find how many pounds that was. And this money was used to buy *The Tatler*, *The Sketch* and all those sort of magazines and for the services of a messenger whose job it was to go around the actual absentee landlords, you know, pensioned relations, delivering these magazines. And they did buy a few fiction books and they were things... I can't remember what the authors... the authors were the equivalent of the Ethel M Dell and all of that, that sort of level, and the governor asked me whether I would mind being chairman of the library because Trinidad was starting a very big library scheme and they wouldn't even look at Antigua till they got their house in order. So Baldwin, who was then the governor, asked me whether I would do it, he said, because I know you don't give a damn and you're the only person I know who can actually do it because you have no... nobody can get at you, you know. And I did and I said no fiction will be bought at all. I will get fiction. You will not have a messenger taking papers around, first of all you will not have *The Tatler* and *The Sketch*, you know. And we had a reading room in the library and again, a cross-section of papers like *The New Statesman*. [laughter]

*1: That's going a bit to the other direction.*

I know, but...

*1: Yes, getting a norm.*

Getting a norm. Which you would read there, there was plenty of room, they had a big, big building. And then somebody on the committee said, ah, but we're going to have to be in the same room as people with no shoes on.

*1: These are coloured people saying this are they?*

No, no, a mixture. These are mostly the pensioners of the absentee landlords or the manager of the sugar factory or the... you know. [incomp – 29:16] because they had a very rich American club had been formed there, and I had to drive out and get all their novels that they'd read them once and, you know. And we just got reference books and so they got into the Trinidad thing, but that sort of attitudes were very prevalent. So I was busy, in a sense.

*1: But it all came to tears in the end?*

Oh yes, I mean I just couldn't live there. You just couldn't. I mean a beach is a beach is a beach, you know. [laughter] And so I came back and I'd been out of the business of course and I'd lost touch. The thing I hadn't lost touch with, I walked into The Highlander and everybody was there. [laughter] It was exactly the same as if I'd walked out the night before. It was quite extraordinary, you know.

[30:09]

*2: Can you just say what The Highlander is?*

The Highlander was the pub which is now called the Nellie Dean, much to everybody's absolute disgust, which was one of the real established watering holes of documentary film unit, I mean everybody...

*2: It was a club wasn't it?*

It was like a club. There was the French club, there was the French pub, there was the Gargoyle which...

*1: The upper echelons.*

And The Highlander was the real meeting place and everybody from, very much from the union at that time, you know, everybody, and also all the documentary people. So that you...

*1: It was a mixture.*

It was an enormous mixture.

*1: Of people like...?*

Well, there was, I mean you'd go in and there was sort of Ralph Bond, Bessie Bond of course, Cyril Arapoff, Duncan Ross, all... Robin Carruthers. I mean you just knew everybody in there.

*1: Grierson?*

Grierson? Grierson rarely.

*1: Oh, he went to Canada didn't he? He used to be there sometimes.*

And, you know, because down the other side, you never saw people like Olwen [ph] in there because she was in the French club, you know, she was very busy over there.

*1: I'm trying to think of the name of our famous Welsh poet. Dylan Thomas.*

Oh Dylan was very much there. Rubin [ph] Todd, George Barker.

*I: Yes. And the lady.*

Nina Hammond.

*I: Nina Hammond. Yes, the famous Nina Hammond.*

And remember Paul Potts [?] [incomp – 32:04]? [laughter]

*I: Golly, yes.*

And there was, oh you know... there was Ralph Bond and there was...

*I: Plus the Soho people.*

Plus a lot of the Soho local people, not the – because they weren't strip clubs then...

*I: The people whose homes were in Soho.*

Whose homes were in Soho, that's right. And there was a grocer's across the road from, you know, in the bottom of St Anne's Court there, there was the very nice grocer's shop there. It was a really nice mix. But this mix had started in the war and it was still going on when I came back and it was only, it got watered down because people went away and other people came and then they changed the name and somehow it never... it never survived the change of name in a funny sort of way. I'm not saying that the name change caused the change in the pub, but I think the pub was beginning to change at that moment anyway, but I think the two facts together... I don't know. Of course when Sherry [ph] walked out on – what was his... you know, who ran the pub?

*I: That's latterly because the first people were old Mr So-and-So who we never saw and Nellie.*

Oh yes. And then was it Bertie, was it Bertie and Sherry [ph] took over, and then Sherry [ph] went off and Bertie ran it for a while, but somehow the heart went out of it shortly after then.

*1: Oh, those were the days, weren't they?*

*2: I think it coincided with the birth of television, perhaps, and the film industry decline.*

Yes, I think because... I think other watering holes came up, because people went further afield and...

*1: And I have a theory you know, that in the heyday of documentary a lot of the people were not married or didn't have young families anyhow, so they were free, but as they grew older they had family responsibilities so they didn't stay up drinking all night, that didn't happen so much.*

No. And I think too, there was a very... you see, during the war, Soho was documentary and the local inhabitants and all the documentary companies were very close together. There wasn't this thing, that group from [incomp – 34:40] went there or the group from [incomp – 34:42] went there...

*1: And Soho Square.*

... so people could all have been one actual company, people were very, very close. And of course the other thing happened that after the war when new companies were formed and that and personnel, I mean Francis Gysin and people like that, and Mary Beale and all those people. They all went their own ways because they sort of split up, like we were a bit.

[35:08]

*1: Yes, they had their own groups and so on.*

And of course people went into other fields or moved on in the sense of progression or otherwise, and then television did make a difference because people went out. I mean I lost touch to some extent because when I was... I worked up at MGM for about eighteen months on the Danziger films.

*I: Oh, did you?*

Yes. And that took me right out of Soho, I mean one was working such unearthly hours on those getting them out, and that was the sort of great day of Elstree when everybody was making television half hour films, they were terrible. And all, you know, Douglas Fairbanks. I mean Elstree was the...

*I: So basically from working on these features to quota quickie documentary, you basically...*

Then I came back, and when I came back I was obviously out so I went back to De Lane Lea. And I was up there for, I would suppose about a year, I suppose, and worked on Golden Marie with, you know, with Simone Signoret, *Casque d'Or*, on the English version of that and quite a few things and Simone Signoret came over, did her own voice and things like that. And I was doing the casting and things, or no, sort of partly doing casting, partly doing all sorts of things. And we were working then in little rooms above a coffee bar in Frith Street. When you think of the De Lane Lea empire now, it makes you wonder. Called Roo's [ph] Bar, which was a coffee bar and we were upstairs. And we worked there for oh, I suppose about a year to eighteen months. And then I got an assistant's job on a film, I don't remember the name, which I worked at Merton Park Studios. I think I was actually, at that time I was living in your house in Maunsel Street.

*I: You were at Merton Park for a while.*

That's right, that was right, yes.

*I: I remember that.*

And then I was working for a... this is when Ron Abbott, who was running the recording there and they were making all these Edgar Lustgarten half hours and *The Leather Bottle* next door was the sort of equivalent of *The Highlander*, I mean everybody used to go on to *The Leather Bottle* after the shoot. And they had two of the most evil switchboard ladies there, who knew everything about everybody. They listened in to every single conversation.

*2: We'll have to interview them.*

I think one was called Maff [ph], I can remember. But they really were, I mean they were quite notorious. And then there were people, a lot of people up there, I'll have to think of some of them whose names one sees, some of them become actors, funnily enough, some of the cutting room assistants.

*2: Yes, Ronnie Curtis and his wife, Elsie. He was casting director.*

Yes, I remember Ronnie Curtis, I didn't know Elsie. And there was, oh yes, Thelma Connell.

*1: The name's familiar.*

She was an editor, she was out there. Ann Chegwin [ph].

*1: Oh yes, she's been interviewed hasn't she?*

*2: I think she has, yes.*

*1: Or she's on the list to be interviewed.*

[incomp – 38:38] Williams there.

*2: Skillbeck? [?] Bobby?*

Yes. And there was... John Dunsford, I've seen his name on credits. Because one was working for people who rented cutting rooms rather than being a part of Merton Park Studios, you know, the people that... you never had any real... you knew the people in the cutting room next door but you never had any real close... Oh yes, Humphrey Swingler's last wife was working there as an assistant too.

*1: Who?*

Humphrey Swingler's last wife, do you remember? Pam, Pam Boswell. Not Pam Boswell, Pam who married Humphrey.

*I: No, I didn't know. No.*

And of course Humphrey was very much around *The Highlander*.

*I: Yes, wasn't he, yes. When I was at Merton Park was before that and that was Ronnie Riley Productions I worked for.*

I can't remember who this film was for, I cannot really remember at all, but I know that I left that and I went and worked for a film that was being produced by Robert Dunbar by Blue Cross animal homes.

*I: Ah. He's on our committee.*

Is he?

*I: Yes, really.*

[39:57]

Bob Dunbar, yes. And he, I mean... and I forget, I think Johnny Ferris was the editor of that. I think it was Johnny Ferris, who's lovely, I mean really lovely. Lovely old short... Looks like a bit like a mini Patrick Moore, you know, a little tiny Patrick Moore.

[laughter]

So I did freelance and then I went out, and this was at a time when I worked as a second assistant, and before I did these things I went out and worked on *Queenie* in Australia [film - *The Queen in Australia*], you remember, out at Beaconsfield.

*I: Did you? Oh.*

Yes. That was where I met, whatsisname? Cyril... you know.

*I: Arapoff?*

Not Cyril Arapoff, no, no.

*I: Frankel?*

Frankel, that's right. He could drive me back to your place in the evenings because he was filming *A Kid for Two Farthings*, wasn't it? *A Kid for Two Farthings*? He was filming with Rosalie Crutchley and Peter Finch out there.

*I: Ah, was he?*

And that's right, and then he used to drive me back, because when I'd finished and they finished, they used to drive me back to London in the evenings. Yes, with many stops on route I remember! [laughter]

*I: I haven't seen him for many years, you know.*

Yes, it's so funny because my cousin, it's so funny, one of my cousins, who I have not much contact with any of my family, but it so transpired that he married Ian Hendry's ex-wife, who was a very, very close friend of Cyril, and it suddenly came up that, you know, we had mutual friends.

*I: How extraordinary.*

I wonder if you remember, the [incomp – 41:49] party when I had a blind date with Cyril, that's how I met Cyril, you arranged a blind date with Cyril Frankel [laughter]. The thing is, I had a [incomp – 42:00] party and I hadn't got an escort and you said well I'll ask Cyril Frankel. And I remember so clearly when Cyril Frankel came to pick me up I was wearing a black dress with those long pinch-back earrings. [laughter] [incomp – 42:17] [laughter]

*I: He was nice wasn't he?*

He was a very nice man. And that is how he knew me, this is why he drove me back, because then obviously he wouldn't have known me, so you did me a long term good turn.

*I: Actually, it's good – can we cut off for a sec?*

[break in recording]

[42:40]

*I: You're now at Beaconsfield.*

That's right, and working as a second assistant on that. And I think I did that before I actually went to Merton Park.

*I: Do you think that Beaconsfield was taking on odd kind of... or was it only by one production company?*

I don't know, what it was then, I think it was letting out space, because I don't know who I was working for, it was the official film on the Queen's tour of Australia, and I don't know which the company was. There was a man called Sidney... Stanley Hawes or something.

*I. Stanley Hawes? Yes. He was the film commissioner for Australia.*

That's right.

*I: Yes, he was.*

He was around and he...

*I: Oh, was he? Yes.*

Yes.

*1: If that's not his title, it's something like that, yes.*

Well it was under his aegis.

*1: Oh really? Yes, yes.*

Because he was doing... and he was one of those people who believed in hierarchy, in other words, you kept your place. Oh yes, very much so. Oh yes. And Grierson took up cudgels with him on that.

*1: Really?*

Because, you know.

*1: He offered me a job in Australia after I left New Zealand Film, yes. And I was so glad I came back to England. Perhaps I had a lucky escape, who knows?*

Well, he was very much that. I was working as an assistant in the sound side of the editing.

[44:12]

*2: This is side one of tape one, of 176.*

[end of side]

[45:44]

*2: Side two of tape one.*

*1: Right, now. Let's do Beaconsfield.*

At Beaconsfield. That finished and – oh, I'll tell you who's done very good, what's his name? Peter Musgrave, who started his own editing company later, was working as the

chief editor on the sound side and oh, tall, lanky, Ralph Sheldon, who did quite a... very, very good editor.

*I: He became very famous.*

That's it. Well, he was editing and had the whole thing. That was the first time I met Beryl the footsteps lady, you know, the lady who used to go around with her little case of shoes and dub footsteps.

*I: Oh, I never struck her.*

Yes. They could make the loops, and it's the first time I came across the actual degree of loop making, because in the documentaries one hadn't really worked in, but most of it was because of, I suppose, of how they had to match stuff. There was an enormous amount of post-sync on that film. I mean really a tremendous amount. And there was a very nice girl, the sound editor was a woman called Jean somebody, very nice, very takeable [?], I can't remember...

*I: Was Ken Cameron there still?*

Ken was there. Oh Ken was there, yes Ken was in recording, you know, wore his kilt when he was dubbing. But then he never wore his kilt, the kilt was for dubs. [laughter]

*I: Was it really? Yes.*

Absolutely. But Jean and this Beryl arrived and we had all these loops of Queenie's footsteps, you know, and they'd go round and Beryl would open her case and she'd put on the appropriate pair of shoes and she'd do *tip, tip, tip, tip, tip, tip* and dub all the footsteps. Beryl the footsteps lady – yes? Yes. I mean she made an enormous career of it.

*I: Did she?*

Yes, she made, that's her full job; she used to go round doing all... because today with the sound techniques you don't have all of that, but then you used to literally post-sync

virtually everything, didn't you, Manny? You know, you really did then, you know. Particularly in features, you know. On any exterior stuff you never used the actual sound, you post-synched all the, all the dialogue you post-synched and you had to put in all the sound effects as well.

*2: And the wild track. Atmosphere track.*

Absolutely. You know, and therefore Beryl made a very good living, the footsteps lady. I met her for the first time as I came across... and also I learnt a tremendous amount on that film, because the degree... and it stood me in enormous extent, what I learnt on that, even though I was very much a minion in the hierarchy, but...

*1: It sounds to me, you see Crown packed up n '52, when I went to Crown I was amazed at the expertise, at the crafts, different crafts that go into a film, the sound people were famous of course, but the editing and the care that every department...*

The miniscule care.

*1: ...gave to one film. I mean just devoted themselves to the film in question. And I imagine that there must have been quite a few Crown people still working there, you see.*

Oh, I'm sure there were. I'm sure that a lot of these people were Crown people.

*1: Especially the people that lived locally, in any case.*

Would be.

*1: Yes.*

And I must say that I was, I mean I learnt a tremendous amount, Tommy, I really did, because I can remember the meticulousness, it was really meticulous, the absolute dedication to standards. But not dedication to standards at the expense of flair, but it was to make...

*I: They were feeling it, feeling it in.*

Feeling it in, yes. And nothing was too much trouble, nothing was too much trouble.

*I: Yes, I go along with all of that.*

[49:50]

And I found that when I came later, even to the documentaries I made on my own with a Norwegian friend of mine, you know, the degree to which one had learnt or absorbed – not actually learnt – but you'd absorbed, building the soundtrack, adding sounds to give you a dramatic feeling as opposed to being a faithful representation of how the sound sounded. And the thing of putting in an enormous number of tracks so that you can always... so you never have abrupt transitions, you can always have your blending of your sounds and the flow of sound, you don't get this awful thing, which really jars me, when you suddenly cut to a scene, you go 'ah', it suddenly goes like that and, you know, you're not aware.

*I: Do you think that this is still going on today?*

I've been so out of touch, my dear, I have no idea. I haven't been working in the industry actively for many years now and I don't know to what degree the things that one sees are assisted by techniques that are available, you know, and all the things that are available. And also, you see, what has made a fantastic difference to sound recording was the sort of, not the push-pull, but the rock and roll system when that came in. That made dubbing a doddle, because up till then dubbing, you would actually start a ten minute reel, right, and you'd sit in the theatre and you do your rehearsals and that. Now, you started with the beginning of a reel and you're on optical sound, you start at the beginning of the reel and you'd have to dub to the end and if anything went wrong anywhere in that reel you had to start from the beginning, go right the way through to the end again. Whereas with the rock and roll system...

*I: You just wound back and forth.*

...you just wound back and forth, back and forth and so you could do each section. And this made such a fantastic, and also the other thing, there were so many other little small

things that made a difference, because you could work in 35mm footages so that when it came to dubbing 16mm the transition... you could be far more precise on the elements of change of sounds and that. These things made it... they didn't make you a better sound person, but they made it so much easier to do the things that you wanted to do. It took the anxiety out, I mean because, let's face it, you see the same reel say twenty times, you feel you're just... you're out of your mind by the end of it.

*I: Yes. Absolutely, I'm sure.*

I know it was. But my first understanding of what you could add to a film with sound in the real expressiveness, because when you're working on, I mean the Alan Cullimore/Ben Arheid films, they were quota quickies and everything was cut to the minimum amount of that and with the documentaries you so often had...

*I: They were very often commentary films anyway.*

Very often commentary and music, basically, or you had very little actual sound, sync sound, very little in most of the ones I worked on. And certainly in the, when I was doing the dubbing of the French films and the Italian and the Indian films, always, I had nothing to do with the actual recording of the mix track, because all the dubbing elements came over from, your M&E [music and effects] track was sent over from wherever, so you didn't have any of that, so that it was really on that film that I learnt more about the composition of soundtracks, of layering soundtracks to effect.

*I: So you're still editing, you're not directing yet.*

No. No, I only directed very spasmodically very much later.

*I: Did you? Ah yes.*

When I had my own production company, that was the only... and then under duress usually. [laughter] Not comfortable. The technical thing, yes, but not... So by then I went to the - when I got married again - I went to work with the Danzigers on their... I was still assisting up to that point, you know, apart from the two Cullimores before I went

to Antigua, and I was working with an editor who was a brilliant editor, really talented and totally... I mean very nice man. But it was a nightmare working with him because his idea of working was to arrive at ten and then go out for large Black Labels as soon as the pub was opened and [laughter] make the most of it. But work, I mean was piling up.

[55:16]

*1: Who was this then?*

Sid Stone. He was...

*2: [inaudible – 55:20]*

I mean Sid Stone, Sid stoned all the time, and he really, I mean he was absolutely, he just ruined his health and his life and that because... And eventually he, we were working at MGM, you know, making these Danziger... and then the Danzigers opened their own studio and he went to the studio to edit and left the sound editing and then I became a sound editor at that point. And that was again very good training because you're working against time and you learn to make very quick decisions and they're quite complicated, some of them. Not polished, but complicated. And then I went and took over editing and, you know, you're edit... and the cutting rooms, he had a range of cutting rooms at Olympic Laboratories at Acton and I walked into the cutting room, there were three adjacent cutting rooms with doors in between, and Sid had been out at the pub hadn't he, and I walked in and there were piles of cans up to the ceiling, round the walls. I was sort of cutting a one and a half hour film a day, you know, I mean literally because there was this incredible backlog. And, you know, we just didn't have time, I mean you just have to make the decision. And that was a time when, I mean I must say that I learnt, I mean Monica would never believe this – this is Monica Mead – is because when I had her cutting room very much later on, she couldn't believe it because I didn't work with a synchroniser, because what Sid Stone did, got it all worked out very simply, was doing all his overlaps by hand, counting the frames, hanging them up, you know, and never used a synchroniser for his sync, an assistant had to finally check it, you know.

*1: And it was alright?*

Oh yes, yes. And he did all his overlaps that way and, you know, so that one picked up a lot of things. It's funny, all along the line you pick up something. Not necessarily useful, but something. And then that finished, I left there and then I was ill for a while and then I was looking around and Lucia Arendt, now Lucia Arendt was an editor...

*I: Oh yes, Lucia. Yes, she was an editor at Crown. She married a doctor.*

Yes, Uri. And Lucia rang me out of the blue, because I knew her because during the war I was homeless at one point, Lucia was homeless, and we both lived with Graham Thorpe in his flat.

*I: Did you? Did you really?*

[laughter] Yeah, he put these two poor waifs up, you know. I would think it was something like about, probably a month or six weeks or something like that, and he rang me out of the blue and she was working for Dimitri de Grunwald, Tolly's [Anatole de Grunwald] brother, and he had a firm called ScreenSpace, which was the London front for André Sarrut in Paris, and they, because when commercials started there were only two firms in England who had any experience with advertising films, and that was Pearl and Dean and Rank Screen Services, both of which were extremely, you know, mundane - factories, as we kindly called them - mundane. And the advertising agencies obviously wanted something a bit more pizazz, so that they went to Dimitri who was a fantastic salesman, you know, and charm absolutely... he's this sort of White Russian charm, you know, that just... And was known, because although he was younger than Tolly, he had snow white hair and he was known as the Silver Fox.

*I: Really? That says something.*

[laughter] And he was always, but in an affectionate sense, he wasn't sort of being, you know, cold and... And he was always on the, I mean it's so funny because when he was setting up *The Millionairess*, because he did a lot of setting up of Tolly's productions for him and getting the money, and it was so funny because I walked round the corner the other day and there was a building there and I saw the list of the firms in this office building and there was a firm of the accountants Stoy Hayward, and Stoy Hayward were

ScreenSpace's, and Tolly's, accountants. And there was this constant trying to get money, you know, it was always a struggle to get money, you know, could we make the salaries on payday or not make the salaries, you know. And this was not so much for the salary set-up because they got a lot of work through their style in their commercials, but it was just trying to set... And there was this man, I forget his name, he was a millionaire who promised to put some money in, I think it was something to do with *The Millionairess*, and this man really made Dimitri work for that money. They used to walk – the office was in Clarges Street – and he used to make Dimitri meet him for walks in the park to discuss the possibility of getting money. Interminable walks in Green Park [laughter] that Dimitri would have to take. But it was then I got to know Paris and went back and forth about once a week over a period of about two years, doing the liaison between Paris, the sort of technical liaison between Paris, and making various minor alterations here. And that's how I got involved with the advertising as well. Because before then I just had one because at the very end of my time at British Films – I'd forgotten British Films.

[1:01:41]

*I: That's got to fit in somewhere hasn't it?*

Yes, that was just before this, that was right. This was just post Queenie. Between the two I went to British Films, that's right, I was there for quite a while editing for there. And then, that's right.

*I: Was...*

Well, John Haggarty, he was the producer then. Sidney Sanderson [ph] was the cameraman, number one cameraman. Terry Gould, another cameraman there. Michael Sanderson was the production manager/first assistant, depending. After John left a man called Malcolm Stewart [ph]...

*I: Oh, that's right, I remember. Because I was there all that time, you see.*

Malcolm Stewart [ph], and after Malcolm, John Roden [ph]. And I left after then, I left just shortly... I don't know whether I left before or after John, but about the same time. And then there was Marianne was my assistant, and David Pitt was my assistant there too.

He went to the Coal Board didn't he? Marianne died, in childbirth, but Leslie, her husband, was an editor and he married the ex-wife of Ken Clark [ph] who was a very good operator who did quite a lot of work for me later on. But we did a lot, we worked with Yorkshire and Thames. And I did that frost fair...

*I: That was lovely wasn't it?*

It really was. It was most enjoyable, that frost fair sequence, on the frozen Thames. And then there was the, I mean when John was producing there, there was that horrendous tourist film they did on the Costa Brava with Robin Carruthers and that really was... the sounds that came back from Spain were quite horrendous, I mean really horrendous.  
[laughter]

*I: Really?*

But yes, I was there for quite a while, you know. And then of course...

*I: Because don't forget, tell them, tell the people where it was.*

Oh, in Berwick Market.

*I: In the very centre of the market.*

In the very centre, in Berwick Street, in the middle of Berwick market, above us was Wallace Productions with Max Anderson up there.

*I: Oh was it? I don't remember that.*

And Max and I used to meet on the stairs and have long discussions on the stairs, you know, he was telling me that he... back at Tipner and my fame had gone before me, because when I'd walked up... And it was so funny because we had a Christmas party each year and all the people from the barrows around we all knew very well and used to come in and I mean we had this sort of, alcohol was flowing liberally as it is at all film parties, and the little boy, the people who had the veg stall, tomatoey and salad stall just

outside the entrance to us, they had two little, young little boys, and the little boys were up there and they were draining all the glasses that they saw. I mean they were absolutely paralytic. They had to be taken home on the barrow. [laughter] But it was a very interesting location and one knew everybody there of course, it was very nice. And that was a very pleasant interlude.

[1:05:17]

*I: Yes. I enjoyed British Films as well. I liked John Haggarty especially.*

Oh John was very nice. I saw him, you know, from time to time.

*I. I wonder if he's still going. I wouldn't mind interviewing John.*

I think you should, because he's also very eloquent.

*I: Yes, yes.*

And John, I mean the thing I remember about John, there was not a single book that came out that John hadn't read. And he'd read so many, you always suspected he was telling you about the blurb, you know, because he'd read, I mean he was... And then he married a doctor, Joan Miller [ph].

*I: That's right. Yes, I remember now.*

And they lived in that road going down, Ladbroke Grove, you know, off there. And then, oh God, we did that children's film. That was a thing of some dramas. This is when I was shop steward and they got into the middle of all of that. Because the Children's Film Foundation...

*I: Was Henry Geddes in charge of it, from the Film Foundation point of view?*

I would imagine so, I can't remember, I don't remember. But as you know, it was, what's her name, the woman? Mary... Nice woman.

*1: Who directed it?*

John.

*1: John? John Haggarty himself?*

Mm.

*1: Oh really? Oh.*

No, I remember he didn't. Bill Hammond. Oh God, Bill Hammond.

*1: Bill Hammond? Ah!*

Will Hammond did it.

*1: It's alright. Shall we erase that? [laughter]*

*2: Oh, have to [incomp – 1:07:10] this interview.*

Will Hammond directed it and it was, as all Children's Film Foundation things, on a very low budget and we had quite an argy-bargy with the union on it about, you know...

*1: Minimum crews and things.*

About crewing, and it was not a question of British Films trying to be mean, it was just a question of how do we make this thing, and it got very difficult. But it was a good rollicking film. It won a, I think it won an award, that film, yes it did.

*1: Considering that British Films was rumoured to belong to the Conservative Party.*

And it was definitely owned by those accountants, run by those damned accountants in Piccadilly.

*1: But they made some pretty good films in spite of that.*

Yes, yes.

*1: And I think John Haggarty was probably...*

I think John Haggarty was responsible entirely for the standard of films.

*1: And steering it through the...*

Absolutely.

*1: ...muddy waters.*

Because he was a sort of great big fella.

*1: Also a very elegant speaker.*

Very elegant, and very fluent.

*1: Did you know him at all?*

*2: No.*

Oh, I'm very fond of John, really very fond of him.

*1: Me too.*

And, you know, he could sort of seduce those so-and-sos, you know, because there was a firm of accountants in Piccadilly and they used to have their finger utterly in the pie, you know, so it could quite well have belonged to the Conservative Party.

*1: That's what I've always understood, but...*

But it... because you see what John had, John Haggarty had, I mean Malcolm was a joke, I mean he just came and went, Malcolm Stewart [ph]. I mean he hardly made... But, what John Roden [ph], John Roden [ph] couldn't do it, bless his heart, because he was too quarrelsome. You know, he couldn't, he was too confrontational and if you're dealing with accountants and those people, it's no use being confrontational, it doesn't work, you know, they just, you know... That's where John just couldn't get, I mean it was the wrong niche for him totally because he just couldn't cope with those people, no way, you know. And he was very emotional, John, you know. Whereas John Haggarty, who under it all was very emotional and a very emotional raw man, but he could be the politician as well and just run rings, you know. He's a bit... I'll tell you who he reminds me of, Andrew Faulds is a bit...

*1: Who?*

Andrew Faulds.

*2: The MP?*

Yes. Very similar, again a big, enormous, charismatic man, you know, well Andrew gets a bit emotionally carried away at times, you know. So that British Films was, you know, but Bill Hammond did all those RAF films, do you remember, the RAF training films that they did?

[1:10:09]

*1: Oh, that's right, yes.*

They did all the films for the RAF and... But this Children's... but I think it won a prize, that. But I think that John had a lot, John was down on location and I have a feeling he had an awful lot to do with the direction, although on paper Bill Hammond did it. It had too much imagination. Do you know, because it was a really romping, you know, Saturday morning romp, you know. And it was a good film. Then just before I left, my first brush with commercials was when they did – this had to be through John Roden [ph], had to be – six quarter of an hour advertising films for Ponds for J Walter Thompson, the beginning of commercials.

*2: It was a devil to finish at quarter of an hour, wasn't it?*

[laughter]

Well, absolutely. Absolutely. And that's so funny, because they were so slapdash about it, because I remember, I made some, I mean I got to know, I mean Valerie Singleton's father was Dennis Singleton who was the producer at J Walter Thompson's who I worked with and another very nice man called Carl Ivers [ph], who became close, not friends, but very close, you know, through the years I worked with him afterwards and we always remember those Ponds films. And it was so much at the beginning of advertising that they had these quarter of an hour films which were little magazine films, you know, how to make up and there was a little dress show and there was little things making it up, and then they'd just sort of say, well cut fifteen out of it Cynthia and cut a second segment out of it, you know, and left it entirely up to me to do. So it wasn't really making commercials but it was, you know... and then Lucia rang me, I was there, that's right.

*1: And was she working in commercials?*

No, she was working for Dimitri, you see and she was leaving Dimitri to become a fulltime housewife. I think she had a child by then and she wanted to be at home, and she thought of me, she said would you like to take over this job, because it seems to me that you would fit in to it.

*1: Was her husband here?*

Yes, her husband was here.

*1: I'm sorry I've lost touch with Lucia. I was very, very fond of her. They were terribly nice to Bob as well.*

Well, she may still be around, but...

*1: They moved into Harley Street.*

But Uri was on the...

*I: Uri, not Uri.*

A-R-E-N-D-T.

*I: Yes, but it wasn't Uri, it was... no, I can't think.*

It was a name like that, very like that.

*I: Not Urik, no.*

No, no. It was very like Uri.

*I: What was his name?*

Mm?

*I: What was his name? Arendt, he was Arendt.*

He was Arendt, that's right.

*I: She was Lucia... Vervaska or something.*

And then she became Lucia Arendt, yes.

*I: What was she? She wasn't Russian, she was...*

Polish, I would think. I would think she was Polish. She had... her accent, looking back on it, and also her temperament was very Polish.

*I: Was it?*

I think so, yes. And then I was just back and forth with Sarrut and commercials, and all these sort of things. And it is true that I went and made the English version of *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*.

*I: Oh did you? That was not... do you mean... how do you mean an English version?*

Well you see, Tati [Jacques Tati] decided, he'd never finished with a film, Tati decided he wanted English dialogue and...

*I: Was he going to be speaking English dialogue?*

No, just for the... he wanted to turn all the... it was amazing actually, I find it very extraordinary when I watch it now, because he wanted all the English characters or the American characters, he wanted them all to speak in English, whereas it was all in French. And I don't know if this is just nonsense, it may be absolutely, but he wanted to do it and he was a very close friend of Dimitri's, both White Russian émigrés – Tatischeff – and so Dimitri said would I like to go to Paris and work with him. Well of course, who says no? So I was introduced to him, it was absolutely hilarious. It was on a Saturday morning I was to meet him and I was to go to, he was staying at the Hyde Park Hotel, the old version of the Hyde Park Hotel, and I was to go there and meet him on the Saturday morning, which I duly did. I went up to his room when he had... it was quite extraordinary because over the bed there were three bells: once for reception, twice for room service, thrice for valet.

[1:15:20]

*I: For what?*

Thrice. Once... they had the bell and they had a little thing which said: once for reception, say; twice for room service; thrice for valet. [laughter] Thrice for valet! [laughter] Jacques Tati, he said, 'What is thrice?'

[laughter]

Can you imagine! I explained what thrice... and this was actually, he was [incomp – 1:15:49], it was quite extraordinary, because he seemed to manage to create around him the film, variations on the film. So he rang for room service, presumably twice, or could have been the thrice one. Anyway, the waiter came up with coffee, and he wanted to give the waiter a tip, so he went to the wardrobe in which there were, I think, two suits, and he's a very big man, very, very tall, very broad-hipped. And out of these two suits, they seemed to have more pockets than any suits could ever have, and he went through every pocket and he puts handfuls of pesetas, handfuls of francs, handfuls of drachma, you know, it was just coins [laughter] absolutely everywhere. But no pennies! [laughter] No pennies. So he had to sort of offer, to say I will give you a tip later. I mean... but he was off to have lunch with Sophia Loren - because this was all about the time when *The Millionairess* - and Tolly and I think he was having lunch with Tolly and Sophia Loren. He said, 'It is exactly the sort of looks I *detest!*' [laughter]

*I: That's a very good [incomp – 1:17:14].*

But now, mind you, this is pre all those sort of sweat suits and things that are around. He at eleven o'clock on a Saturday morning in a hotel says, 'Mademoiselle Moody, I want to buy the bottom half of a tracksuit, where do I go?'

[laughter]

*I: Well, they were hardly invented then were they? Lillywhites, I suppose.*

And what he did was, he used to run in the mornings and he used to wear out the bottom half of his tracksuit and he was not about to buy a full tracksuit, he was only going to buy the bottom half, and it had to be white. And I thought my God, this is Saturday, you know, quite apart from anything else, and I remembered in the arcade just as you go down from Brompton Road to Sloane Street, there was that sports shop in there, very old-fashioned little sports shop, and I said, well I don't know where, but there's a possibility. So we went there and he asked for his bottom half of a tracksuit, and they said the clothes – they had the racquets and the bats and things upstairs – and there was a little spiral staircase that went down to the basement where the clothes were, it was tiny, it was just

about the width of Tati's hips. So we had to literally to go down, it turned in on himself, you know, round. He got it. And I think that..

*I: [laughter] I bet you that went into a film!*

[laughter]

*I: Afterwards.*

He got it! He got it!

*I: Good for you.*

But when I went out, when I went to Paris and I nearly took down the... there was a lot... you see, I could have sworn that anybody who's watched *Hulot* swears there's no dialogue. There's a tremendous amount of dialogue and because the dialogue was used as sound effects rather than... it was not used as dialogue, it was used... this was why it should never have been, you know. But there was a tremendous amount, you know. So I did that and then I came back and recorded it in Burnham Beeches, because it had to be outside, and then the planes started, you know. With Marjorie Westbury and Michael Balfour who did the American voices and I forget who did the other voices, and sent it over to him. And it was amazing because he had an assistant in Paris who'd been his assistant for years, a man called Maurice Bernard, who was really very, very nice, and he had a lot of spare time around Tati because Tati moves exceedingly slowly and he doesn't believe in starting a day till about four in the afternoon and so that there's a lot of time. And in moments of time what Maurice had done, he'd taken one day's call sheet on *Mon Oncle* and he'd meticulously drawn everything on that call sheet, so there were so many little poodles and so many little misses, and all drawn beautifully, it covered the whole of one wall, one day's call sheet, it was beautiful, you know.

[1:20:49]

Then of course the London companies, the Ridley Scotts and all those very, very good commercials people came up: Hugh Hudson, Adrian Lyne, so that Paris no longer had the

edge, so that it tailed off. Dimitri also was always... I mean Dimitri always had money problems, you know, like anybody in that business. And he'd also got more involved with Tolly's films. And then another man called Jack Ralph [ph] and Kumari Ralph [ph], do you remember them?

*I: Jack Relph [ph]? Yes. Oh, Jack Relph's [ph] an actor.*

No, Jack Ralph [ph] was a producer, a director. He was in Canada.

*I: I'm thinking of Jack Relph [ph] am I?*

Yes, you're thinking, yes. Jack Ralph [ph] and his wife Kumari, who was absolutely... very strange woman. I mean that was dramatic, I mean I can't tell you, that was a dram... And I sort of went over and continued working with him for a while and it got too traumatic.

*I: Where did she come from?*

She came from... she was Anglo-Indian.

*I: Oh, I see, because it's a Maori name, Kumari.*

And she was very complicated and I mean Jack was, bumbled on and that and they'd both been in Canada and they'd worked in the National Film Board there. And so then I started up my, you know, an editing company in Great Newport Street, which seemed to metamorphosise itself into a production company.

*I: Yes, you had cutting rooms?*

I had cutting rooms and offices and that, yes. Had two floors!

*I: Did you?*

God knows why. And then, you know, went through all the various ups and downs. Then I did a lot of documentaries with a Norwegian friend of mine, mostly for Norwegian television. And then I got rid of the lease and then I, when I used to have to cut I used to hire cutting rooms from Monica.

*1: Did you? Yes, yes.*

And this was near where I lived, you see.

*1: Great. Let's have a break then.*

[break in recording]

[1:23:10]

*1: End of reel two?*

*2: No, I think there's another minute or so on this.*

Just on the advertising, I mean one worked with all the sort of advertising agencies, but funnily enough, you, apart from one or two exceptions, there wasn't a sense, one never built up with the people there the same real feeling of clannishness, of belonging to a group of people that that documentary thing first did.

*1: I can imagine.*

Because one of the people that one thinks of, you mention the names, and this was like your family in a sense. And you see people, oh, you know, even people you didn't have much to do with. But I found with advertising it was all so superficial.

*1: Darling, too.*

People were all here today, gone tomorrow, nothing really, apart from I think I probably made about three what I would call friends of the hundreds of people that were... I made a

lot of friends in Paris but they were nothing to do with advertising. I met them in Paris because they happened to be there and I happened to be there, but...

*2: It all seems to be done by a committee. When you get a set-up on the camera they all want to look through it.*

Oh, absolutely. It is by committee and it's all by, everybody's jockeying and trying to cover their back, you know. So everybody's having their...

*1: And everyone calls themselves a creative producer.*

But I must say that I found that when I went to Toronto – I went to Toronto a couple of times for four months at a time, saw an awful lot of people, I saw an awful lot of advertising people there, because I did think at one point I might go and try and work there, because I like Toronto, it's a nice city. And as I say, Alan Cullimore's there now, and Ronnie Densham [ph] and a lot of people from England are there, surprisingly that I came across. But...

[1:25:10]

*1: But you wouldn't now would you?*

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Anyway, I could have settled down there, but I don't think I would, I think it's... no, no, no. But it was interesting because Grierson was still sort of the god, yes.

*1: Oh, was he?*

And it had sort of, the guru in a sense still, you know.

*1: He certainly made a buzz wherever he was didn't he?*

Oh, no question. I remember in Leipzig, I mean there was Cavalcanti and Grierson in Leipzig, I mean that... well, I mean these two deadly, well I don't know whether they

were really, but there were certainly enemies on the surface, put it that way. And neither... there's the most wonderful Leipzig story with Cavalcanti, I can't even tell it.

*2: Tell it in here then.*

Cavalcanti was going to be interviewed – no, Cavalcanti was the person who actually discovered my uncle was a sculptor.

*1: Oh, well that's a great credit to him isn't it?*

And so Cav knew me through family, and this was through another friend of mine. So Cav was a great friend, and Grierson was there and they were the three lions of this particular festival: Cavalcanti, Grierson and Joris Ivens. And Joris was absolutely adorable, I mean really...

*1: A wonderful filmmaker too, wasn't he?*

Oh, absolutely adorable. And there were these two who were, *arghh*, you know, behaving, both of them, appallingly. I mean there was no way of pretending they weren't. Anyway, Cav was going to be interviewed on German radio, thank heavens, and he had agreed to give the interview in French and there was this sort of lounge where all the delegates used to gather, and he spotted me there one morning of the interview and he said, 'Oh no, I'm not going to give the interview in French, I'm going to give it in English and you're going to translate, you're going to be my interpreter'. So I was... and they had got a French interpreter, for German, although I'm sure that the German interviewer understood French and English perfectly well, but they went through this sort of protocol. And this went on with me, and my French then was minimal, I mean it was halting, and it certainly wasn't up to translator standard, let's face it. So the German interviewer said in German to the French interpreter, 'What does Mr Cavalcanti think of Dr Grierson?' The French interpreter said to me, '*Qu'est-ce que vous...*' in French, 'What does Mr Cavalcanti think of Dr Grierson?' And I said to Cav, [laughter] 'What do you think of Dr Grierson?' 'He was shit.' [laughter]

*1: He said that? Did he really?*

I said, 'Cav, you cannot say that'. 'He's just shit.' I said, 'Cav, you cannot say that'.  
Meanwhile the two; the interviewer and the interpreter are hysteric because they obviously understood it. So there am I thinking, oh God, what am I doing here? Why am I here?  
[laughter] They've put me in the middle of this. 'You are my interpreter and it is your job to interpret faithfully what I say. [laughter] And he sort of turned to the... I mean it was actually very funny but I thought oh God, I don't want to be here, he said, [incomp – French 1:29:10].

*1: Cavalcanti...?*

*'Monsieur Cavalcanti trove que Dr Grierson est un peu merde.'* [ph]

*1: 'Un peu...?'*

*'Un peu un merde.'* [ph] [laughter] Cav turned and said, 'No, I said he *is* a shit'.

[laughter]

*2: [inaudible – 1:29:35]*

On a tape, yes, and they must have edited it. But I mean they were killing themselves.

[break in recording]

*2: This is side two of tape one.*

[break in recording]

[00:00]

*1: Do you think that the editor has a greater influence on the final product now, now that the whole editing process has become more complex?*

I don't think it makes any difference. I think it's relative to the...

*I: You worked quite a bit on commercials – how did you find the people on commercials, how did you find the discipline and the techniques?*

Well, I found that you were working to the best feature standards, because you were using top technicians, top equipment, top art directors, top cameramen, top operators, because the demands for the thirty seconds were always the distillation of the demands that are made on a...

*I: On a big film.*

...on a big film. And I made a series for Canada, which I made over a period of three years and every year I used to get the same crew together, because everybody used to like... and they were based on *The Forsyte Saga*, but that was about the period, just after *The Forsyte Saga* was being so successful, and it was based on all... and we had all the *Forsyte* people, you know, Margaret Tyzack and all those people, Eric Porter and all those people in it. Ted Kotcheff directed them, and we had all the really good, good feature people, so that your standards were just a miniaturisation of working on a feature. So depending on the studio or the size or the size of the set, depending on the studio or if you were on location or whatever, your costume, you had your costume designer and your wardrobe mistress, your make-up and that. And sometimes I think even more so because you, because you're concentrating on such a small, precise area, you had to almost be more meticulous, because you were just looking at every frame, as opposed to being taken away by a story, a part of a long story.

*I: Interesting. Now, I've got to ask you here, one of the questions in the questionnaire, now that film editing's probably more complex, do you think the editor has a more major part in making the film than he did before?*

I can't see why there should be any difference, because you are basically, as an editor, well I've always thought anyway, helping to put forward the ideas of the director. And that remains, doesn't matter what material, what equipment you have, you might find certain things easier to do, but it doesn't mean to say you have more influence because you find certain things easier to do. You may be able to find more effects at your disposal, but

they're just effects added, it doesn't mean again that you have more influence. I cannot see that the relationship's any different. I mean it would seem to me, you know. It may vary with... But I think it varies with the relationship between the director, the editor and the producer, rather than with the means that are used. In some relationships you may find the editor has a lot of influence and in another you find very little. I mean I wouldn't like to try and argue with David Lean how to edit a film, for example.

*1: Well, he'd been an editor hadn't he, so yes.*

And I believe that in fact his films virtually cut themselves.

*1: Yes. Can you name any editors you particularly liked working with?*

Well, I haven't really...

*1: Directors, sorry.*

Directors?

*1: Yes.*

I enjoyed working with Ted Kotcheff. I haven't worked with a great many directors. Let me see. I've had a lot of... no, I haven't. I mean I've worked with directors in France more, you know, than I have over here. And more in France... I mean Desmond Davis I've worked with, he's nice to work with, I liked working with him.

*1: Was he a cameraman once?*

*2: Yes.*

[04:55]

I mean... I don't mean Desmond. No, Desmond Davis was the camera... No, I'm not thinking of Desmond Davis, I'm thinking of... Desmond Davis, who lived near me, he

was a... he used to live near me. No, he didn't. Desmond Davis. Isn't it funny, there are two Davises. Shortish.

*2: He was a cameraman, then he turned director, he did both.*

*1: Did he?*

Was it Desmond Davis? It was Desmond. It's funny, because when you get these sort of names, you made me doubt whether it was Desmond. Desmond Davis. Doesn't sound right now. [laughter] Isn't it funny?

*1: I'm now going to ask you some questions about the ACT.*

Yes.

*1: How did you first get involved with the ACT? I'll read out some of these questions and you can answer them in bulk if you like. What recollections did you have of the early days of ACT? What do you think ACT's standing was up to the war years and during the war years? What positions, if any, did you hold in the ACT or any committees you were on? What do you think is the future of ACT in the film medium? Do you think ACT has played a useful role in the shaping of the industry? That's a very broad spectrum of questions. Just give us your thoughts about it. I know you're out of touch with their present movements.*

I'm totally out of touch with their present movements, therefore I wouldn't even begin to know about that.

*1: No, well it's all changing so rapidly.*

And it also changed, the big change happened with commercial television.

*1: Did it?*

Yes, it did. The whole... because up to then I came into, I joined the ACT in January, I did actually write it down because I thought maybe one of those sort of... January '45 I think it was. '45... I'm pretty sure it was January, it was just after the war. I think it was January '45, and I got to, well, honestly because I was working in documentaries and partly I got to know about ACT because of The Highlander too didn't I? All the organisers were in there in force. [laughter]

*1: Absolutely, yes.*

And I sort of found that it was, in those days it was somehow very much a, again that family thing was very much there because the organisers and the documentary people were somehow very intermingled.

*1: Very much so, yes.*

It was very hard to sort of differentiate. I think that when commercial, when all the television companies opened, which broadened the whole... When it changed its name to Association of Television, you know, Film and, you know... Technicians, then - Cinematographic and Television – then it changed its character. It became far less personal, you know.

*2: Countrywide.*

Oh, absolutely, it became very much less personal. It was no longer in a way, it was always a tough union and a very militant union in a sense, but it was always very, in a way, it had that feeling of cottagey-ness, because it was a small union of very varied people and because it covered such a broad spectrum of people in the sense of characteristics, education, talent, jobs, it covered, that it was very fluid and interesting. But now it is inevitably, you know, it's got so big. I mean when I say that my membership number was, when I joined, was five thousand and something, which I'm sure was a high number for then, but you compare it with what the numbers are now, you know. You knew everybody, I mean virtually at that point everybody knew everybody.

*1: That's right.*

And now, I mean I'm sure that if I was still working that I wouldn't know most of the people that... maybe on the particular section I was involved in, but then the section would be what the whole union was then.

*I: In those days, yeah, yeah.*

*You were on committees too? You were shop steward? No?*

I was shop steward very briefly at British Films, while I was there, which put me on one of the committees, the general, you know, for a very short time. But no. I've never really, I was never sort of active in that sense at all.

[10:12]

*I: You were saying earlier on that throughout your life you'd enjoyed the documentary field probably more because it was more of a family feeling, it had a sort of... it had a purpose that unified it. Whereas in commercials and the feature films you found you didn't get that feeling very much. Can you expand that at all?*

I've always felt... it's sort of a sort of feeling one has rather than anything that you can... it's very difficult to put down on an intellectual level without seeming to be unfair to other people. But I've always felt that... more at home with documentary, more at ease. It's much more my milieu. I find it vastly more interesting than with... it's because you're learning something on whatever you're making a documentary about, there's something there to learn and I find this is one of the most appealing aspects to me. I find the people much broader in their interests. I find because, for this reason too, because they go into all sorts of areas, whereas if you're working on a feature it may deal with some particular aspect where you may pick up something, but it's... I find that there seems to be more time for getting to know people in documentary. On a feature you find that, I mean, because some aspects of feature making are desperately boring, I mean sitting on the floor, you sit there and you sit there, you know. By the end of the day you're totally exhausted from virtually doing nothing sometimes, do you know? And I find that people are inclined, if I look back to the drink sessions in *The Highlander* when people have finished work, they congregated from here, there and everywhere and they were all terribly impassioned, I mean they really were. The conversations going on, anything under the

sun, whereas the... if you are – and of course they talk shop as well, there's no question about that – but you find with the feature people, you're more likely to be talking on a sort of cocktail level chatter, or on a shop level and it's just, there is a difference in feeling. Commercials, you're dealing with... in advertising, because you are at the mercy of the actual, all the people working in commercials are at the mercy of the advertise... the client, who's the advertising agency, and they impose a superficiality. And you usually find yourself socialising perforce with people you don't really particularly even like much, or haven't got a respect for, but that's even worse.

*I: All the same, you've met some jolly interesting people haven't you?*

Oh yes, I have, I have.

*I: You have really. Wonderful.*

And I have, I mean I have met people in advertising who I really am very fond of and I've got very close friends.

*I: And the people the advertising agents use, the, you know...*

Well, yes indeed. That is true, that is true, yes. There is that. But you do in documentary too, because, you know, they may not be...

*I: Now, what have we left out? Can you think of...*

[break in recording?]

Hang on, I'm trying to think. Clancy Sigal – was it Clancy Sigal who was doing the criticism, the film critiques?

*I: Yes.*

And he used to have lunch in Father's [ph], and he was somebody who was around at that time, an American wasn't he?

*I: Yes. I have never read anything of his but I believe he's frightfully good.*

Yes. And he was nice, I enjoyed him. And there was...

[break in recording?]

*I: While we had it switched off we were talking about the people at Basic Films when Leon was there. Lindsay Anderson.*

Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, who was a special person.

*I: Special. Lovely person, yes.*

Lindsay Anderson and...

*I: Tony Simmons.*

Tony Simmons.

*I: And they were just embarking on their career.*

[15:00]

They were just getting... in a very different way.

*I: Yes. At that time Lindsay Anderson won an Oscar for his film about deaf children.*

Oh that's right, yes. They all sort of seemed to get a certain *succès d'estime*.

*I: Yes, they did. Yes, yes. And they were making a film called... well it was made on the Virgin Islands, Virgin Island. Do you remember that, about a bird stranded on the beach?*

I may have been... I missed quite a lot because at times I was away, and of course when I was doing all that Paris stint I wasn't really much around London at all, I mean I might

just as well have been abroad at that time. That's what I was thinking of the... because there were so many... I mean there was Muriel's, that club in – Muriel's dead now – that dreadful drinking club in Dean Street. And the wonderful thing about Muriel's, that if you go there, say once in five years, you'll see, I mean Humphrey Swingler used to be in there all the time, and you'd always see people you knew in there.

*1: Brian. [laughter]*

Absolutely, absolutely. And who was it who... oh yes, somebody, Robin, Robin [Hardy]... who used to make commercials.

*1: Carruthers?*

Who made the film, *The Wicker Man*. Robin...

*1: Not Carruthers?*

No, no. It was whatsisname, I worked a lot with him. His brother, you know, Peter Shaffer's brother. And he was always, I mean he was a real drinker, you know, I mean the first, all day. I remember going to Muriel's once and saying Robin is barred, because he apparently had fallen down, broken the loo apart or something. And they used to have these annual award dinners for the commercials, usually held at the Hilton or somewhere appalling like that, and there were things like... no, it was Tony Shaffer... it wasn't... it was Tony Shaffer who was Robin... But Tony Shaffer was found asleep on a sofa in a furniture window in Park Lane the next morning and somebody else was found...  
[laughter]

*1: It was a ripe old life then wasn't it, it really was.*

And I remember I was doing a commercial for Robin, he had a production company that operated, he married a very rich lady, and I think he's married another very rich lady, he'd already married a very rich lady, but it's very much up the mark, it was always... I mean he gave a Christmas party, to which I was invited, and there was nothing but Dom Perignon, you know, I mean absolutely... ridiculous, you know, there were lots of people.

And Tony Shaffer was there and Peter Shaffer was there and that, because Tony Shaffer was Robin's partner and – Robin Hardy – and he made a film called *Wicker Man* which became a bit of a cult film eventually years later. And attractive, nice people, you know. And I actually went for a meeting with him to Majorca for a meeting one Saturday evening.

1: *[laughter] That's the way to do it isn't it?*

[laughter] It's amazing.

[break in recording?]

1: *Let's wind it up shall we?*

2: *This is side one of tape two.*

[recording ends abruptly at approx. 19:25, runs to 31:51]

### Queries

p.8 Betty Lurid – spelling? Production Manager at Shell Film Unit

p.12 Frank Clark – spelling? Editor at Merlin Films

p.14 Richard Heinz – spelling? Partner of Major De Lane Lea

p.17 [incomp] talking about the library in Antigua

p.18 Olwen – spelling? Acquaintance who frequented the French club

p.19 Rubin Todd – spelling? Frequented The Highlander in Soho

p.19 Paul Potts - ??? and [incomp] unclear

p.19 Sherry – spelling? Talking about The Highlander in Soho

p.20 Sherry x 2 – spelling?

p.20 [incomp] x 2 – talking about various groups of filmmakers [difficult to hear]

p.21 Roo's Bar – spelling? Coffee shop in Frith Street, Soho

p.22 Maff – spelling? Switchboard operator

p.22 Ann Chegwin – spelling? Film person

p.22 ?? Williams – inaudible name (at Merton Park Studios?)

p.22 Bobby Skillbeck – spelling? (at Merton Park Studios?)

- p.24 [incomp] x 2 – talking about a party
- p.25 [incomp] talking about blind date, unclear
- p.31 [inaudible] Question from (2) about Sid Stone
- p.33 Sidney Sanderson – spelling? Cameraman at British Films [British Lion Films?]
- p.33/34 Malcolm Stewart x 2 – spelling? At British Films
- p.34 John Roden – spelling? At British Films
- p.34 Ken Clark – spelling? At British Films (editor?)
- p.35 Joan Miller – spelling? Wife of John Haggarty
- p.36 [incomp] talking about William Hammond, director
- p.38 John Roden x 2 – spelling? At British Films
- p.38 Malcolm Stewart – spelling? At British Films
- p.39 John Roden – spelling? At British Films
- p.39 Carl Ivers – spelling? Worked on Ponds commercials
- p.42 [incomp] describing visit to Jacques Tati in Hyde Park Hotel
- p.42 [incomp] talking about Sophia Loren
- p.44 Jack Ralph/Relph – spelling? Producer/director, actor
- p.46 Ronnie Densham – spelling? In film industry, went to Canada
- p.48 [incomp] x 3 remarks in French by Cavalcanti
- p.48 [inaudible] comment by (2)
- p.55 Father's? Place Clancy Sigal lunched