

BECTU History Project

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Interviewee: Mary Harvey
Interviewer: Teddy Darvas
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Mary Harvey
Tape 1 Side A

Note from transcriber: There were a couple of slight issues, the unidentified sound recordist and the not great quality sound from either of the interviewees. You will notice that almost all the transcription queries are on that side of the table. Mary Harvey though came out loud and clear.

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 1 Side A

The copyright of this recording is vested in the BECTU History Project. Mary Harvey, Production Secretary, Confidential Secretary. Interviewer Teddy Darvas. Recorded on the 6th of November 1996. Side One.

We're going.

Yes. Okay.

Right.

Right Mary, tell us about your childhood, where you were born, how you, educated and how you came into films?

I was born in Cornwall in October 1919 and very shortly after that, about three months or less, went to New York with my father, mother and my eldest sister. We...

What did your father do?

He was a farmer, and he'd just been in The Second World War, he was very badly affected by it. And we stayed in New York with a, a great aunt of mine. And we, I remained there with her for about, till I was three and a half. And, in the meantime, my father had died. He was going to settle in Canada but somehow it didn't work out, I didn't, I was too young to know at the time. But it just left my mother, my sister and I, and we came back to England when I was about three and a half, I suppose. And really for a holiday, to see the family. Then she decided she would stay in England,

she was a teacher. And she got a job teaching way down in the South West of Cornwall, near Land's End, and that's where I grew up. I went to the grammar school at Penzance and then on to The London College of Secretaries, in Grosvenor Place, where I worked very hard and went out in the big world. And my first real job was with a Harley Street Consultant.

Can you remember what you were paid?

Oh yes, it was a big sum, two pounds, ten shillings a week, it, that was because I was highly qualified.

Which, what year was this?

That was 1937 I think. Yes. And, end of 1937. And then during 1938, no, no, it was 1938, can I correct that? And after I'd worked for him for about a year I went down to Cornwall for a summer holiday, that was the summer of 1939, and he rang and said 'we're just about to go to War and I don't think you should come back, it's not safe for you in London, wait till we hear what's going to happen'. So I stayed down in Cornwall for about a year or so and did things like WVS and helping to sound the air raid warnings and unsound it, we didn't have a proper siren, we just had to keep your finger down when it was all clear and does a 'buzz buzz' when it wasn't, when the warning came. What else did I do? Opened the canteen for the soldiers, because they'd nowhere to go on the dark nights. And then came back to London in about '40, end of '40 I would say, beginning of '41. Went back to my doctor, who promptly then got called up, and they made him, I don't know whether it was a colonel or something frightfully grand with red tags so off he went. And that left me free to do something else. And I just happened to see in Wardour Street a little notice saying, I think it said action or active secretarial agency. So I went up the little wooden stairs where there was a small person who said 'I've got what might just interest you, there are two young brothers who are getting ready to start a film, would you like, like to work for them for two weeks, they want someone while they're in town'. And I went to see them, met John Boulting and he said, 'Yes, yes, we'd love to have you start', and so I went to them for two weeks. At the end of which time they said 'Why don't you come

to Devon with us, we're starting a picture', that was *Thunder Rock*. So I went to Devon with them, my first taste of the film business.

What, what, what actually were you doing?

I was their secretary.

I see.

[05:00]

So I went there and I became the producer's and director's secretary, very important. I knew absolutely nothing at all about films but I, I loved films of course. And then from there, everyone there takes it for granted, or did take it for granted that because you were there you knew all the ropes and the lines and were awfully nice, so I really enjoyed myself.

What was, what did, what was your, what were your first impressions of the film studio and about the shooting and the other people, cam..., cam..., who was the cameraman for example?

Yes, the, well the cameraman was Jack Cardiff. And the, the, no I correct that, Mutz Greenbaum was the sort of big, big chief, Jack Cardiff was his camera operator, Ray Sturges was the second. I remember it all terribly well because it being the first thing, you know, one does remember all the details. Barry Houlding....

Oh yes.

Very nice chap, was our production manager. And we had a rather eccentric Norwegian called Rolf Popp, that's P-O-P-P, who was the first, no second, sorry second assistant, Michael Johnson, whom everybody remembers, was the first assistant, Rolf Popp was the second. Billy Herlihy, H-E-R-L-I-H-Y was the third, he used to do all the calls. And there was a dear little camera boy, a focus puller, called

Alan Hulme, who was Ken Hulme's younger brother. Let me see. Anyone else, anyone, would you like any...?

But, the, it being wartime, and, and at Denham, I mean sort of air raids and things, how, how did the shooting go? Did you work very, did they shoot very long hours?

Yes they did. I don't remember any air raids there in our time. I don't remember even seeing any notices up about air raids, but then I probably didn't notice that. I don't remember any excitement, shall we say, to do with the War.

How, how long was the shooting?

Oh, God knows. [Laughter] I don't think it was all that long because the Boultings were given official leave from, both John from the RAF and Roy from the Army Film Units, they were given leave to make this film, *Thunder Rock*, official leave, because the authorities thought the film would be a great incentive for America to come into the War. It was the story of a lighthouse keeper on the island in the, The Great Lakes of America, and he was really shutting himself away from the problems and the world, that was Michael Redgrave. And it took, James Mason, it was his first really important part, he was a pilot who flew in to the lighthouse and, and the plot developed so that towards the end Redgrave was influenced and you could see he was beginning to think he would get mixed up in the War, also that he thought he should.

It was a marvellous film.

Yes, it was.

Yes.

Yes.

It, it, was it that, they, they did a film before then, the Boultings, didn't they, about Pastor Hall?

Oh yes, they did *Pastor Hall*, that was another influential film. They were very, very inspiring young men. They were marvellous to work with because they were so sort of dedicated, full of ideas, you know. Probably terribly impatient and, with, when things didn't go their way. And I remember we had a lot of union trouble, but only about things like wanting an extra half hour or something and there'd be a terrific amount of, well sort of petty, I mean at that age I didn't know enough about unions or, or direction, things like that, so I couldn't really tell there was an awful lot of what was going on.

Did, did Roy cut the film?

Yes he did, he, he cut the film, worked through the night. I worked through one night, the whole cutting room staff worked through. I don't know why I was there really because I wasn't a lot of help, I probably made coffee or something. But it was a lovely feeling that everybody...

[10:06]

Yes.

You know, was in it together, very nice, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed them, all their family, I began to get to know the various members of the family and, there weren't many children then, John had a, a baby boy called Norris, who was photographed in the scene, in a very poor, poor person's home in the Midlands somewhere. He was a tiny scrawny, very wet baby in nappies. [Laughter]

Yes.

And they were part of the crew of the ghosts who went, who were shipwrecked in The Great Lakes, he was the first Boulting baby I knew. There was another one delivered shortly after the film, that was Jonathan, that was Roy's son, Jonathan.

What happened when, you stayed on right through the post production and everything?

Yes, they had to go back to Pinewood, or their various bases. So they left me in, in charge of post-production, which was nice. Which meant I was around the studio and started to learn a bit more of, really of what went on then.

Who did, I mean, if Roy went back, who did the rest of the editing, did, can you remember, and the sound?

Well there was Clifford Boote.

Oh yes.

Clifford Boote was the editor. So I suppose he did, but Roy was very, a very hands-on editor, you know. So that, I don't quite remember whether he came back at intervals, it's very hard after fifty, fifty years.

And it was only up the road.

It was only up...

It's...

Yes, exactly, exactly, yes.

Did you stay with them afterwards? What did you do, get work somewhere else?

Well no, I stayed as long as they could, had any excuse to keep me, because it was an MGM picture, financed, and I suppose then the, that, once the film's handed over that must have ceased. By then I'd got to know quite a lot of people in the studio. And, I'm trying to think what happened. Oh yes, and, and went over for a while to Two Cities Films, who, that was their headquarters at the time, with, with a lovely man called Giudice.

Yes.

G-I-U-D-I-C-E. And, and, and I worked for a little while casting with, for Irene Howard, Leslie's sister. And, and also, in a funny way, got caught up with Myron Selznick.

Oh yes.

The agents. Who had several artists appearing at the studios and I sort of found myself, on their behalf, looking after their artists. I remember, there was Ann Todd, who was very sort of nervous, shaky sort of poor thing. She came down to start a film, and I don't know which film it was, it was round about that time, and she felt she wasn't being looked after properly or treated properly or something and so they rang and said 'Would you go over and see Ann Todd, she's not happy, would you go and see what you can do'? So, innocent abroad, I went over, she was very nice and we had a little talk, but I didn't, couldn't think of anything much to do because, I think probably something with the dressing room or something, she wasn't happy. She was overemotional.

Yes.

I don't think I achieved anything on that particular case. But she was alright. I'm trying to think.

Shall I pause a moment.

Yes, yes, yes. Yes.

And...

Yes.

And...

Yes, right. Well we were still on *Thunder Rock* the, the boys, John and Roy were beginning to want to revolutionise the industry and get the production going much more smoothly and efficiently so they started the thing called The Film Production Conference. We had printed paper, everything, and I was the secretary to that. And they got the, the most amazing string of, of names who were in the business at the time, interested in it, and we had several meetings. And chief, chiefly it was to co-ordinate production so that you didn't go into production until you'd got a completely practical script. You knew where you wanted, you know, you knew, you know, really practical work on the script, which sounds rather simple but of course, we know it isn't.

[15:30]

Which has been forgotten now anyway, you don't need a proper script.

Yes, well that's quite right. And their, the script for *Thunder Rock* was, as an, an example, I mean I wouldn't have recognised that at the time, but the script for *Thunder Rock* was very, very pared down of a lot of extra stuff, very businesslike. And that was held up as the great example at the, at the time. And we had, they got Noel Coward, because he was just starting to organise *In Which We Serve*, he joined. We contacted Launder and Gilliat who, in those days I hadn't met, but got to know very well later. And, I don't know whether David Lean and Ronnie Neame came into it. I think they were very, very occupied at the time, they were approached and...

He was, David was still an editor and, and...

Yes David was directing with Coward.

Yes.

And I think Ronnie Neame was the editor.

Yes.

That's right.

And Ronnie Neame was the...

And a producer, oh yes.

Cameraman, cameraman.

Oh and he was the cameraman, too.

Yes. Yes. Tony Havelock-Allan was the production manager.

Oh, of course he was, yes. Yes. Athene Seyler, the actress, also came into it, who was delightful, we had a jolly evening meeting in the West End after production and she was sitting next to me and she was such fun. She had, she was wearing sort of white gloves, all rather proper, and one had a huge great hole in it. 'I must remember to mend my glove, I keep forgetting'. And, and then I met the power of the unions at that meeting, because also at the meeting were Sid Cole and George Elvyn and, and when the meeting was over they said 'Are you going home now'? And I said 'No, not especially'. And they said 'Well we're going to see the new film at the new gallery in Regent Street, why don't you come along'? So along I went with these two august people from the ACT, they were very jolly, and we saw Sidney Gilliat's picture *Young Mr Pitt*, which was a bit long, but otherwise very good. Those are the names I remember most from the Film Production Conference. I didn't save any of the letter heading, it would have been rather fun.

Yes, yes, especially.

Yes.

And so then what happened next?

Ah, then I was back with *Two Cities* and, when, Derrick De Marney, he was producing *The Gentle Sex* for *Two Cities* and so he had offices at Denham. And I met

him, and we got on very well. So I, I moved over to, he, he had a very small production company, and we were working on films for the War effort. We went, we took charge of the Polish film unit, who were in Denham labs at that time, very nice crowd of people. And there was a very good director called Cekalski, I think that's C-E-K-A-L-S-K-I, Cekalski. And their editor was Stefan Osiecki, O-S-I-E-C-K-I. And they had a very efficient cutting room. We did a lot of interesting work for the Poles, sometimes with the people from the Navy who'd managed to get out and joined up over here, and sometimes with the Polish Army. And, at the same time, I think it was, we were working on short films for the Ministry of Information on all sorts of subjects, you know, health, security or whatever, shortish films, quite interesting. So we got to know a lot of the people at the MOI, well they were an amazing collection of people. There was John Betjeman, Denis Forman, oh so many, those were the two that...

[20:30]

Who directed these films for Derrick De Marney? Did he direct...?

He did.

He directed them himself?

Yes, yes, he did. Yes, and that went on for quite some years, we were together working. And then, also after that time he worked in the theatre and he produced his own plays as well so we branched out into the theatre and that kind of thing. Not strictly speaking to do with films.

Well, no, no, but it's to do with, greatly, with the History Project. What, were there...?

Yes.

You're still his secretary, really. Or more than that?

Oh no, no, just, just a, well PA really. There was a film on which I got a, an associate producer credit, a film of his about boxing, called *No Way Back*, with, with Terence De Marney and we had that jolly boxer, Dave Crowley, he was advisor on it, with Eleanor Summerfield, she was in it.

Who were the sort of cameramen and people on these shorts for Derrick?

Well Ray Sturgess, he came up, he, he was on *Thunder Rock*, and I think he worked on one or two of the De Marney films. If my memory now remains the, it's...

You were not called up during this time?

I wasn't called up. Well I, I, I was married in between, I was married in '43 so I wasn't called up, and anyway we were considered to be doing...

Yes.

Very important work for the MOI.

Yes, we, I think they, Ray was a reserved occupation.

Yes, it was a reserved occupation.

Yes.

Quite a few actually.

Yes. Yes. Roy went out to Africa to make *Man of Two Worlds*.

That's right.

Yes.

That's right, yes.

He was there a long, long time. And we used to work quite a lot with The Crown Film Unit at Pinewood. I remember Dusty Buck, production manager.

Yes.

He, he worked, he worked there, yes.

That's right.

Yes. And Humphrey Jennings, a lovely man.

Yes.

And...

McAllister?

Yes.

Do you remember McAllister?

Yes. I never worked with, with, with him on...

Very peculiar.

No, I don't know. And, was Sandy Mackendrick there?

Yes.

He was, yes.

For a little while, yes.

Yes. But Dusty was rather jolly, she was very efficient and sort of got you facilities and things, didn't she, when it was almost impossible. Oh, and also at Denham was when I had the invitation to, from Harold Boxall, who was the...

Yes.

Great man over at Denham Labs.

Yes.

I didn't know him, I'd never heard of him.

Not Denham Labs really, he was at...

Well he had his office at Denham.

He had...

Yes, that's where he had a rather nice...

He was Korda's production manager and...

Yes, that's right.

His number two really.

Yes.

Yes.

I didn't know any of that.

Yes.

But I just got the...

Yes, he and Sir David Cunningham were all the...

Oh yes.

Korda people.

Yes. I got a call one day, would I go and see Mr. Boxall in his office at Denham Labs, and he received me very kindly and said he'd heard, you know, I wasn't too bad and so, he said 'I'd like you to consider working for Alexander Korda, who is planning to come back to work in England'. Now I can't tell you what the date was, it was probably '42 to '43 because we were sort of, our marriage plans were all taking shape at that time. And I often wished that I'd thought more, I went away and thought about it. I told him things were a little bit upset at the moment, I wasn't sure quite. And, and then I went back to see him later and said I, I didn't think really I could offer, perhaps, any long term sort of employment so I...

[25:12]

Was your husband in the Army or?

He was a pilot in the RAF. So that was my brief flirtation, as it were, with Alexander Korda, which I do regret, I would have loved to have known him, worked with him.

So, and then?

And then?

Do you want to pause again to think?

Yes please.

Alright, we're going again.

Right. After Denham, when I was with Derrick De Marney, we were forced, now that I remember it, the studio forced us out. They kept giving us notice to go, they said you, we need your offices, which was true enough, they did, but, in the end we rather reluctantly dug ourselves out and took an office in 161 New Bond Street, which was shared with some lovely people called The London Play Company, which was run by an amazing woman, Dorothea Watts-Phillips and a lovely chap called Major Jimmy Sabben-Clare, that was all, they were play agents chiefly and great fun. He was a Christian Scientist and kept me sitting at lunch times reading chosen bits for the day, but he had a great sense of humour, and his daughter was the actress, she married Esmond Knight, a very beautiful girl, [Pause] whose name I've forgotten. And so we worked in these offices which were off Bond Street but you went into a lovely little side door and along the courtyard with flowers and things, you'd never know you were in the middle of London, with, David Tomlinson's father was a solicitor, he had offices to the top of the stairway, opposite us. And it was right, a peaceful, nice sort of place to be, and that's where we worked from there. I don't quite know where to go.

And you, where did you, how long were you there?

I don't...

Shall we pause a second?

Pause a bit?

Yes.

Yes, please.

We're going.

So you were with Derrick De Marney for a number of years?

Yes, I was with him for a number of years, during which time I had my daughter Hillary, born in 1950, so there were some years when I did very, very little work of any sort, but he was putting on plays and I would be there to help him with the script and things.

Can you remember any of the plays and...?

Yes.

And which theatres they were in?

Yes, I can remember quite a few of the plays. There was one which starred his brother, Terence, which was, we got Eric Spear to do the theme music for, and Eric later went on to write the theme for *Coronation Street*. But it was a Peter Cheyney, *Meet Mr. Callaghan*, and it had, it had its own theme tune, which Eric wrote. And it starred Terry De Marney and Harriette Johns, 's' - Johns.

Yes, with an 'S'?

Yes. I did one, I think that one we went on tour with *Meet Mr Callaghan*. My memory on the names of the place is not very good. So for a few years I wasn't full strength at all, I was more family orientated.

Yes.

Except that I kept in touch with them all.

Yes.

And then we take another, that's about ten years I would say, we take another length, leap forward and, which brings us to 1960 when Derrick...

So you, so you didn't work, well apart from now and again with Derrick?

[30:00]

That's right.

All right, all through the '50s?

That's the '60s. Well the '50s.

Fifties.

Really the '50s and...

Yes.

A lot of the '60s. I was...

Yes.

Sort of a, a dilettante, I suppose you could say. Well I really hadn't got, I felt I had to be at home as well, I had help, but not quite enough, you know. And, and then it was in '61 when Derrick finally retired, more or less, that I thought it was time I had... Because by then my marriage was over and so I had to get a proper full-time job and...

Who looked after Hillary when you went to work?

Oh well we had the famous Gussie, Mrs. Jackson, now known to all as Gussie, who loved her dearly, you know, she really thought she was her child, she was very well looked after. But by this time she was, she was about ten or eleven so she wasn't quite so helpless, you know.

Yes.

Every, everything was alright for her, and she had Gussie, who was like a second home. And, and then there was a link that led me to... Yes, I started looking for a serious job and I heard of a job going with a chap, he was, production company.

Let's stop until we get...

Yes, yes.

Yes.

So you, you went to, to see, for an interview with a distributor?

Yes, a very, very well known, powerful distributor, and...

You...

And he...

You think it was Paramount?

I think it was probably Paramount, yes.

Yes.

If I think of the name I'll throw it back. And, just to be his, his secretary there. I thought of him very well and, and I mentioned, I said 'If you need any references, you know, there's the, the Boultings, I've worked for them for a long time and know them quite well'. And he said 'Fine'. When I left his office I crossed the road to Broadwick Street, where the Boultings at that time had offices, and went to see them to warn them they might hear from this gentleman.

This is already, when they were in, in the...?

They were...

Offices off...

They'd just moved in to British Lion.

Ah.

It was '61 I think it was, when they all got together, that time, then. I went to see John and Roy who both, luckily, happened to be there at the same time and told John he might be hearing from this chap. And he said 'Darling you can't possibly work for that fellow'. So he said 'I've got a, I've got an idea, I think Sidney is looking for someone, I think Frank's in today, I will go along and see if he's in his office'.

By this time Boultings had Pam did they or not yet?

Pam was there, she'd been with them then...

This is Pam, Pam Rippingale?

Pam Rippling, Rippingale, yes. She'd been with them then some long, long time. She joined them when they were making a politician film.

Oh yes, 'Fame is the Spur'?

Fame is the Spur.

Yes.

Yes. John went along and came back beaming and said 'Frank is in, come and meet him'. So I met Frank, who was his usual self, delightful, funny, rather vague. And, 'Yes', he said, 'yes, I think, I'm sure Sidney is looking for someone but he's down at Shepperton finishing off *Only Two Can Play*'. And so that was my first meeting with Launder and Gilliat, with whom, I suppose you could say I ended my career, because that was '61 and it went on till they both retired.

Sixty-one. By this time they had control of British Lion did they, or not yet?

[35:02]

They joined as directors, they, all four of them, the Boultings and Launder and Gilliat were on the Board. They hadn't, at that time, taken over the company, those negotiations came quite a bit later with them.

How, how, how was it that they came in then? I mean who was the head of British Lion then at the, who pulled them in, who was the, was it Arnold or, or?

No, he, Arnold Goodman wasn't associated with it at that time, he was always their legal advisor.

Arnold Goodman.

Yes.

He was their legal advisor so he knew all about it. But, I remember David Kingsley was the...

That's right.

Managing...

Yes.

No, yes, Managing Director, he was the Managing Director. And they were already there so I couldn't really say who, who brought them in, but I think Sidney covered that quite clearly and he did a great deal of reminiscing with Roy.

That's right.

Yes.

Yes.

So I don't think I could really say quite how they came to be there. They were already there when I got there and happily working, everything seemed to be fine. Working hard, yes.

It was, I must say that it was, any time one had nothing to do, because I was working on documentaries, either you or Pam always had tea or coffee ready, it was quite a social occasion.

Yes, it was very, very happy. Very happy set up there. We had a nice thing going. It was quite, we all worked very hard but they were a very inspiring quartet, those film makers, because having been in the rough times themselves, you know, having to sort of jump to it and do, can't always have their own way, they were there, their purpose, as far as I could see, was to help any independents who came along with a really good idea, they were able, if possible, to give them a chance to make their film, you know. It was a battle, it was a complete battle against what, I think it was Roy christened, 'The Duopoly', that is the makers and distributors having complete, as it, it was in America.

Do you know anything about, about the, the law suit that the Boultings had against ACT about having to be members in that...?

I wasn't around at that time. I read about it in the papers but I couldn't say that I was around. They wanted to hang their tickets up didn't they, wasn't that it, while they were working?

Yes, it was...

While they were directing I mean?

I think the solution was that whoever was producing gave up his ticket just for the time being and the other one had to stick it because he was directing, I think that was the solution.

He, yes, I, I wasn't there at the time, but, I mean they did have confrontations with the union from time to time. When they found it, I'm thinking mostly from the lot, because that was where I was at, at close quarters.

May I just say, because of this I think for, for the record, that when they were going to do 'Fame is the Spur', the, the Boultings had an idea that they would give a profit share to all the technicians and ABPC were horrified, and all the Scottish accountants, and said 'Most certainly not'. And ACT threat, threatened a strike if they did that, because ACT at that time was only interested in minimum rates being so high that that's what you got. Of course, if that had gone through film technicians then probably would now have residuals because nobody thought about television. So if they, if, if they hadn't met this absolute opposition...

Ah.

It would have, anyway, because it's not my interview it's yours. I just thought that...

No.

One ought to put this in.

I just sort of a nice little footnote perhaps it could go in somewhere, talking about money earned and everything. When I went to Denham, right away on *Thunder Rock*, we'd been there about, not two weeks even, and it was pay day, and I was quite resigned to my two pounds a week, which, for the world outside, was quite a good salary you see and I wasn't short of money then or didn't seem to be. And John called me in and said 'We've been thinking seriously about this and two pounds ten is not enough, we're going to give you five pounds a week'. And I, well practically fell about, really. Though I thought, how very nice. I don't know why they did it, or whether the union, whether there was a sort of rate beyond which, below which they

couldn't go, but I think it was just sheer thinking that this poor innocent girl what have we got her into, we better pay her something worthwhile.

[40:58]

What was the thing with Batchelor and, and joining his firm?

Oh that?

When did that happen?

Yes, yes he got me into the ACT.

What, when was this roughly?

In, in, [Pause] well I, we were just halfway through making *Thunder Rock* I would say, and Bert and I frequently travelled on the bus from Uxbridge to Denham in the mornings, and I only knew he was Bert Batchelor, I didn't know, at that time, that he was a great union man or, you know, or other things about him.

Yes. Okay.

He was always very softly spoken and very pleasant. And one morning, very solemnly, he said 'Mary I think you really ought to join the union, the ACT'. And I said, 'Oh, should I join the union'? But he said 'It's very important we should get people, people to get into the unions and union unity is strength', and all that, you know, he said it would be a good idea. And, of course, really, I hadn't to, because I was only listed as the producer's secretary so that was, didn't apply. But he must have been quite impressive because I said to John, 'You know, I think I'm, I should join the ACT'. Looking back on it, it must have seemed rather, they knew that I wasn't union wise or knew anything about the unions at that time, but Bert had put it very clearly and I thought he's quite right really. And so when I announced that I thought I'd join the ACT, to their eternal credit, they said 'Oh yes', you know, 'very nice'. They didn't say, 'Oh for heaven's sake don't get mixed up with that lot'. I, I think, looking back

Mary Harvey
Tape 1 Side A

on it, I can see the humour of the situation that, they said nothing against it at all.
Quite happy for me to join the union.

I'm going to stop you there.

Yes.

[End of Tape 1 Side A 43:12]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 1 Side B.

Mary Harvey, Side Two. Right.

Right. So '61, July, I think it was July '61, having met Sidney down at the studio...

Which studio is this?

That was at Shepperton, where he was making...

Okay.

He'd finished *Only Two Can Play*, I think, just about finished it, but he was busy wrapping it up.

But, of course, all of them, Frank and Sidney, the Boultings, David Lean, Carol Reed, they were all, they all came across to London Films because Davis wouldn't allow them, or give them money to do what they wanted. I think that was one of the reasons that they came.

Oh, of course, yes, they were, that's a very important part of their lives, wasn't it? London Films and Korda, it's amazing. Well Rank and John Davis were impossible, you know, who, you couldn't have stayed with them, with him I mean.

Was, was it Frank or was it Davis, really, was the trouble?

Davis?

John Davis I think.

Yes.

I think.

Just The Rank Organisation I meant.

Yes, The Rank, but John Davis was, I, I never met him, I saw him from a distance. He looked repulsive and I think he was, my own opinion but, you know, they didn't, he wasn't a nice man.

Because Sidney made the story of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Yes.

In '52, on which I was second assistant. And then of course, '54 was the first 'St. Trinian's' film.

Ah, your memory is better than mine.

So you, you weren't around then?

No, no.

Yes.

I saw *Gilbert and Sullivan* at, you know, a member of the public, I saw it, and I enjoyed it because I love Gilbert and Sullivan. And every time you mentioned Gilbert and Sullivan to Sidney he would groan and, you know, how he used to do, creep down into his armchair and, oh, but really I loved the film.

Yes.

He pretended he was unhappy. I think he quite liked it really.

Did he lose money on that one?

It was Korda.

Oh it was Korda's, ah?

That would be Korda.

Yes, yes.

I don't know, did they lose money on it?

Oh yes, a lot, but that's a different.

Ah.

Story.

Yes. Well it hurt poor thing. He didn't...

Yes.

I don't know what, I think he had a... Oh I know, he had a ruptured appendix or something went very wrong with him and he had this appendix and he was, the, the operation went wrong and that made him feel wretched and it was all tied up with *Gilbert and Sullivan*. This is just hearsay I mean.

Yes, yes.

Yes.

You know.

Yes.

I know...

So '61 you joined them?

Yes, '61 I joined them.

And by this time they are, they're with British Lion?

They were British Lion with, with John and Roy Boulting. And we were all up on the fourth floor together and it was a very entertaining time, it was great fun, because, when they weren't working hard, which they all did work hard, but when they weren't in Frank's office we had a nice a big television with which we could keep up to date with the racing, because that was very important. And in the Boultings' office there was a nice big television where we kept up to date with the cricket. And if, during the morning they, for some reason the BBC cut off the cricket in order to announce that the War had started somewhere, it was 'Darling, ring the BBC, ask them why have they stopped the cricket'? [Laughter] So they were great fun, they were very good days.

What was the first film you were on that, with Frank and Sidney?

Oh I didn't make many with them, I'm trying to remember. Well Sidney's brother, Leslie, he made for them, he was, I can't date it, I may be wrong, but there was a film called *Two Left Feet*. But it was directed by, I think, Roy Baker, I think I'm, I'm not sure, I may be giving it to someone else. *Two Left Feet* with, with Michael Crawford and Julia Foster, that was, I think, the first one. I'm...

Well '62 the Boultings made 'Heaven's Above'. That I, I, I remember. Because A: it was my first film and...

Yes.

Premona [ph 04:58] was pregnant with Terry.

[05:00]

Oh yes, yes. *Heaven's Above*. I loved that.

Did, did you work, have anything to do with that one? No, you were working with Frank and, Frank Norman weren't you, and Sidney Gilliat?

Yes, I was with Sidney, I was Sidney really.

Yes, yes, yes. Yes.

And they were, I mean Sidney didn't, after *Only Two Can Play* there was quite a long...

Yes.

Time before he made another film. He, he was, you know, did quite a lot of work to do with British Lion, you know, reading scripts and things like that, sorting out contracts for, for people who brought their scripts in. I can't quite remember the first film he made, it was quite a long time that I worked on with him.

We now come to really the big thing, which must have been '63, beginning of '64, with the battles for when, is it Bentley who, who was going to, the asset stripper was going to take over and Sidney Box got involved.

Oh that's, oh...

And that is the, which you must, anything you know about...

Yes.

Is very important.

Yes. I'm not sure, well we didn't, we were not admitted to the sort of high debates that went on in the board room or anything, naturally, because it was all rather secret stuff. But there was, there was the sort of meetings with the Board of Trade. Then the question was, and the NFFC was a sort of stormy situation.

NFFC had a share in British Lion?

They had, yes, there was something called 'The Golden Share'.

That's right.

And I didn't, I'm not very good at this, the...

But, but the thing was that, that you must know something about, because that, Bentley was going to get the studio, and Sidney Box was going to be brought in as executive producer, it was, everybody thought well he always shuts studios down. And...

Well...

When the battles started.

Yes.

What, what was, well I think when, you know, for the people that are not aware of Bentley, who is Bentley?

John Bentley was a self-made millionaire, he was a, one of the asset strippers..

I'd forgotten all, yes, that's right, he was sort of a glamour boy rather.

And he did, he used to buy things and then just sell off.

Yes.

Everything.

And, and the studio involved now, we are at Beconsfield are we?

No, Shepperton.

No...

Shepperton.

British Lion owned Shepperton. And there was, I'm not being, I'm not trying to conceal anything it's just that he didn't... I mean the backstage workings of it were not really relayed to us there.

Yes.

Although we, you know, we would type urgent letters and things like that. But I'm just trying to think of how it all happened. Because the Bentley episode was the first one I think, an earlier one, and, and then came the time when it was as though it was thrown open to bidders who would have British Lion. And there used to be a sort of, a new story in the paper every day, you know, 'Sidney Box to get British Lion'. And virtually every name you care to mention was going to buy British Lion, which was, was really as much news to me as anyone else. And then there was two little girls who were at school with my daughter, called Hyams, and they, she came home one day from school and said... And I can't remember the little girls' names now.

Hymie's brother was Sid and...

Little girls, you know, the so and so Hyams say their granddad is going to have British Lion. So I thought well that was interesting. I'd heard, I'd come across them in another context, the brothers Hyams, you know, in, in..

There were cinema owners.

That's right.

Distributors.

And distributors. And, and Hillary came home one day and said 'Oh they, so and so's grandfather's going to buy British Lion'. [010]. And I said 'Oh, are they? Wonderful, buy me too'. I mean it, it was a sort of absurd...

Yes.

Time, really. But everybody was, there were a lot of other names apart from Sidney Box's, can you remember any Teddy?

[10:00]

No, I can't. I, I remember, because I was on a film called Carl [ph 10:03] re, re-cutting Carly U [ph 10:06]

Oh yes.

And Roy was supposed to supervise it and of course, he just didn't have the time, and we sat for weeks and weeks waiting for Roy to, to have time. And, and eventually he put in Peter to surry me.

Ah.

For me, to, to carry the film on. But I, I remember you and Pam frequent...

Oh we were...

Having conversations.

Yes.

The most terrible strain.

Oh always strain.

About funding [ph 10:30] it.

Always, either letters to *The Times* or letters to the Board of Control, letters to, oh John thing at the NFFC, John...

Yes.

Terry?

Yes, John Terry.

Yes, yes.

Was...

Sir John, Sir John Terry.

Wasn't John Terry at one Chairman of British Lion?

I think he was.

He put in.

I think he was before I went there.

Yes.

Yes.

I think the atmosphere in the office must have been awful really.

It was quite, it was, well, you know, the Boultings could always have a nice, interesting, exciting atmosphere of strife and, and thing. And Sidney was, was, got more depressed about the whole thing and fed up with it and he just wanted to make films. Frank was very good and very energetic and full of ideas.

Of course, it was a tragedy that those four, during the height of their creative ability...

Yes.

Were side-tracked.

Yes, it was.

To be in a studio and, as we say, never wanted to be.

Yes. So I mean if people were to accuse them of, of making money out of it all, I can only say there were years went by when they made very few of the pictures they wanted to make themselves, purely because they weren't at liberty to do it and fight the battles at the same time. So they didn't film and they might have made much more money if they'd made their own films. I wish I could be more specific, but I...

I do remember...

I just remember these awful sort of things in the press and the excitement of it all but I couldn't...

I do you remember when, when the battle was won that, that you and Pam hung banners outside the window saying 'we've won', it was in the papers.

Well we, yes...

There was great excitement.

For some of the people I think from the upstairs floor, the fifth floor, you know, publicity. But it was mostly the little office girls, you know, like the ones who did the teas and everything, they got very excited, and there was banners out, and I went into Sidney's room and said 'Have you seen the banners flying, they say we've won'? And he was sitting absolutely sulky gloom, which he frequently was anyway, 'Oh, oh'. It was, it was was really, I mean, I, it was funnier for me than anything. I should have been terribly, I was quite glad when it all was resolved and at least we knew what they'd decided to do. But it was a shame I mean for the studios and everything.

But then they kept on. What, what happened, how did it all end with the, when they gave up British Lion? What became..., what happened then?

Well they, we gave up. [Pause] What was the year then that we lost that battle? Because I'm trying to remember, we moved out...

When you won the battle, you won the battle about '64.

Yes.

That's when you won the battle.

Then we moved, we moved our offices down to Henrietta Street in Covent Garden, the Launder and Gilliat offices.

That must have been about '66 though wasn't it?

Yes, it was later. Well then we might...

I remember having lunch with Sidney, he took me to Simpson's, when you were in Henrietta Street, later on.

Yes.

Is it in your little book?

Oh.

Is there anything in the book?

I don't think so.

We'll stop the recorder then.

Stop the recorder then.

I'm sure that was it. But then the funny thing is, after a few years we moved back again.

Start, start with, yes, you...

We moved back again to British, to Broadwick House.

[15:00]

Yes. But you moved in the first place, why was that?

Well, we were, I can only think that, I've got a sort of feeling that Andrew Cousin was sort of fidgeting for, wanting... You see we, we took up there two large rooms, Frank and Sidney each, and we had a reasonable size room for two girls and the huge filing cabinets. And I think Cousin was on the move, he wanted to, to get more people in, so that might throw some light on the situation. But, and Sidney wanted peace and quiet, I think he wanted to get away from it all. Did you ever know Sidney?

No.

No, I mean if you, you would understand, that would be a good reason.

Yes.

To get away.

I, I think especially...

Well obviously...

Sidney got very fed up with the running a business, didn't he?

Well he did, so did Frank. I think they all began to feel that they were wasting, you know, some good years of their lives, and all to no avail it was beginning to appear, I suppose. So I'm right, is that, I do remember Cousin was fidgeting away and, and Sidney got fed up with him. But then why did we move back again? We were only back for a little while. We, I remember seeing, we had lunch one day Teddy, as we frequently did, did we not, and, down at the old thing...

Down the road.

At The Stage Door of, no at The Stage Door of The Queen's, we used to go into The Wellington.

The Wellington, that's right.

Marjorie Vosper's club it was, we were all there.

But by that time...

Wasted so many hours...

Of course, Pam had left, and then eventually you went with...

Pam had...

Went back to Boultings, didn't you?

Pam had gone. No I didn't go back to them until '75 or six, '75 or '76.

So was Sidney and, and Frank...

And...

Carried on all this time.

Well, no, they didn't, because Frank, we, first of all we left Broadwick House and went to Henrietta Street, then we came back for a short while. And then we moved to, to Christopher Mann's offices at 140 Park Lane, which were rather nice offices, and we were there for a while. Then Frank and Bernadette decided to go to live in the South of France and so there was a big upheaval while everything, and we had to go through endless files, it was terrible, terrible, see. And, and, and we got a lot of Frank's stuff that he, he had to keep for sort of contractual reasons, you know, things, sensible stuff all had to go to his son's, his son's, he had a big house in the country. We got that all down there and then when he went we moved what was left of our bit of the office, some of it to Sidney's house in the country, the old files, and some to their flat, he had a flat in Ranelagh Grove, in Pimlico. So then we had no other...

But tell us a little bit about the relationship with Frank and Sidney, and you. There was a great friendship and you were always going down to Wiltshire and everything...

Oh yes, yes. Yes.

So, so, you know...

Well we were sort of friends.

So people know something about, about their personalities and all of this.

Yes.

I mean, how did they work together? Because one directed, the other produced and...

They worked awfully well together because...

How did they...?

Well...

When they settled down to write a script, together or separately, what did you do then? How did you...?

Ah well Frank's scripts, he had a secretary who would...

No.

So we're talking about, about scripts.

Oh yes.

How they started with?

Well Frank had his secretary and he, and she would do his scripts and, and things for him.

But how did they work?

I think they were...

How did they write?

Yes, I think they would start off individually with whatever their ideas were, you know. Setting them out like a treatment, or whatever, some sort of treatment or suggestion. And then they would get together and talk and course a lot of that they'd

do either at home or over the phone, but Frank would appear with an idea, he was sort of, he was always an ideas man, coming up with something new, you know, and bright and usually funny. And they would discuss the idea, and he would bring in, probably, a, a treatment to start with, see what they thought. Then they would discuss it together, perhaps over the weekend, something like that, a little more casually.

[20:18]

Did they go, did they go sort of purdah while they were writing or?

Well sort of, but they were both very sociable people, you know, they didn't want to waste too much time they, they... I suppose they would lock themselves away for a while but, on the whole they were very good at working together, even if one of them had started it they were always very receptive of one another's ideas, you know. And, and would talk it over, and there'd be something, someone would suggest something and Frank would be very quiet. He was always, had a very late take, you know, and be very quiet, and suddenly he'd see the funny side of it, you know, and you'd hear his rather high pitch laugh sort of echoing out. They always enjoyed writing together.

Did they dictate to you or did, did they, did you just type manuscript or what?

They did, well mostly, I mostly did it with, with Sidney, some with Frank if he hadn't got anyone there, but mostly with Sidney. Yes, he, he did dictate quite a lot, especially when we got to know each other better, you know, never, so he didn't feel... He was rather a shy man really, basically, Sidney, a very shy sort of thing, and he probably, unless he knew you pretty well he, he wouldn't want to sort of explore ideas and try things out. But he quite liked doing that, because mostly he wrote by hand and as he said himself, he was a very lazy man, so it, it was always nice if someone else did the work for him. But he was very easy to work with and he had a lovely mind, a sense of humour, you know, he was so funny. Mordent is the word I can think of more than anything. And, and Frank also quite liked to dictate, but he mostly seemed to, as far as I was concerned, bring it in, he'd written it over the weekend or something like that. I'd...

He wrote the [Inaudible 22:29] on the Cote'd [Inaudible 22:31] when you were down there for a holiday.

Yes.

And, on a Sunday morning Bernadette allowed Frank out during the sermon to go outside the church so he, then I'd go off and lay the money on the horses for the, he would say and he had to go back into the service.

Oh dear, I wish he could still do that, poor chap. Shame.

But when did Sidney, when did Frank get this stroke, do you, do you remember?

I think it must be at least seven years ago now.

Yes.

It's incred... They were on holiday in, in Turkey and, with no warning, you know, this sudden stroke, which really felled him. And Bernadette flew him to England to St. Thomas' and he had treatment, and then they moved him to a place in Devonshire Place and, and then flew him to the South of France. But he did, he insisted on coming over in '95 for Sidney's memorial service. They, they had it in a little church in Wiltshire, and he announced that he was going to fly over for it and...

Could he speak?

Well very limited. He can, you know, if you talk he, he sort of takes it in, but he obviously has to think. But he was well aware of what was happening, and Peter Coates read the, Roy, Roy's... Roy started to write the address for it, and then found he'd double booked himself for something, but it was even more vital so his brother, Peter, stepped in. And then he added his bit to the, the address. And it was a very entertaining, a very nice, all about them as...

I couldn't go, I was asked to go.

No.

Represent The Savage Club, and I couldn't go.

No. Well it was, it was very nice. I mean Frank in his wheelchair with Bernadette and his nurse who flew with him, they were at the back of this little church and, and Peter delivered it, although he himself is very ill at the moment. Do you know Peter, Teddy?

Have we recorded Peter Coates?

Yes.

That's right, yes, he said he'd done the, and, so he was touching on various aspects of them as, all of them young men, you know, and starting up all sorts of things they started up in their extreme youth and very funny. And describing Frank and Sidney as young men. And Frank, at the back of the church, was getting perfect reception of this and was laughing most heartily, and Bernadette said 'I haven't seen him laugh so much in years, and years'. He thoroughly enjoyed it. It was so nice.

[25:25]

So then, when they sort of more or less stopped making films and, and you, and you...

Yes.

You had, you were working for the Boultings as, as well weren't you?

No, no.

At the time.

No. I just, I, I...

With Roy, didn't you?

No, in 1975, 1975, by which time Sidney had retired, they'd given up their London flat and they were living down in Wiltshire. I used to spend a lot of time down there with them, anyway, because we were all friends, you know, and I knew all their families and everything. And, so I wasn't doing anything in, in town at all. And I'd thought it was about time I did something serious, worthwhile. So I thought I'd like to go and work for the Citizens Advice Bureau. But I couldn't afford to do it for nothing, and so I had an interview with this nice woman who ran it, who said yes, that would be fine. And I, I said 'I need to be paid something', and she said 'Yes'. But when she, I was then, I think, I was sixty, I was either sixty or getting on for sixty or something.

Yes.

You see, and she said 'Well we, yes we, we do take on some people whom we pay, but we would need to send you for quite an extensive course because there are a great many things you need to know there', you know, 'and, to be frank, it wouldn't pay us, at your age, to send you and give you an expensive training and then have, you probably wouldn't be, have that length of service', you see. So, unfortunately, I couldn't do that. And then there was a sort of, really a distress call, because Roy was far from well at that time, he was very upset, his marriage had broken up and it really up..., you know, he was a very sad man. And I, something, well it just worked out that I couldn't really think of not going down there to try and, with, with him and John to sort of get him going again, really. So what it was roughly he was a very sad man, because his last, well his, then his last marriage to Hayley, had, Hayley Mills had broken up.

And that almost destroyed him, that.

Yes, it did. It did. He did recover, but, again, but it was an awful blow. So I went back to him and John and we had offices in Glebe Place, in Chelsea.

Yes, yes.

And started working again. And, and then, after a few years there we moved to Twickenham Studios, where we had an office, and that was fun. And then John died, he fell ill, and he died in '85, I think it was '85. Was that the year that Ian Botham was so marvellous in the Test? In June '85, do you remember Teddy?

Yes. I can't remember the year, no.

No. I think it was because I had this melancholy task.

Sorry, no, I'm pointing at you.

Oh, I had this melancholy task when we heard over the phone that, I got, took a call from John's home saying that he'd died just then and it was really rather awful seeing a, a twin lose another twin, you know.

I thought that Roy was with John the day before and they watched the Test Match the day before he died.

[30:00]

Yes, I think he did go over, yes. I think he went over.

I remember that.

Yes. So, what affected me so was that I went out and, you know, left him on his own for a bit because he was obviously shattered. And then he asked me if I would ring the notice through to *The Times*, you see. And what he wanted to say wasn't actually wasn't, wasn't a conventional notice, you see, and just something to the affect that John Boulting had died on such and such a day, very happy after watching Ian Botham scoring whatever it was, it was an, an amazing score that day, you know. And I, I started to ring up from another office, you know, to put it through and I couldn't speak, I had to put the phone down again and I had to find a nice girl who was nearby, you know, and I said 'I can't say it'. And so she rang it through. So he didn't go, he

couldn't go in the official death column because the, according to *The Times* that was not quite right, but he was in the personal column right beside it.

I remember seeing that.

Yes, yes. Sad. Yes, so that's that.

Well shall we stop for the purpose in...?

Right, now we're going.

Yes. Sidney wrote the libretto of *Our Man in Havana*, from Graham Greene's book, and the music was by Mark Williamson, who is now The Queen's...

Master of The Queen's Music.

Master of The Queen's Music, that's right. And it was performed... The theatre now escapes me.

Coliseum or Covent Garden?

No. No, it wasn't. It was a smaller theatre. It was, I think it, was it Sadler's Wells?

Sadler's Wells probably.

I stand to be corrected.

It is Sadler's Wells...

But wherever it was.

It was before they went over to the...

Yes.

Coliseum.

I think it was Sadler's Wells. And it was very well received, indeed. And Graham Greene wrote him a nice letter saying how, what a good job he thought he'd done of the opera. It had...

Were you involved in, in, while he was...?

No, no.

On with the libretto?

This was something he did, this was so important, you know, that he would sit and close himself away and do it, it was the nearest to his heart the, the opera.

Because Sidney was a great music lover, wasn't he?

Yes, he loved...

He loved...

He loved music, and he loved opera. He would have given anything to be asked to direct an opera, but it was not to be. But it was a success and why they haven't repeated it I don't know. I, I saw it, it was, I thought it was delightful. And before that he also wrote a one act opera with Malcolm Arnold, Sir Malcolm Arnold now, from a story by Saki called *The Open Window*, *The Open Window*, that's right, which I didn't see, he'd already written it when I met him. Those are the two things he did, and he loved that.

Well I introduced Malcolm Arnold to Frank and Sidney, but they didn't know whom to have as composer for 'The Belles of St. Trinian's'.

Oh yes.

And I'd just worked on 'Hobson's Choice' and I said 'Listen to that music because it's the funniest comedy score'. And then they listened to him and, and engaged Malcolm. And the question of what should be the title music, and I sort of said 'Well why don't you write the school song'? And he said 'Oh yes, and I'll do it like with cymbals and that sort of thing'.

Oh.

And that's, and that's all they did.

Oh brilliant, yes. It was, it was jolly good. Jolly good films.

But, one thing I, I, it's becoming more my interview than if I may...

No, no.

Just talk about Sidney and Frank second assistant on 'Gilbert and Sullivan', we were, having a run in with Korda and all the problems of re-takes and extra numbers and how to solve a problem. And I whispered to Frank about, I had an idea of how that could be done, and it was amazing is that Frank considered one was friends, they treated you as an equal. And Frank said 'Alex, Alex, Teddy's had a good, marvellous idea', and told him. And he said...

[35:12]

Yes.

Yes, and they adopted it.

Yes.

It was, it was a very typical Frank and Sidney...

Yes, they're very generous, very generous people. Yes, quite so. You do it.

So let's start again. I'm sorry, I'm...

Right. Yes.

We're going.

Yes. Well, on *Thunder Rock*, the people who most spring to mind are a gentleman called Professor Pizey, and his name really, P-I-Z-E-Y.

Yes.

George Pizey, known as 'the professor' because he was tall and rather bald and looked like a sort of eagle, or something of that effect, who was very in to the other world, a psychic and, and séances and things like that. And also on the film was a wonderful continuity girl called Phyllis Ross, very intelligent girl, very, spent, she would spend two days working out somebody's star sign and their traits and their likely future, she would do that, and all the, you know, the actors and technicians loved to get her to do them. But she was, as well as that, she was a very brilliant continuity girl, very accurate, and great fun, I liked her very much. Rather eccentric. She had a sort of long, curly chestnut curls and, and always wore corduroy trousers and, and Roy used to say 'I wonder if she ever goes and gets those trousers washed'. Not that she was grubby, she wasn't really at all. She lived in Uxbridge. And every week she saw the two films that would be on that week in Uxbridge, you know, the Monday to Wednesday and the Thursday to Saturday, because she said 'No matter how bad a film is I can always find something in it that really interests me', you know, 'what I can think about, about it'. And she, she was very, a, a lovely person. She did the, the star casting for everybody, including the director, anybody. If you wanted your stars foretold, Phyllis would do it for you. And she also wrote, she, she wrote an awful lot of treatments, really, I suppose they would be. But she was full of bright ideas.

Gave you an all-star cast.

Yes, she gave you an all-star cast, well done. And, I lost touch with her after some years. I always remember her with great affection. I don't know what happened to her in the end, I think she rather got mixed up with a crowd of people who were into serious sort of séances and things. She moved and went to live somewhere, the other side of the park, and came to some sort of disaster. I never heard the end of the story so I can't finish it, but she was a very, very nice woman. Professor Pizey was brilliant, a stills photographer. And, then we had Ernie Holding, who I think has already been, done his recording, but he was a very efficient, very efficient production manager, with a very deadpan face, and looked terribly severe and thin and forbidding, although actually he wasn't at all. He was great fun, very, very efficient and, and, you know, people would want to get him on their picture if they could possibly get him.

Do, do you know anything about his background, actually?

Ernie?

Yes. Because he, well he...

He lived at Ruislip or Icklingham or somewhere like that.

Yes. Before he became a production manager?

No, I, nothing.

No.

Nothing at all. No. I thought he'd all, he was one of those people that you thought had always been what he was then, you know, he didn't, he seemed unchangeable to me.

You mentioned Michael Johnson.

Michael Johnson.

He went to Hollywood didn't he, and then he came back?

Yes he did. He was...

He came, came back to being a production manager.

Yes, he came back, and brought with him his son, I think he was, was he Mike Junior?

Yes.

I think his son was a Michael.

[Inaudible 39:35]

Yes, and now I see his name I think on BBC credits, the young Mike.

Yes, I think you're right.

'Baby Mike' we used to call him.

I think he's controlling at BBC 1 or something.

Is he?

I think.

Is he?

I think so.

Oh dear.

But Michael Johnson Senior's brother was Denis Johnson, production manager as well.

Yes, yes. And even their father was something to do with show business. I don't think it was films, it was something else. Michael Johnson was, was a very nice, quiet man, very efficient also. Who else did we have? Well not to do with them but what, I do remember another, a person I met down at Denham and that was Maude Spector, who turned into the queen of all casting people, and she was very anxious to get a job in casting. She was working for a producer called Victor Hanbury.

[40:50]

Oh yes, oh yes.

At the time.

Yes.

And I was with Irene Howard, which was nice and jolly, doing casting, but Maude said to me once, 'I do envy you your job, you know. It's one, the one thing in the world I want to do'. And I said 'Well, you know, why don't you do it, because it's not my, it, it isn't what I want to do, you know, I like it, it's fun but I found you never got anywhere with casting because you, you draw up long lists of suggestions and people, and then the director or producer will look at it and say 'No, no, no, no'. And they end up with nobody, or you end up with the one they thought of in the first place. So...

That's right, yes. Yes.

I thought it was a bit soul destroying.

Is she still around, Maude?

She died about two years ago I think, but she went on to do great things, Maude. She really created a big place, and she really was very, a very distinguished casting director, you know, Maude. She'd set her heart on it. I lost touch with, with Maude actually. But I always remembered her wistful desire to do casting, and she did.

What do you remember when you were with Derrick De Marney of other crew and actors and things?

Well there was Derrick, and there was his brother Terence, who was a, a rather, much shorter, little, but rather volatile actor of great charm and typical...

He was quite a star wasn't he?

He was a, of course he was, yes.

Yes, yes he was.

Yes, in fact he, he starred in a very early film, I think it must have been a silent one, about a, a coal mine, when... I, I forget much of the detail of it. I don't think there's much, I know he was in it. And, and also someone else that reminded me, and Teddy may know her, an actress called Margaret Lacey.

Yes.

Now Margaret Lacey was determined she was going to act in films, that was the one thing she wanted to do. And she'd started off with the magicians Maskelyne and Devant.

Devant, yes, yes.

That's right. She was the assistant....

St George's Hall.

Yes, that's right. Well she was the, I think Jasper Maskelyne's assistant. She used to sort of be put in the, the thing and sawn in half, sawn in half, you know.

Yes.

She, she did all that, and she loved that but she wanted to do films. And she was a great admirer of Roy Boulting, she was devoted to Roy and, and, I think when they were both very young, he was an assistant on some picture and she was probably an extra or had some very small part in it and they always remained great friends, and she, if ever there was a film on a tour, British Lion, for Roy or John, or eventually, as it happened, with Frank and Sidney, the British Lion Four, we would always have somehow to find a part for Maggie Lacey.

I'll stop you there.

[End of Tape 1 Side B 44:15]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 2 Side A.

Mary Harvey, Side Three.

So, there was Margaret Lacey and, who was a great, about the leader of the Boulting Repertory Company, in many ways, because they always found its base. And, and eventually so did Launder and so did Gilliat. Whenever any of us were around we said 'You must find something, there must be something for Maggie'. And, now Frank Launder had quite a stable, as you say, there was Lloyd Lamble, there were a husband and wife team, oh, I wish I'd done my homework.

And there was a...

But also, say about Thelma Connell, Thelma Myers.

Oh and there was Thelma Myers, later to become Thelma Connell, who was Frank's editor, always had been, as far as I can remember. She had been married to a chap called Doug Myers.

Doug, yes.

That's right, Doug Myers. Yes.

Yes. And when he died she married Paul Connell, he was nothing to do with films as far as I remember.

But he was an actor, and he was in...

He was in, he'd been an actor, had he? He went into real estate?

He was in 'The Belles of St. Trinian's'.

Oh, oh.

He was a dreadful actor and conceited.

Yes. I only knew him later when he became a sort of an estate agent, or sort of, bit of an entrepreneur.

In fact Thelma was at my school.

Ah.

Her name was Thelma Dunaway.

Thelma what?

Thelma Dunaway.

Oh really?

Yes, yes.

Ah.

And she was a very bright student.

Yes.

She was, she had, she had, she went on to do Higher Schools or whatever it's called.

Yes.

Very bright.

Yes.

She was a very lovely, I had...

She was, yes.

In 'St. Trinian's'.

She was very nice.

She was a wonderful redhead, I'll always remember that.

Oh was she, yes.

Yes, yes.

Oh, I see, yes, yes. I follow.

Sorry Frank. And she was David Lean's assistant when he was still an editor.

Yes, was she, yes? And she was very knowledgeable, she always wanted to direct. And it never seemed, although they wanted to sort of encourage her, it never seemed there was quite the picture or the opportunity in some days, you know, a, a woman director was...

Yes.

An oddity really.

Frank relied on her on a difficult sequence, not to shift.

Yes.

Things, and I remember Frank and Thelma sitting on the set, with Thelma working out every shot for him.

Yes, she would do, I'm sure, yes. Yes, quite right. And I'm trying to think of the cameraman they had too, Frank especially, was very attached to his special ones. Can you remember Teddy some of them that you...?

Well 'St. Trinian's' was Stan Pavey, who did a bloody awful job, but that was...

Oh I don't remember him.

He was, I think, a second, third choice, you know.

Yes.

Yes, I, I, no I can't at the moment. Sidney was always very particular about his music man, that was what mattered most to him. So I mean that was why he was very fond of Malcolm Arnold, who, for some time, disappeared from the scene. I think he was in a, in a nursing home in Eire.

Well he tried to commit suicide and things...

Yes.

A couple of times with Mark and Eddie.

Yes, but now he's, he seems to be very much still...

Well he's got a minder who, who looks after him.

Oh has he, oh?

Yes, he has.

He was on television programmes.

Ah, oh I see. I didn't know that then.

But I promised if they can get, the project could get hold of Malcolm, because that I would go and do the interview, because I knew him. But I don't think he's up to it somehow.

Oh I see. Oh.

You know Matthieson?

Oh a lovely man of course, how could I forget, a wonderful man called Val Valentine.

Oh yes.

Yes.

You could write a book about Val all on his own, he's amazing. He was a, he was an old friend of theirs. He'd been, I think he'd been an actor, a touring actor, oh, ever since any time at all. He enlisted, he went to fight in The First World War when he was fifteen, I think.

Yes.

[15:00]

He, he altered his age and went off and fought in the trenches of France. And he was extremely, he was a lovely man. He was rather sort of rough sounding. He was very tall, and was a very hefty drinker, it was mostly beer, and he had this huge red nose that betrayed, you know.

Yes.

Which he admitted himself, because once I had to, I'd sent him over to the bank to get a cheque cashed, it was for him, but they didn't recognise him and he brought the cheque back to me and said, 'The so and so's they won't, they won't cash this cheque', he said, 'you've got to ring them up'. So I rang them up and they said, he was standing beside me, and they said 'Can you identify Mr. Valentine'? And I said, I was looking at him and I thought, well the great thing about Val is this enormous conk which is very well built up, you know, I thought, 'He said go on then, go and tell him, the great thing with the bloody great conk'. [Laughter] Well luckily they heard his voice because he was a boomer, you know, so that was alright. But he was a lovely man, and he came up with all sorts of brilliant ideas. I mean they acknowledged it for, for a lot of their films, in fact they kept him, because he was not a, a thrifty man, you know, he was always in trouble with, with running out of money. He lived down in Brighton, and he used to come up every two weeks and he was on a retainer for, that was out of their own pockets, you know.

Yes.

Frank and Sidney's pocket purely. And he always came up for his retainer. And he was always great fun, he breezed in to collect it, you know, he'd be there for an hour or two and you, you could hear him at the other end of the building. But he was so nice, and he was full of brilliant ideas. He had the idea for *The Rake's Progress*. The, you know, the chap...

Yes.

Who goes downhill, the, Rex Harrison, and, and he ends up dying a hero's death in the War. That was his, just the original outline, and he was very good at those things. And they, they just looked after him because, you know, he'd been very helpful to them, and he was such a nice man. He went to live in, in Brighton and he died there, oh, gosh I can't remember, it must be many, I wouldn't like to say.

Who was the, Frank and Sidney's personal assistant, very tall chap, very nice, became a top BBC director?

Oh Cyril Coke.

Cyril Coke.

Yes.

Son, son of...

He was the son of...

Edward Rigby.

Edward Rigby, the actor, that's right.

He was six foot four, and Edward Rigby was about four foot, eleven.

Yes, yes, Cyril Coke, he went on to do very well. I think he's now with Yorkshire Television, I don't know where he is, it's a long time ago. He would be very useful to you.

He might, he, he must be late seventies now.

Yes. That's true. Yes, he was one of their team. And Carol Lloyd who had been Frank's continuity girl, she married Ted Lloyd, who was a producer. Ted Lloyd..

Aston?

Yes, Ted died about three years ago. And Carol sort of retired to have a family, but she used to come in every week and do the books, keep the accounts up to date, that sort of thing, very nice, very nice girl. And Smedley-Aston was a, was a, a sort of, not, not a colleague, but he was a, a producer who occasionally made, they were doing a film they couldn't do themselves, Smedley could, was, sort of produced it. He was quite an eccentric character.

Smedley-Aston...

Yes.

Was the brother of Frank's first wife wasn't he?

Yes, that's right. No, he married her, they were sisters.

Ah.

Smed's wife and Frank's were sisters, yes. Yes. And he's living on the Isle of Man now. Thora she was called, still is, I think they... And, and his son, Brian Smedley-Aston, is still producing. He produced the last *St. Trinian's* that Frank made, the very last one of all which was, you know, not a happy one really. I don't, it's, you know, wouldn't hurt Frank's feelings about it but it wasn't right. It was the one about the, it was called *The Wildcats*, it was about the school girls going on strike, which could have been very funny but it didn't work.

It's very difficult to do a follow-up.

Yes. Although the first, there were four I think, weren't there? And then this one, well it wasn't the same. They had a different unit, different script. Sidney had nothing to do with it. And, yes, you see they were such a team.

Yes, yes, yes.

[10:00]

But, I.... We'll see, did we mention any other names? The wonderful lighting, cameraman on *Thunder Rock*.

Yes.

Whose name in those days was Mutz Greenbaum.

Yes.

And some years later, for some reason, he changed it to...

Max Greene.

Max Greene. Yes. Because I thought that was...

Well that was...

Fake.

Well, that was partly to do with the War I think.

I suppose so.

Yes.

But Mutzie, well Mutzie was just the name for him, he was rather...

Yes.

Like a little...

Running around.

Boar.

He was one of the nicest people I ever...

Oh he was lovely.

Yes.

Lovely. And, so he was great fun, always. He, he was a, well he worked very hard, but he never, he was always ready for a joke or a smile or something. Very, very nice. And Jack Codd, if I remember as, as being extremely good fun, pleasant. And, and the cast of, we had a nice cast, of course, on *Thunder Rock*. There was...

Yes, yes.

A lot of them were refugees from...

Yes.

The War. There was Freddie Valk, Frederick Valk, V-A-L-K, you know. He was the doctor on the ship that was wrecked in The Great Lakes and the, all the, the crew and the passengers, who were all lost in this disaster, were, there was a sequence in about half of the film where they walked through this lighthouse as though they were still alive. And there was a rather clever...

Michael Redgrave falls in love with the girl.

Yes.

The ghost.

And the ghost was Lilli Palmer.

Yes.

That was, she was another one, you see. We had all these, well strange foreign passports in the office, because they all had to bring their...

Yes.

Original passports. You know. Freddie Valk I loved. He was a great big bearish man, Teddy must have known him, yes?

No, I never met him, no.

Didn't you?

No.

And, and Lilli Palmer. And Barbara...

Murray?

Murray.

No, not Murray, Mullen, Mullen.

Barbara Mullen.

Yes, yes.

Was the, the sort of very early women's rights character who was emigrating to The States because at home she, she was treated, you know, as nothing and couldn't make her mark in life at all. She was really independent so she had set off to go in the ship to The United States to make her way. And, the little, the baby I referred to, which was John Boulting's baby, Norris, his mother, Jean Shepherd, and I've forgotten the name of the man who played the father, they were, they came from the Potteries and they were all sort of wracked with TB or something, they were very sad and they were going to try and make a new life there. And Lilli Palmer was the girl whose father was the Viennese doctor who had ideas before his time, that was Frederick Valk. He was practicing medicine and was very unpopular because of some of the things, whether it was because he was a Jewish doctor I can't remember, it might have been. But they weren't persecuted in that way, I think it was, I think it was that he was practicing

some kind of medicine that was not approved of in those days. And there was another...

The most imaginative story, it's been done so often now, ghosts coming in, but at that time...

Yes.

It was a complete...

They found a very good way, I forget how they, they were very puzzled, they wanted to make it clear that these people who were drifting through were different in a weird sort of way from the lighthouse keeper.

Yes, that's right.

And from James Mason, who was the young...

Yes.

Pilot, who was staying with him because of, his plane was there. His plane was refuelling or something I think. And they had to differentiate, and I forget whose idea it was, maybe it was the Art Director, and I'm not really sure.

Can you remember who the Art Director, Director was?

I, wasn't it Jack Carols?

Oh, I wish I could, I'm not sure. Oh dear, I'm not sure. I mean somebody had the idea of having a, a, quite a, a different, sloping floor. I think it was something like fifteen degrees the floor sloped for those scenes, so that they seemed to be walking more slowly or somehow differently.

Yes.

I forget, but it was quite effective. It wasn't sort of outrageously different.

No.

[15:00]

But, I think it was a German sort of name, more a German name.

Yes.

I'm sorry, I can't remember.

It wasn't Mel Bandoff [ph 15:08]

Mel Bandoff? [ph 15:10]

No, no.

No.

We shall have to have a phone call...

Which is...

Berndorf, Alke Berndorf? [ph 15:15]

No.

No, no.

No, no, no, I can't, I have no idea. But the cast, I think Bernard Miles was in it.

Well, which one of them directed? John directed, was it, on that one and Roy produced?

Roy.

Roy directed?

Thunder Rock, yes. Roy directed *Thunder Rock*, and John produced it.

So any later characters or actors that you can think of?

Well James Mason was interesting because it was really his first noteworthy part. And Roy said, funnily enough not long ago, that he didn't know, he found he was rather a difficult chap to sort of communicate with or something like, he didn't quite understand. And, and he realised after, it may be something that Mason said to him later but, he was absolutely terrified, he didn't know what he was doing there or why, why he was making this film or what he was supposed to, how he was supposed to be reacting, because he wasn't, he never set out in a way to be an actor. He'd just left university from wherever he'd been and, and the expression that, throughout the film, he wore, which was, I quite remember, it was rather sort of a kind of baffled look he had with funny sort of slightly puzzled eyes and looking as though something significant was going on, you know. And he said 'Oh now I know that he was just terrified and thought "what the hell am I doing here"'?

Were, were you with Frank and Sidney when they did 'State Secret'?

No, no.

Because I wondered whether you knew the stories about Sidney and Douglas Fairbanks Junior.

Well I know how a tiresome actor he was. I would think that Sidney told Roy if he, he did, Roy said he got a lot of stuff from Sidney. And I would think he would have told

him, because he could be very awkward I believe when it came to climbing mountains...

We'll see, that's right.

Oh, yes. Yes.

But I only know second hand.

Yes.

These things...

Yes, oh no, I think Fairbanks he found a, a trial and a temptation there to kick him.

So let's stop and...

I think I've...

Well looking, looking back.

Yes.

Looking back, if you could start again, would you change anything?

No, no, no. I loved it. I might have loved, if I could have taken up the Korda offer, but then of course, I wouldn't have known Frank and Sidney.

Yes.

I would have met them of course, because...

Yes.

We would all have been at 146, but I just would have loved to have known the, the Kordas because he sounds such a wonderful, and they all, I mean Frank and Sidney, they all talk about him with great devotion and lots of laughter and everything, you know, I think I would have liked that. But then I wouldn't want not to have... No, I, I've been so fond of all the people I've worked with.

What's the highlight?

Oh, the highlight? [Pause]

All of it?

Well I think you're right, I think it is, I enjoyed it.

Yes.

So much, and, because if I didn't like the people then I wouldn't stay. I mean I had one or two very early jobs which only lasted a little while and I just couldn't be doing with the people.

Yes.

You know, I just didn't, and, so that, yes, I think I could say, I mean it's had a lot of downs with it as well when things didn't go so well, you know, and a marriage that fails is, is a bit of a down.

Yes.

Of course. But, on the whole I just...

Is your ex still alive?

No, he died in a car crash, oh, many years ago now.

But Mary, on the downs, if...

Yes.

As far as the industry is concerned.

Right.

What was the down?

The down?

Yes, or downs?

I don't ever remember not wanting to be do, be doing what I was doing, even when we were in the theatre business and sort of going up and down with a play that didn't work and all that sort of thing.

[20:12]

Yes.

It was always being busy and having to do something else the next day. I dare say I might have got a bit fed up, but I, no, I think I must have a sort of rather philosophical nature.

Yes.

I, I really think so, you know.

You mean it's, it's going to be alright on the night?

Yes, yes. Yes, exactly. And people, I find, on the whole are, are nice, I like people. If I'm working with them, you know, if they're impossible then I just don't work with them but...

We were all, it's amazing what good friends we all were.

Yes, that's it. I think.

The sort of thing that's missing, tremendous.

Yes.

I think so. I think so.

Yes.

And also of course, in, in the theatre. I'll tell you a nice interesting character I met, who was lovely and very rebellious sort of chap, and that's the Eric Spear I mentioned, he was...

Right. Yes.

A music man and, then this is the theatre, he composed this sort of little tune that went for *Meet Mr. Callaghan*, and they played it between the acts, it was on at the Garrick Theatre, they played that between the acts. And then one day he said to us, that was when I was with Derrick De Marney, and Eric said, because he was always running out of money, you know, he had a wife and, and two children and he was always hard up. And he said 'I think I've had a bit of luck that Granada have asked me to do, they're going to try out a new soap which is going to be called *Coronation Street*'. And he said 'I'm, I'm working on', you know, 'the introduction, the tune, for it'. And he wrote me a letter and he, it was all music, I don't read music so, and it could have, I don't know whether it was just at that time, all around the outside of the envelope he'd written bars of music. So whether that was the original, whether he was working on it, he, he would do that, you know, rather than use another envelope. And I never kept it.

But, then I, later on, many years later and Eric died and *Coronation Street* was such a success, and I used to think to myself thank goodness, you know, his wife and two children will be well provided for. And I met a chap called Dennis Pitt. Did you ever come across Dennis Pitt?

No.

He was a journalist and also to do with, he was in, he did some television at the beginning, he did *What the Papers Say*.

Oh yes.

And things like that, for Granada. And, and Sidney and I used to meet up with him at the local pub in Wiltshire, the 'Who'd Have Thought It'. And, and one day when we were talking he said something about Eric Spear and I, I said 'Oh yes, Eric', you know, I said I was so thankful that he did that *Coronation Street* theme because it would have gone on in perpetuity and it would have, as you can imagine, kept his family in some comfort, I imagine. And then he said 'I know about that', he said, 'what happened was that Eric sold it outright to Sidney Bernstein', or he was, you know, the boss, and, but he said 'I'm pretty sure that what happened when we realised, when he died and we realised that his wife and children were in some distress I think that it was put to the, to, to Bernstein and Granada that maybe some arrangement could be come to and', he said 'I think it was'. So I've never heard for sure but it seems so.

Yes.

He was, he was a great character, Eric, he was another one, you always met him at the bar.

Yes.

You know, well didn't we all meet at the bar? Heaven for friend.

So that I think is probably it.

Thank you Mary, thank you.

I don't have anything else, have I, can I...

Thank you.

Can I go and play now.

[End of Tape 2 Side A 24:02]

Transcript Queries – Mary Harvey

Page/Time	Query
Tape 1 Side B	
28 04:58	'Premona'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Interviewer's wife
32 10:03	'Carl'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Script title
32 10:30	'Carly U'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Script title
33 11:10	'funding'? Doubtful Word – Uncertain context
41 22:29	...wrote the [Inaudible] on the...
41 22:41	...Cote d' [Inaudible] when you...
50 39:35	Inaudible question/comment.
Tape 2 Side A	
66 15:08	'Mel Bandoff' (?) Spelling/Doubtful Words. Suggestions for name of Art Director
66 15:10	'Mel Bandoff' (?) for Thunder Rock film. According to Internet search none are
66 15:15	'Alke Berndorf' (?) remotely like the actual names.