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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. Vivienne Collins, nee Knight, film librarian, film creditor, documentaries, interviewer John Legard with Alan Lawson, recorded on the 30th of January 1997. Side One.

AL: We're away. Right running.

First Vivienne where and where, where and when were you born?

I was born in London, I'm probably a Cockney I think in the City of London Hospital in 1929.

And schooling?

Yes, I went to a small private school from the age of five to eight and then I went to a primary school and then I went to a very well known girls' school called North London Collegiate.

Oh, oh yes, I remember that well.

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

What, over in Edgware.

Yes, in Canons, yes it had just, it had just moved to Canons during the war actually, yes, yes. And in fact we went to Wales in, just before I went to North London we went to Wales to escape the blitz in 1940.

Where were you, where were you living then?

We lived in Hendon, most of my childhood in fact. And in fact we, we lived, but I've got no memories of it, we lived in Stamford Hill till I was three years old and then moved to Hendon when I was three. And then of course, the war started when I was ten years old and we, I mean very funny in a way what people did at the beginning of the war, I can remember this quite clearly. First of all I can remember the, the start of the war standing out on the steps with our, with our gas masks up, on looking up at the sky to see what was about to, well because the first siren went I think within hours of the, of the war breaking out. And we went to Windsor, of all places, for a couple of months, and this was without my father who was still working in London. He worked as a company secretary for a fairly small company by today's standards of I think boilermakers actually. And then, and I had a younger brother who is actually six years younger than me so that's quite a, quite a big gap and he was very small at that time. And then during, or just about the beginning of the blitz we went off to North Wales with an aunt and with a younger cousin and we lived in a small semi-detached house

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in a place called Glan Conway. And I can remember in fact standing, it must have been very close to the house because I'm sure we didn't move out, with the Welsh lady who was our landlady and we were looking at Liverpool docks going up in flames and she was saying 'Look what you English have done to us', which was ironic in more ways than one really and truly, yes. [Laughter]

Yes.

And we stuck it out for I think three or four months, and during that time I couldn't go to school in fact because the, the whole of the Civil Service had evacuated to Colwyn Bay and Llandudno and I think all the schools were full up with, with the children of the Civil Service. And it took me I think most of that time actually to get in to a school by which time my mother decided that she'd had enough with being away from my father. And there were, I, I don't think there was ever any thought of leaving us children, as many children were evacuated at that time without parents, but I don't think that ever entered their minds so we went back to London. And I took up my place at North London Collegiate which had very recently moved from Sandall Road in, in Camden Town to Canons, which was at one time the home of Handel actually.

Yes.

Yes, yes. And so I, I went to North London Collegiate and then I, at some point, used to cycle there. I mean unheard of I would think today, but I used to cycle across fields and have fun with the, the Haberdashers' boys who also moved out in to that area, or used to have their sports fields out in that area. I used to see the odd 'flasher' [Laughter] across the fields but it didn't seem to affect me greatly. And, and every so often at North London, well first of all we were clearly dogged by air raids during that period.

[05:20]

I was going to ask you, yes because you came back presumably when the blitz was...?

Still on.

Still on, as it must have been by that stage.

Yes, yes, yes, that's right. And it's amazing I suppose in some ways. I mean I've got strange memories. Because one night I think we took ourselves off to Hampstead tube station to see what it was like being, going into the Underground and it was appalling. I can remember being, you know, it, really seeing the Henry Moore sketches of that later on very much brought back memories of what that night, and we never repeated that. And we had one of these awful table shelters that you used to get under. What, I've forgotten what they were called after, after the person...

AL: Were they the Morrison?

Yes, that's right, yes. Yes, I think, I think...

And the Anderson known as...

The Anderson were the ones in the garden.

Of corrugated iron?

Yes, that's right, and I think, I think it was the Morri..., I think you're right and we used to crawl under those from time to time. And, and at school I think the cloakrooms were reinforced so we used to spend an inordinate amount of time sitting in the cloakrooms.

Mm.

At that time.

What about your interest in movies as a child, did you get involved in going to the pictures?

I think that came, well I had a very, very limited childhood so far as movies were concerned, my mother I think restricted them and I think they tended to be Shirley Temple and Mickey Mouse to a great extent. Very, very different from my husband's, I mean it's quite interesting because he's just a few years older than me and because his grandparents owned these two cinemas he's got an enormous childhood movie interest and he used to go, he used to go to the cinema quite a lot and used to... In fact when the usherette would show him down to the front he would say 'I can sit at the back, you know, my grandparents own these', he must have been quite revolting I think then in fact. [Laughter] And they, so he's got, he can remember many, many more films from, from those periods, Spencer Tracy films, Freddy Bartholomew films.

So you haven't got any very strong memories at the back of your mind of the first films that you actually saw?

Well...

Any particular films?

Well I think it was later, I think it was early teens, the sort of Rita Hayworth, *You Were Never Lovelier*, that, that kind of film.

AL: Oh I remember. Sorry, you were on but you were on very low.

Ah. So memories of those sort of films, yes, you know, when I was a sort of lovelorn teenager I think really.

What about theatre and so on, I mean, because it's all wartime so there wasn't much was there, even the, one's entertainment was mainly radio of course.

We didn't get to much. I can remember going to, I can remember taking a younger cousin of mine to one of the Ivor Novello things and I can remember...

AL: Was it Golders Green Hippodrome?

I think we went in to town, in to London for that. But you're right about Golders Green Hippodrome, that was, that was, that was very active in fact. But my parents weren't huge theatregoers I don't think really and truly so I think it all opened up much more in my teens and my late teens really. And my interest in film, first of all I think the difficulties about North London were that I had been very, very bright as a youngster and I don't think I fulfilled early promise. I think that, I mean it was quite interesting because later on I had a friend who taught at North London and she said it was a marvellous school for the brilliant ones who could keep up without any problems but they tended to under teach and I think I was the sort of child that would never, could never own up to not understanding things so I would rather sit quietly instead of explaining that I didn't, that I didn't understand. So I think I a bit fell by the wayside. And the head actually, I remember the head calling my parents up because she very much thought I was university material but my parents... Well first of all they had their problems. I mean they were, they were not very well off. I mean my father did a white collar job and so money was quite limited and I think it was, they had, I mean I think my mother had great conflict, she knew North London had been a very good school and she wanted her daughter to go to a very good school but I don't think she realised the implications of that, that it was a hugely academic school.

Yes.

And it wanted its girls to... I mean I always remember Dame Kitty Anderson saying 'I want to educate my girls as much like boys as possible and take them to the limit of their potential', and I don't think my mother really understood this, I think she, the, she was very scared of me going to university because she thought I was going to turn in to a 'blue stocking' and the big aim was that I got married. So there were enormous, there were quite big conflicts in me because I had these two messages that I'd sort of taken in about leading, about the values of education but also the need to get married and to be a good...

[10:36]

Home maker?

Yes, yes, yes, I think so. And anyway I didn't go to university. I was quite interested, and it was partly through an uncle, I realised that my, my uncles really had quite a big influence on me because there was one uncle of mine who was very interested in photography and I became quite interested in photography and decided this was perhaps a good compromise that I would go to photographic school, and that is indeed what I did and I went to...

Which one did you go to?

I went to Bolt Court, and this was shortly after the war about '46...

Say '46?

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Forty-six, '47, something like that yes. And it was really in a state of disorganisation I think to put, would be the polite way of putting it. There were returning soldiers coming, returning, returning service people and there were not enough lecturers and we were not given sufficient structure and sufficient direction I think. So I did enjoy it.

So you make, made do for yourselves as it were, you had to use your own creativity and experiment.

To a certain extent, yes.

AL: And makes concentration on still photography.

Oh very much so, very much so, yes, yes. And one of the things we used to do because Bolt Court is just down Fleet Street, we used to go up to the Law Courts and attend some of the divorce, [Laughter] divorce cases for fun, yes, yes. And then I... Now let me get this straight.

How long was the course in fact was it a...?

The course was about a year.

A year, yes.

Yes. Well it was, as I say, it was a bit disorganised, it really was, and it was not, it was not in those days, it wasn't the days of, of offering diplomas and things and I think that, I think that also that some of the people who, the returning members of the forces who came back had probably been in units that had used photography and they were much more experienced than I was and had much more background knowledge, and I think I didn't get nearly as much out of it as I, as I should have done. But then I...

So at the end of that year then you were there ready to go up and get a job?

That's right, that's right.

And what was your first job?

Well my first job was in a commercial studio... Oh no, that's interesting, I've just remembered. The first job was actually to work for an individual photographer who did a lot of *Vogue* fashion shoots.

Oh.

And I remember meeting Anne Scott-James in fact now. That's, that's interesting because that's just come back to me, and I really was as a kind of runner I think, you know, helping to get the clothes ready, helping to do... And I think that I also realised that this really wasn't for me, it wasn't. I was, I was a rather, I mean I as a product of North London I'm, and who I was, I think I as quite serious minded, and in some ways I look back on myself and think of myself as rather priggish I think in some ways. And...

Most of us were when we were young weren't we?

Yes, I think I took you, I took the world quite seriously. I mean growing up during the war and towards the end of the war I remember going to a conference at Westminster Halls for the Council for Education in World Citizenship, and it was about the great new world we were going to build and how everything was going to change. And in a way we were inspired, it was around the time of the start of the, of the Welfare State, which we were full of joys, we, we were full of hope about weren't we?

Huge, that's right.

And the start of the, the start of the Health Service, which came a little bit later than that, that was probably, I'm probably anticipating that a bit, that was about '47, '48, something like that.

Mm.

But we were full of the hope of, of things that were going to, that were going to happen, and I think being in a fashion studio was not how I saw it really. [Laughter] So my next move was to a commercial studio in Baker Street, and there I found myself in the darkroom. And after a few months of this I think I began to feel like a mole actually and, and really I'm a, I realise now that I'm a great open air fiend and this also wasn't really where I wanted to be.

[15:20]

Yes, and anyway you were dealing with other...

AL: Do you remember the name of the company in Baker Street?

No I can't, no I can't.

But you were just dealing with other people's stuff so there wasn't much creativity in that it was just a chore wasn't it?

No, not at all, I was being taught, yes.

In the dark like working in a lab?

It can, you know, there's a, there's a certain level of creativity in the sense that, that somebody who is doing commercial printing actually can bring certain aspects out so that it's not, it's not straightforward like being in a lab there is, there is the shading and there's all sorts of things that you can learn that you've got to do, yes that's right. But the fact was that again it wasn't... And what happened was another uncle of mine became, because quite influential in my future because he, I think he must have understood, and I must say this actually because I think at that time there was a lot of interest focused on me, although there were a few other members of the family, I being the first grandchild, there were, my mother was a part of a family of five children, two, two boys and three, three girls. And I was the first by about three and a

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half years and an enormous amount of fuss was made of me because of that. And this particular uncle was my youngest uncle and I was, I mean I think we were both very fond of each other at that stage. And he introduced me, he was a dentist and he introduced me to a patient of his who was a cameraman at Crown.

Who, sounds very interesting.

Yes. And he actually talked to me about the whole documentary film movement, and this stirred up a great interest in me at that particular time. Now his name was Martin Wilson.

Oh yes, I remember Martin Wilson extremely well, yes.

AL: Yes, yes.

Yes you can remember him?

Because I, yes, there was a film that I edited that he directed.

Right.

AL: Martin was in Army Film Unit.

That's right. Yes, yes, yes.

AL: I knew him.

Yes, yes, yes.

AL: Delightful man.

Yes, yes he was, he was a lovely man, yes, yes. And he talked to me about the whole, I mean just opened my eyes to the Documentary Film Unit and I started reading books about Grierson and about Rotha and about Grierson and, oh, and Flaherty, yes, and Flaherty.

Mm.

And I then became very interested in the whole idea of this and decided that I was going to get myself into Crown Unit Film Unit. And it so happened that we were down the road from COI of course.

Of course Baker Street, yes they were in Launchbury [ph 18:00] House somewhere weren't they?

Yes that's right, yes, yes, and I used to go. I started after a period of time, and I can't tell you exactly when, I used to go and see somebody called Phil Long.

Yes, Phil Long, I know her, yes.

She was...

Yes I remember her.

She was in charge of the library was she? Was she?

She was, yes over Pentecost.

That's right.

Over Pente, she was the head at, the MOI or COI.

That's right, yes. And I used to go, eventually having introduced myself when I, she must have given me some hope and I used to go about once a week and nag her for a job.

So you just went in did you and did you get an introduction to her through Martin?

I think I probably did.

Yes, you probably did, yes.

I think I probably did, I think I probably did.

It's nice, a nice way of finding out isn't it though her? Incredible woman.

Yes, yes, yes, and it stirred my, it really sort of stirred my imagination actually.

Yes, right, mm.

And for me being the person I was it was perfect because there was the visual interest but there was also the social interest of the whole Documentary Film Unit so it really stirred me at that particular time.

*Mm, did he ever take you down to Beaconsfield, you know, as a, just to look round?
He might have done.*

He might have done, he might well have done.

Anyway no matter.

He might well have done. And...

So Phil Long?

Phil Long eventually gave in and gave me a job, you know, and I got a job in the film library for three pounds five shillings a week. [Laughter] And I had to get myself to Beaconsfield from Hendon on that as well.

AL: Blimey, yes.

Well it didn't cost much to travel on the Greenline did it in those days? It was what, three shillings or something every time.

But there was also you see, there was the aspect of that that really scared my parents, my mother in particular.

Really?

Who by that time thought I should be a secretary. [Laughter] She said one, one or two of my friends were, were, had got sort of, that had got shorthand and typing training and she thought why couldn't I be satisfied with something like that. I mean in fact of course, looking back it it would have been quite a useful training to have because I could have gone, done continuity as well, and in fact I resisted that like mad for some reason. Not the continuity aspect but the shorthand and typing, I felt for some reason it was going to pigeonhole me, perhaps quite wisely in fact.

[20:18]

AL: You were right in that period.

Yes, yes. I think, think that's right. I think that's right, yes.

Well anyway I mean you'd had a course and you wanted to get on and work and get a job.

Yes, yes, yes.

And none came more or less.

So I, so I went to Crown. And I remember Pentiac Jack [ph 20:36] I remember Penty quite clearly.

So Adelaide Pentecost her name was.

Do you know I never knew her first name I don't think. Yes, yes. And she was a small lady with frizzy sort of iron grey hair with a certain amount, it was going white, it was going white. And she was, I remember her being very physically sort of active, she would bustle around the place. And there were about...

Do you know if she got an MBE for her work as librarian?

I think I did know that, yes I think I...

Or an OBE or something like that, I think it was MBE for her work at Crown Film Unit.

I think I did know.

And of course, she'd been a neg cutter in features years before.

Yes, yes, I think I did know that. And I, I, there were about four of us trainees at that particular time.

So who did you have with you?

Well there was a Mrs Ford, who was, I think was the secretary, the secretary or general sort of help, assistant to Penty.

That's right.

And there was somebody called Brian who was local, a big sort of red faced young, I mean he was a boy, let's face it.

Yes I remember him vaguely yes, Brian somebody.

And then there was Mike Bachelor.

Mm, mm.

AL: Oh yes.

And...

AL: Bert's son.

Bert's son, yes.

And then there was Sheila Grierson.

Mm, mm. Grierson's neice?

That's right. And me.

And you?

Yes. And me, and me. And it was in a way it was like going back to school [Laughter] in some funny senses, and I think one of the overriding feelings I had at Crown, which was a real shame, was being outside of everything. Because I began to, I mean I began to get a feel of what the film business was like and we... I mean one of the first things I did, we were given, I don't know how quickly we were given negative to handle, but this is obviously a memory that stands out because of its awfulness was that I dropped the centre out of a thousand foot of negative.

Well we all did that.

Oh right really? I thought it was the most terrible thing that ever could happen to anybody really.

Oh yes, yes, yes.

Yes, yes, yes. And, and when you think of it the getting it back was so awful wasn't it?

Oh a nightmare, absolute nightmare.

Because you could, you could put tramlines on it.

Mm, yes.

Yes, yes, yes. And that was, that was awful. And, but on the whole I've got good memories of a lot fun, and the memory, one of the biggest sound memories was of *Instruments of the Orchestra* playing. It might, we must have been centred quite near the recording studio.

Well actually the 'Instruments of the Orchestra' was, was shot when we were still at Pinewood just the year before I think, and, but it was being dubbed and so on at Beaconsfield.

Yes, yes. And I think it was, I think a lot of people were very interested in it at that time.

Mm.

And I think Ken himself...

And Ken Cameron of course...

Yes.

Ken Cameron who recorded it, yes...

Yes, he was yes...

It was his sort of a showcase film wasn't it?

It was a landmark I think, a showcase film, yes, yes, it really very much was.

But I imagine that, you know, in the library you had, even if it was a frustrating job because you weren't involved in production at least you got to know how to handle film?

Absolutely, absolutely. And I...

And a lot of film too?

Yes. And it, I suppose it in a way that was, you know, incredibly useful because to feel comfortable handling film and winding it on the, on the flat rewinds was a, is, was very important, of course.

Mm.

And I remember Sheila and I talking about plans, you know, for the future, what, you know, how we wanted to what we wanted to do and, you know, direction was, was...

Your aim?

Was the big, the big issue but the first step had to be the cutting room really and truly. And at the time... Now what relation, was, was John Taylor a relation of the Griersons?

Yes. John Taylor was Grierson's brother-in-law, because John Taylor married Grierson's sister.

No, John Taylor was married to Barbara Mullen.

Sorry. Yes Donald Taylor was married to...

AL: Yes, yes.

That's right

AL: He was....

John Taylor was married to Barbara Mullen.

Yes.

And John Taylor's...

AL: Sister?

Sister married Grierson's... That's right, yes so it was his brother-in-law, yes, I got it the wrong way round.

Yes, yes, yes, that's right. And I... Well there were, I mean let's, let's think about some of the people that I remember from there. First of all I met Leon Clore.

Right.

Who after a while started giving me lifts because he lived fairly near, well comparatively speaking, and it was an awful journey. And I had, I can't remember, I have the feeling that I was there that terrible winter of '47.

[25:12]

Yes, mm.

But I'm not absolutely sure whether, whether it was.

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It was the early '47 we were, we were completely snowbound for months weren't we?

That's right, that's right, yes, yes. And anyway Leon was perfectly prepared to give me a lift but Penty didn't approve of this because it got me in about half past nine instead of nine o'clock. [Laughter] But I think we sort of overrode that a bit and, and lived with that. And I think that was fascinating travelling because when Leon would travel sometimes Max Anderson...

AL: Yes, oh wonderful, yes.

And also Lucia Krakowska [ph 25:48].

Yes, she was the, in charge of the foreign versions wasn't she?

That's right, yes. And a very glamorous lady I think, I found her so, yes.

Yes, she was yes, Lucia yes. I wonder what she did, did you keep in touch with her at all later?

I did for a while but after that, because she, she married a doctor as well and I remember that they went to Peckham but what happened to her later on I really, I really don't whether she stayed in the business. But I remember being somewhat overawed by this company that I used to sit with, I used to, there used to be fascinating conversations which I used to enjoy enormously. And so, and in the cutting rooms at that time was you, was Jos Jackson?

Yes, Jos Jackson, Pat Jackson's sister.

That's right, yes, yes.

Terry Trench?

Yes, oh yes, I can remember Terry very clearly, he was very tall, sort of biggish, but sort of slightly stooping gentle man, yes, yes.

Mm, mm. Yes.

And Jean MacKenzie.

Jean MacKenzie, yes.

And I don't know what happened to her, don't know what happened to her, whether she left when she had children.

Yes, I used to sort of kept in touch with her vaguely, she lived in Pimlico for a long time and she married a chap named Hawken, Jim, James Hawken I think his name was and she sort of obviously left the business.

Right.

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But I think her daughter possibly was in the business, except I've lost touch with them.

I've just realised I've, going back to the library I've lost, I've left out the most vital member of the library was Anthony Harvey.

Tell us about Anthony Harvey?

Because he was, he was a trainee at the same time and a fascinating boy but I think quite maddening, I mean he, he appeared to be the original butterfly mind because he, he used to hop around, he was interesting to talk to because first of all because of his past...

He was an actor anyway, he was a child actor.

He had been a child actor, he played Ptolemy in Gabby Pascal's *Anthony...*?

'Caesar and Cleopatra'.

Caesar and Cleopatra, yes, yes, yes. And he'd obviously, I mean he, we all must have been late teens I would guess around that, that time so we were all really quite young.

Mm.

And he had obviously given up on the acting and decided that he wanted a, wanted a future in production. But he didn't take the library very seriously and he used to madden Penty, he really, he used to play practical jokes I remember. And he would, Penty would stand there jumping up and down with rage at some of the antics. [Laughter] I wish I could remember the antics that he got up to but they were, I mean he, they were horrendous in her eyes and used to drive her up the wall. But he was quite an amusing character to have around at that, at that time. And then Tony got... Oh I remember he, that's right he invited me to the premiere. I don't why on earth I didn't go, he invited me to the premiere of Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet*.

Oh!

And I didn't go for some peculiar reason. I must have been nuts but I didn't anyway. And then, and I think it must have been after he left that he rang up and I couldn't go because he was offered a job at Gaumont British Instructional and he went to work in the cutting rooms and the library was a lot duller.

Was that Mary Fields?

That's right, yes, and he was, the library was a lot a lot the duller when he left.

Sure, yes.

And I, by this time, was continuing my habit of nagging, I mean it was obviously a feature of my young life was that I would... In fact a friend a lot later on asked me how I'd got on in all these fields and I said 'Well would you say I was pushy'? And she said 'Well in the nicest possible way yes'. [Laughter] And I used to go and see

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John Taylor and make his life a misery but he didn't see his way to actually letting me in the cutting rooms. And I can't remember whether Sheila got into the cutting rooms.

[30:05]

Yes she did didn't she?

She must have done but whether it was after I left or not...

Yes she became Jos Jackson's assistant, I remember.

Right, yes, yes. And John Reid was there, well because she married him.

John, John Reeve.

Reeve, that's right, and she married John Reeve.

She married John Reeve, yes.

That's right.

And then he went to Film Producers' Guild, no he went to Rayam [ph 30:24] didn't he, Rayam [ph 30:26]?

Yes, yes, yes. And anyway came the day when, when Tony Harvey rang me up and said 'Vivienne I've been called up, I've been conscripted, would you like my job'?

Oh really, mm?

And I had, by this time, felt that I wasn't getting vary far at actually getting in to it and I think Crown was entering in to a quiet period at that particular time, maybe you would remember that John more I don't know whether, whether the cutting room wasn't expanding, I don't know anyway.

No.

I think I gave up. And also of course, a big point about going to GBI was that it was a Elstree which made it a very much more civilised journey for me from Hendon, and I think actually I was going to get a rise as well so all in all the...

It made sense?

It was compelling really to, to go and do that.

Oh yes.

AL: They were at Elstree not, not Welwyn, they'd moved from Welwyn?

I think though they were at Welwyn.

AL: They had been at Welwyn, yes, at one time.

They were behind the Gate Studios.

AL: Oh there?

At, at Elstree, yes, yes.

AL: By the railway line?

[Laughter] Well and also in Bullham's [ph 31:30] Yard.

AL: Yes, oh yes, yes.

It was in Bullham's [ph 31:32] Yard, yes. [Laughter]

But just before we leave Crown Film Unit, I mean obviously it was quite a good training for you even though you didn't get in to production, yes.

Oh it was great, yes. I mean I...

And you got, the great thing about Crown was you met so many people there connected with the film studios.

Yes, it was, I was very, very reluctant to leave because I think I was aware of it, very aware of its historical significance and it, you know, the significance that it had played during the war. And there were a lot of fascinating people, and I think I was, I mean I think one of the frustrations for me was realising that I had almost by chance happened upon a, the prospect of a very fascinating career and world really.

Mm, yes, mm. Well it established that in your mind.

Yes, yes, oh very much so. And, you know, I think one of the things was I was absolutely dying, you know, I think, I could hear from, from the library I could hear conversations in the cutting room, I could hear [Inaudible 32:30] going backwards and forwards.

Well it was exactly the same as my own experience because I was in the library for eighteen months, you know, a few years before you and I was going through the same hell trying to get in to the cutting rooms and eventually it happened.

Yes, yes, yes.

And thank God for that, you know, but it took an awful long time.

Yes.

And I felt I was wasting my time but on the other and I was learning...

Absolutely.

Handling film and, you know.

Yes. And learning to look at film, all sorts, yes, yes.

Look at film, think about it, talk about it and with all the people there when I had the opportunity.

Yes. And when you were looking out material when you think about it you were also beginning to...

That's right, yes, yes.

Yes, yes.

And working with clients who came in for doc shots and so on.

Yes, that's right, yes, yes.

AL: So when did you actually pull out and go to GBI?

In 1948.

Forty-nine was it?

AL: Forty-seven?

No that's mine, there it is. Was it '49?

Forty-nine yes, yes, yes. Can we cut for a second?

AL: Yes sure.

We're off and away? Yes, now tell us about your last days at Crown Film Unit and before you were off to GBI?

Well I think, you know, one of the things about Crown was that it was frustrating but it also motivated me because I began to see the world that I had entered, which was to me quite fascinating. I mean it, it'd be, I think I had a, sat in on a dubbing and that was an interesting experience.

Mm.

And also...

Can you remember who was the editor, it would have been Jos or somebody, it probably was?

Mm...

Anyway it doesn't matter.

Oh gosh I can't remember now.

Mm.

I think...

Anyway you, you'll...

And I think Ken Scrivener did it.

Oh yes, Ken, Ken Scrivener was a dubbing, mixer.

Yes, yes that's right, yes.

Very good, he was Ken Cameron's number one.

Absolutely, yes, yes, yes. And also saw the stage, which was, which was...

Newly, newly restored.

Sorry am I going...? Yes, I also store, saw the, the sound stage which I found...

It had just been built hadn't it, rebuilt after the war, that's right.

That's right, yes, yes.

At vast expense. And were you there when Herbert Morrison came along to open it?

No I don't think so, no.

He said, do you know what he said to you, said to us all? 'Good luck to you in your careers at Crown Film Unit'. [Laughter]

Yes, I'm...

[35:00]

AL: Five months later t closed. [Laughter]

Yes, yes, yes. And I think...

Ironic.

And I think in a way it was an odd start because really there was no other documentary film unit like it was there?

Oh no.

Vivienne Collins
Tape 1 Side A

And certainly as time went on, you know, the companies I worked for were smaller and smaller and so...

Well me likewise.

Yes, yes, yes. And it was, in a way it was a sort of a false introduction to the documentary film world at any rate.

No, to be fair actually I went to British Transport Films but it was only a quarter of the size of Crown Film Unit, I mean Crown was the big one.

Yes, yes.

Wasn't it?

Yes, yes.

I suppose you could call Film Producers' Guild which was a, a group of film companies, that was a thing in itself, that came later anyway as far as you were concerned.

That's right, yes.

Yes. Now tell us about moving to the small GBI?

Well GBI [Laughter] I mean was really quite funny because it was sited behind the Gate Studios in Bullham's [ph 36:00] Yard.

Oh.

And you really wouldn't find it unless you knew exactly where you were going looking for it.

Mm.

And I, I remember, I mean I'm sure it had a proper entrance but I can remember most often going up in to it through the fire escape, and that seemed to play a big part in my life there because...

Going up the fire escape?

Yes, yes, yes. [Laughter] And again it was quite an active unit but of course, no, not the, not the facilities that Crown had. I mean there were plenty at that time of course, there was a lot going on at Elstree and so that it was a fascinating time to actually be at Elstree but not so far as GBI were, GBI was concerned. I went to work for a very nice men called Mickey Boyd who...

Editor, yes, mm, Mickey Boyd yes.

Yes. You can remember him?

Yes I've met him, yes.

Yes, because, you know, I haven't really seen him for many, many years, I don't know what happened to him and when, you know, he'd be quite an age now I guess.

Mm.

And there were... Now wait a minute. Yes, let me, let me recall some names. There was Darell Catling.

Yes.

AL: Oh yes.

Oliver Cheatle.

Yes.

Derek Hyde-Chambers.

Yes.

Cyril Randell. So, you know, he'd had a big staff when I come to think of it.

Indeed.

And yet it doesn't strike me as being a big building. Anyway that's by the bye.

Were they on the sort of staff as it were – those people – or were they...?

As far as I...

They probably came in on a, on a film by film basis then.

No, you see that's very interesting you should, you should actually remark on that because that brings back one of my memories. And there was also somebody called Jack Baldwin, and Mickey and Jack were quite friendly, and I remember we would be working on probably three or four films but my memories of, of GBI are of, well actually very contrasting memories. One of Mickey saying 'Well I don't think we better do any more cuts today we'll, we'll do ourselves out of work', and so doing a couple of cuts and putting the cans away.

Yes.

So, but you see that's in answer to your question people were on staff.

Mm.

Vivienne Collins
Tape 1 Side A

Very much on staff at that time. And obviously people were worried possibly about there not being enough work, although Mary Field was around and we did make children's films.

But Mary Field was the boss was she?

Yes.

Mm.

At that, and we'd, but...

Who else did she have as a...?

We did actually make children's films. Maybe she went to...

AL: Children's, Film Foundation?

Children's, Film Foundation.

Film Foundation.

While that happened because we did, I don't think she was the boss, I think she must have been at the Children's Film Foundation by then.

Mm.

AL: Well who was in charge then perhaps in GBI?

There was Harold Goodwin was one of the producers. I can't just, no I can't remember.

Well no matter at the moment because, you know, what were the films then...?

I can remember working...

What films were you working on, what sort of films were you doing? Because I, I associate GBI with those lovely nature...

AL: Yes.

Natural history films.

Well I...

But those are mostly pre-war weren't they?

AL: Yes they were actually.

Vivienne Collins
Tape 1 Side A

Yes, they were well known. We were working on a variety of things, I think we were working on a film about trains, sponsored films.

Mm, sponsored film makers, yes, mm.

And then I went on to work on a children's feature.

Oh did you?

I think Nicky must have, which Phil Randell was cutting it and I think Mickey probably worked as dubbing editor. And I remember us working all the hours, really that was my sort of initiation into working all night.

Right.

In fact.

AL: What was the work, do you remember its name – the second feature?

Mm. [Pause] I keep getting confused because I later on cut a children's film and I can't remember what this one... Unbong Chappie [ph 40:12] was the director by the way.

[40:14]

AL: Oh well we can phone him up.

I think it was a, it was about, there was some skiing in it but I cannot remember the name of it.

Where did you do your sound recording, and did he, I mean obviously you didn't have a sound department there at GBI as such but you to one of the studios?

We went to one of the studios.

To Harold King or one of the...?

Yes, I think we, we may have gone to ABPC possibly.

Oh ABPC?

Possibly yes.

Yes.

And, yes, so the really, and I remember starting to hear the name John Davies around at that time.

Ah.

Vivienne Collins
Tape 1 Side A

And fear started to be in the air because John Davies, he must have, I don't know when he took over at Rank but there were by then stories about his cost-cutting were beginning.

So therefore you felt you were under the axe or possibly?

Well I don't know, I think there were just feelings of, you know, fear.

Fear, yes, yes, mm.

Around actually. I...

Now you were actually, you were assisting to begin with but you say that you, you started editing there did you?

No, oh no, no, no.

Or no?

Oh no, that was much later on.

That was much later on, yes, mm.

Much, much.

So you were assistant editor?

I was a very much a new assistant, yes.

AL: What kind of equipment did they have at GBI in the cutting rooms?

They had...

Moviolas?

Moviolas, yes. And...

Acmiolas and Moviolas probably?

Yes, yes.

AL: You did have Acmiolas?

Yes, yes, I think so. I think so.

And I suppose just the standard equipment really whatever...

There were the usual synchronisers and, yes, yes.

From Blacktest, but was before...

Vivienne Collins
Tape 1 Side A

Yes, yes.

This was before magnetic so you, mm...

Oh very much so, yes. Oh that was where I think I began to learn to bloop.

[Laughter]

Which was then the, the assistant editor's nightmare.

Yes, that's right, we all went through that until we got...

Because I think I must have had to learn pretty quickly on this children's film I would guess.

Mm, mm, true.

Because I, as I say, I have a feeling that that's what I spent most of my time doing endless...

Tell us about blooming?

Blooming?

How did you do that, I mean how did...?

AL: I'll stop you there.

[End of Tape 1 Side A 42:20]

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

Tape 1 Side B.

So tell us...

AL: Vivienne Collins Side Two.

Ah, so, so tell us about the art of blooping, the craft of blooping?

Yes. Well I think I must have had a, a baptism of fire...

What was the point of blooping?

Well blooping was that where there was a join in the sound and the join, and it was, well whether it was cut on modules or not on modules there had to be a way of cutting out that 'bloop', that noise that you got between, between, between two joins.

Mm.

And I don't know who, who had evolved this terrible method but what the poor assistants had to do was very carefully bloop every join, and if you were shooting, and in this particular case this was the equivalent of a feature film so there would have been seven, eight tracks at least probably, and you had to go through a thousand rolls of 35mm film, because we were very much shooting and cutting on 35mm in those days, you had to go through thousand foot rolls of this blooping every joint. And in those days I'm pretty certain we did it with ink. And what you did you did it with, mm, an ink that would not wash out am I right in saying?

Quick drying?

AL: Yes, quick drying.

But quick drying, but not always quick drying enough because you, if you wound on too fast you would smudge it and you would ruin, you would both ruin the bloop and ruin the, ruin, ruin the track, so you could be quick but not too quick. And you had to do a kind of slash smooth diagonal line that took in the join as far as I remember. And it's probably something I've deliberately blocked it out of my mind I would guess.
[Laughter]

No it's not surprising, yes. And then the other way of doing it was using this black tape...

I think that came a bit later.

Little, little triangles of it.

Yes, yes.

Little triangles we had of it, yes.

Yes, yes.

Perhaps that came later, yes.

I think it came a bit later but it was actually a much easier way of doing it because you can cut off a lot of little triangles and hang them on the edge of the tapes.

Yes, little triangles, yes.

And then you, yes, yes. Why nobody, nobody ever did elect to cut bloop, bloops did they? You couldn't ever buy cut bloops, not as far as I can remember, not as far as I can remember.

Not that I know of, yes, mm.

Anyway it was, that was one of, that was one of the nightmares. And of course, the other aspect of sound cutting was that if the editor made a cut that he wasn't happy with, or the director wanted changed you immediately your, the assistant's first job was to order up another print of that, of that soundtrack.

Mm.

And that...

Well this applied of course...

And of course, the other aspect of it I've just remembered is that you would order from, from cutting copy dialogue or possibly just the...

Yes the dialogue, yes and backing.

You would order up complete new prints.

Yes, they used to mid cut didn't they, the, the final commentary and the final dialogue?

That's right, yes. And that was just another...

And those were automatically blooped.

Oh were that?

AL: Within the patch.

Ah that's right, yes, yes, yes, yes. So it was, in those days it was a hugely extravagant way, a lot, I mean I'm sure...

There was a lot of film involved wasn't there, yes, mm?

There was a lot of film involved indeed, yes, yes.

But that was that side, the sound side, and the picture side too I mean there was always this business of having to order up reprints.

Or, I mean lots of blank frames.

Yes, that's right. Because I mean in re-cutting you would have, and you built up, you were...

That's right.

You lost frames.

That's right.

Because there were no butt joins in those days were there?

Absolutely not, no.

Did, did you, were you a good assistant, were you, were you efficient?

[Laughter] That's a good question.

But some people hated it didn't they?

You see it's interesting. I think that I, I was not bad. I remember breaking rush, breaking down rushes and labelling all the, all the cans quite well. I think, you know, I think I often would learnt it paid perhaps not to be such a good assistant because you didn't get landed as an assistant for so long if that was, in that case. But I think, you know, I was a good compliant girl so I was, then I learnt to become a reasonable assistant. But...

And so you worked with Boyd, Mickey Boyd?

Yes.

And...

And, as I say, Sue...

Sue Arandale [ph 04:30] yes, mm, mm.

Sue Arandale [ph 04:31] I think Seamus Hill must have been there, there were various people that I met there. There was somebody called Pat Wilson, who I'm still friends with in fact. She later became Pat Evans and then Pat Ingram.

Mm, mm.

Did you know, oh you weren't, you weren't at the Guild were you?

No.

No? So you probably wouldn't have known John Ingram either, no. So I, I'm still in touch with Pat. In fact I have, I have it in mind to, to do a recording of her one of these days.

[05:03]

Oh good idea, yes, mm.

Because she's had a most interesting career actually. So yes I really became, learnt to become an assistant at that stage. And at that stage my love life began to impinge actually because I was then going around with Henry, who as you know is my husband of many, many years, how we've survived is another question. But he was a medical student at that time and what I now understand was probably jealousy and, not mistrust if you like, began to get very uptight about the whole nights I was working on this children's feature film and began to say 'You should get more money than then', because I was a trainee I was a second year trainee. And I can't remember what overtime we got but it was very inadequate I think.

AL: Very.

In comparison.

AL: Probably half a crown would surprise me.

Yes, yes, yes. And we were literally working all night on this particular film. And he began to make a lot of noise about, you know, why was I accepting this, why didn't I go and demand more money? And there was somebody in charge of the cutting rooms then, his name was Oscar, Oscar something.

Mm, mm.

And, and I started my usual, new habit of nagging him [Laughter] about more money and promotion. He wouldn't give in, and I, I think I learnt a big lesson over this, I said 'Right I'll leave' without having another job to go to, which I think was a very, very stupid move actually because I was really having fun at GBI.

Mm, oh right yes, that's quite a drastic move isn't it, yes.

And, and it was, it was a very silly move actually but it was, it was a case allowing another influence.

So how long were you there in fact, how long did you work at GBI?

I was there for about a year.

Mm, mm.

And I was learning a lot quite quickly.

You were learning a lot because you were actually working the, properly in the cutting rooms so it was, it was a useful period.

Yes, yes, yes. It was very, it was very useful and it was very silly, as I say, what I, what I, what I did, and I landed myself up with a period of unemployment after that, which was a big lesson I think.

But I mean you were obviously a member of ACT and that sort of stuff.

Yes, I was a member, I was a trainee member of ACT at that time, and I think that was the first period I think when I was at GBI was the first period when we began to hear noises about a trainee scheme when, I don't know if you can remember that John...

Yes indeed.

When, maybe you'd got beyond being a trainee at that time, when they were discussing taking trainees in to all departments.

AL: Yes, that's right.

Which would have been wonderful. And, because I still had yearnings... Of course, the point that I forgot to make actually was that I did actually try to get in to the camera department at Crown as well. And I remember talking to some cameramen, I, I don't know whether I was actually talked to Martin about this, Martin Wilson, but I was told that 'We don't take women in the cutting rooms because they're not capable of hand, handling the the camera department.

Yes, the camera department at Crown was run by dear old Jonah Jones wasn't it?

Oh that's right, yes.

Mm, yes, he would be fairly...

Yes, and...

AL: Firm in his views wouldn't he? [Laughter]

The, the attitude was that we would not be capable of humping camera equipment, which was pretty hefty in those days.

Yes it was indeed, it was very cumbersome.

Glad because nobody told me about humping film cans, 35mm film cans which could be pretty heavy. [Laughter]

Yes they could, yes, I knew them, and dubbing tracks, my God yes.

But I think that, I think the camera department was pretty chauvinistic wasn't it?

Mm.

AL: Very.

Oh right, yes. [Laughter] I think that no we're not going to be invaded by women I think really, really and truly. And it's only beginning to happen now – what forty years later.

AL: Yes it was because of television.

Yes, yes, yes, and the five, probably the, the ability to move equipment around, yes so much more easily. So I really did myself in the eye by what I did at, by leaving GBI.

Mm, so that was 1951 or something?

Yes.

And so you had a...

And that was around the time I got married actually.

Yes right, so possibly it was nice to have a bit of a break?

Well I don't think it was because we were very broke.

So you'd be short of money.

We were, Henry was a film, was, was a medical student, he wasn't ever a doctor by then.

[10:00]

Oh I see, yes.

So I think he was, and maybe why he asked me to try and earn more money was so that I could keep him actually.

[Laughter] But it had the opposite effect, you know.

Yes it did, it certainly did, yes, yes. So it didn't, it didn't have the desired effect. And I had a period where again my uncle played an, an influential part about. I went to work and I really cannot remember the point of this, I mean the whole thing was quite crazy and I think, but I, I went to work at a dental equipment firm who decided they would quite like to start making films.

Oh really, mm?

Yes. And I started shooting some 16mm but really the whole exercise was, was really pointless because it never, it never came to anything. I wasn't experienced enough, they didn't know what they wanted so it never really, it never really came to anything. And I was on ACT's books of course, by then.

And so you were naturally keeping in touch every week?

I was keeping in touch, yes. And eventually I got a job at a very small company called Brunner Lloyd.

AL: Oh yes.

Who were in Denmark Street. And the, by then... It's interesting because Brunner was one of the, I never, I mean he just used to come in from time to time and he was very, a sort of rather glamorous character and he was one of the famous firm of Brunner.

Brunner?

And the, what were they?

ICI or something, yes.

That's right, yes, he was one of that family, yes, yes. And Mark Lloyd was the brother of Geoffrey Lloyd the MP, who was, he became, he was actually a minister at one point wasn't he?

Yes, he was a Cabinet, yes a Cabinet Minister wasn't he?

Yes, yes.

Can't remember what he did.

And Mark Lloyd, one always felt in a way, I mean I don't know whether he had a private income but one always thought he was a bit playing at film making really, really and truly. And we had these cutting rooms in Denmark Street and wasn't an incredibly active film maker, he always reminded me of Jack Benny, both voice and appearance actually, he was quite a good looking man and with a, with a fierce temper. And he obviously, I mean I've got very vague memories of the films that we made there. I can more remember the people, Erica Masters was there.

Oh yes I remember Erica.

And she worked for him from time to time as a production so we must have made films actually as a production manager. And the person who used to come up and down very frequently but not to work there was Walter Lasley [ph 12:50] who used to borrow, because Mark had cutting rooms and he also had camera equipment, and

Walter used to hire his camera, his equipment quite regularly. And I stayed there, and again I'm not really...

What were you doing, what sort of films, these were, these were technical films were they?

Sponsored, yes, sponsored technical films.

Sponsored technical, mm.

Technical films, yes.

Were they privately sponsored or through the COI, maybe they were public? It doesn't really mater does it?

Well it does but I, I can't, I fear it's made very little impression. I feel...

So you're shooting on thirty-five are you?

I was just going to say, you anticipated me John because that was for the first time I started handling 16mm.

And how did you find that?

I hated it.

[Laughter]

I absolutely hated it. I remember what I did, I had a most extraordinary activity there. Because I think, I don't know whether, I think Mark, and I don't know whether we should do this on tape or not, I think Mark was very mean and he objected to lab expenses and he tried to find a way of doing opticals without sending them to the labs and he got them to dip them, dip film into, into ink and try and build opticals through dipping it in ink, dipping it in ink. [Laughter]

That's intriguing isn't it?

Yes. Into, it must have been something like blooming ink or something like that, and I spent an inordinate amount of time and he got inordinately angry because I couldn't achieve it really. But we must have actually made some film because I actually was blooming there as well, in fact... Oh I remember, yes, yes, yes. I, I actually, Jill Craigie came in.

AL: Oh yes, yes.

And worked, and took a cutting room and I worked as her assistant on a film about women suffragettes. And in fact quite a fate of, well known woman composer...

[15:00]

Elizabeth Lutyens?

That's right, absolutely. How did you know?

Well there aren't all that many women composers and there weren't all that many women composers who were writing for the movies.

Yes, no you're absolutely right.

And she was one and then Grace Williams was the other.

Yes. No it was Elizabeth, it was Elizabeth Lutyens, that's right. And, and so there was a lot of library material in that film in fact, there was a lot of archive material about the suffragettes.

Mm, and it was all reduced to 16mm for cutting?

Yes, that's right, yes.

It must have been a fascinating film to work on?

It was. I'm not sure whether that on...

Maybe that was 35mm.

16mm. I think Mark's stuff was on 16mm, I've a feeling that that was on 35 John.

And was that being made for television or the cinemas so it was probably...It sounds as though it might be television.

It sounds as though it might have been television.

Bit early, no it would be.

And I don't know where the money came from that, or flowed from that in fact. But it was quite interesting, it was an interesting film to work on in fact, yes, yes. And I noticed in your, in your sheets that Jill Craigie had been interviewed and only did two sides and I would have thought she'd actually...

AL: No, no.

Nothing much?

AL: It was a, well it's, it was very disappointing, you, when... It was, we must go and have a word with Rodney, he's the, who did the interview.

Right.

AL: She was very...

Teesler? [ph 16:15]

AL: Yes, helped Rodney with that and she wasn't very co-operative. [Laughter]

Oh really?

Oh shame, I didn't know that.

Oh right.

AL: Have a word with Rodney, it'll be there.

Oh yes, yes, yes, yes. So again that was, that was a very interesting experience because, you know, she was quite a well known woman.

Yes.

At that time.

Oh she was, indeed she was, wrote all... [Inaudible 16:42]

Yes, that's right, yes, yes, yes.

She'd made some quite distinguished movies hasn't she?

Mm, mm.

Early, just earlier. And she worked with us at Crown for a time.

That's right.

I can't remember what the film was that she made there but I remember she did do something.

Yes, yes, yes. So...

Anyway that must have been an interesting break for you.

It was interesting.

And you were there for, you were there from, for a few weeks?

It was a bit, it was a bit chaotic. Well I worked, you see I was there and I presume maybe that was why they employed me as an assistant, I, I really can't remember how it happened but they were, they were, it was cutting that...

That film, as I said quite a lot to do, yes.

In, in, it was quite rare. And there was a lot to do, I mean it was interesting. I think my library experience was helpful because I remember we had to, we had to get hold of a lot of library material for that, and again very interesting.

And that would be working with the, well newsreels I suppose and Crown library?

Yes, yes and people like Pathe and, yes, yes.

And Pathe, yes, mm.

Yes, yes. So, so that was, that was quite...

It would be interesting to see that film wouldn't it if we could dig it out. I wonder what it was called? I'd like to see that film.

AL: Well probably National Film and Television Archive will have it.

Yes, they'll have it, mm.

Yes, yes, yes.

If we could find the title somehow.

Yes, yes, yes.

So anyway what's next then? I mean were you finished the film, did you stay on there for a bit?

I did, yes I was there for a while and then, mm, I don't know, I cannot, do you know it's extraordinary I cannot remember whether Mark laid me off or whether then I was offered a job at, at Technical and Scientific. But anyway I went, that's where I went after that.

It's down the road from there.

Yes, over the umbrella shop.

Mm.

Over...

Oh yes.

Smith's the umbrella] shop.

AL: Smith's the umbrella, oh over there?

And you walked past it.

Is that where they were?

Yes. Oh yes it was before they went to Hanway Place, because they later moved to Hanway Place which is just also the other side of Oxford Street wasn't it? That's right, yes, yes. It was...

Who was in charge of Technical and Scientific?

Dennis Ward, he was a doctor, scientific doctor of some description, yes, yes. And that, I went to work for a lady called Pam Bosworth.

AL: Oh yes.

Yes?

I know her name, yes?

AL: Yes.

Yes, yes, yes. Who was lovely to work for she really was. And a very unusual woman, very calm, didn't get heat up as I remember it in the cutting rooms. And that's where I met Peter Morley.

Mm, mm.

Who was in the cutting rooms at that time without a ticket. [Laughter]

[Laughter]

I had particularly cleared that with him, I said 'is it alright to say that Peter'? And he said 'Yes', he said he spread it on his own material.

[Laughter] An interesting point in history, yes.

And he couldn't go to his own dubbings because of that. [Laughter]

[Laughter] How funny, yes.

Yes, he was, he was cutting. And who else was there?

Of course, he was originally, he was at, worked at Merton Park didn't he, Peter Morley? Wasn't he in, in the projection department?

In projection, that's right, he was, he was in the projection box there, yes.

So this must about be about his very first job then?

Probably.

Mm.

But he was cutting by then.

And in the cutting room.

He was actually cutting by then.

Oh was he? Yes, mm.

At the time I went there, yes, yes, yes.

Mm, 16mm again was it here – there?

Yes, yes it was.

And can you remember the films, the subjects that you were working on there?

Isn't it awful, do you know...?

So were they, were they Technical and Scientific ultimately?

Yes, yes. And I think I, that's where I began to work on Coal Board films and things like that.

[20:00]

Oh did you, yes?

But then you see that doesn't make sense does it because there was a Coal Board...?

Coal Board film unit, yes.

Film unit. But...

But they probably farmed stuff out quite regularly as indeed did British Transport.

And I worked on a lot of, a lot of car films but that was later on, that was at Merton Park. Now we, I remember working on a big film with Pam, but do you know I cannot remember what that was.

But, so you were obviously assistant editor and Pam was editing.

Pam was editing, she'd been editing. She wasn't at... I mean how old was I then? I must have been about twenty-one.

Mm.

I suppose Pam must have been about twenty-five.

Yes, right, mm.

And I thought she'd achieved a lot because she was obviously, you know, she appeared to be a very, or quite an experienced film editor by then, yes. And we, I think we were working on films for Shell.

Mm.

And, as you say, fairly, fairly technical stuff.

Mm.

I'm just trying to think who was writing there at that time. There was Rob Evans, who was actually Pat Wilson's husband who I'd known from GBI. You, I began to realise what a closed world it was where everybody tended to know everybody else.

Typical, that's right, yes.

Yes.

And I was thinking that of course, Technical and Scientific had been part of the Film Producers' Guild.

Yes, oh it was.

So therefore you presumably got to know the other companies a bit did you?

Not that much, it was very cut off. We went to, we went to Merton Park for recording.

Mm.

We did go to Merton Park for recording, but it was very cut off in other ways. I remember one amusing part, I must have got married, either got married at the beginning of that period or, or was married when I went there but I know Dennis Ward insisted that I be known by my married name, he said he wasn't having anything not known about... [Laughter]

None of this mm...

None of this...

None of this artistic thing, you know, keeping your maiden name? Yes. [Laughter]

[Laughter] Yes, yes, yes, that's right.

Mm.

And it got quite confusing for a while in fact, yes. Except that I didn't actually have many credits to my name before that I don't think anyway. [Laughter] But it was, there were various other things that happened which, you know, in fact were very significant. Because I can remember... I mean it was an interesting place, it was, it was above the umbrella shop so by peering down you could see New Oxford Street.

Yes.

And various things. And there was also a paper-seller on the corner, and I don't remember how we heard it, whether it was through the, through the paper-seller shouting or that somebody had a radio but we heard that George VI had died.

Oh right, yes, 1952, mm.

Yes, yes, while I was in the cutting rooms there. And the other significant thing that happened to us was Henry qualified and arrived downstairs outside the umbrella shop. He came in a taxi, which meant he must have felt very rich because we weren't very rich [Laughter] and he was drunk as well because he'd just qualified.

[Laughter} Ah yes.

And I always remember Peter, Peter Morley remembers as well, him handing a handful of change to the taxi driver and someone saying 'Take what you want, you can take what you want' [Laughter] sort of thing, yes.

Yes, yes.

And who else was there? I'm just trying to think who else was there. There was somebody who later became quite significant at Shell, Derek, Derek Williams? Or BP I think he became.

Derek Williams? There was a Derek Williams.

It was Derek Williams, yes.

AL: He was a cameraman.

Yes. And he later become, he was a director/cameraman.

Yes, mm.

That's right. And he, he did some work, he did quite a lot of work.

He did, yes, mm.

And I think in fact Peter cut for him, Peter Morley cut for him. And so I think we were very tied up with...

What were the cutting rooms like there above the, above the umbrella shop? Were they nicely equipped?

Well it was a sort of big joint cutting room. I think we both cut in this long...

Large room with...?

A large sort of room. And it wasn't, you know, I think it took quite a lot of accommodation because we both, they both cut in the same room.

AL: Of course the 16mm helps quite a bit.

Yes.

AL: And it doesn't take up so much space but...

Yes, but it, you know, by the time you've got...

AL: Chaos?

Your, your, [Laughter] what, what's the word? Your, your tubs your...

Bins?

Your bins, by the time you've got your bins taking up room and probably not enough rewinds...

Most films, I suppose in those days you were mainly shooting silent stuff and with commentary and narrative and so on. Or did they, did they do quite a lot of synch, did they do synch shooting on, on the 16mm?

[0:25:00]

I think my main introduction to synch shooting was at Merton Park.

Was later, yes.

Yes, I think you're absolutely right, I think...

AL: I don't think they did synch shooting on, on...

Sixteen as early as that.

AL: Not at that time, I don't think so.

No.

No, mm, no probably not.

No, that, no I think you're absolutely right.

So that's what made it made it more manageable so you were dealing with commentary and music tracks and so on you weren't having a complex...

Yes, yes as opposed to the commentary and, and effects...

Yes.

And so on. And I think I began to learn about music, about recorded music as well there. You see I think at, at GBI, particularly for the childrens' film, we were having composed music.

Oh were you, yes?

At that time, yes were children, were childrens' film...

Yes, that's the one you were doing before, yes, mm?

Yes, yes, had reasonable budgets didn't they? I mean they weren't huge but they did have reasonable budgets and they, and they had actors. So again, you know, I was, I suppose in a way I didn't really appreciate it at the time but I was getting quite a variety of experience really.

Of course you were.

Really and truly.

So how long did you stay with T&S?

Well, the main, first big disaster of my life happened at, at T&S. I mean there was quite a staff there in fact, I mean it was funny because it was a little maze of rooms.

Mm.

And there must have been quite a few secretaries, there were one or two people writing, as I say there was Bob Evans, there was Derek Williams, I can't remember who else. But I remember that that was the days of the mobile X-ray units and we were told that a mobile X-ray unit was coming and everybody said 'Well', you know, 'I'm not going to have one of those', and I, as the wife of the newly qualified doctor in all by big-headedness, said 'Oh yes, there's nothing to it', you know 'come on let's, you know, let's all go and have one'. And I went and had one alongside most people, I don't know how many went but, you know, in the end I, I remember I persuaded quite a few of the office staff to go.

Yes I remember that.

And we went and had these, had an, had X-rays. And I remember we were due to be going on holiday with this particular, particularly influential uncle and aunt in my life, this sort of youngest uncle of mine. And Henry was, in fact I say I was the wife of a doctor, in fact he hadn't... I don't know if he'd actually qualified that week but it was all incredibly new. And we, I had a card saying would I come back and be X-rayed again? And we wondered what this meant and somebody said 'Oh well it probably means, you know, there's a button showing or there's, you know, they, they've fogged the film or something or other.' And in fact Henry phoned up the authorities and they said 'Well, you know, we think you should get your wife another X-ray because we think she's got a cavity'. And when he explained that he was a newly qualified doctor they said 'Well, you know, if you can get an X-ray at, at Middlesex

it'd be much quicker', Middlesex was where Henry had been a student at the Middlesex Hospital.

Oh right.

So it was all very much in the area. So I always remember, I mean this is a very vivid memory in my, in my mind, the, he took me along and they got me an X-ray, the Resident Medical Officer, who was actually Henry Yellowlees who later on became very big in the Ministry of Health I think he became, I can't remember what he was but he became somebody quite high up in there. Anyway at that stage he was the RMO and he got the X-ray and he and Henry went and looked at the X-ray and Henry all, has always said, and I can remember sort of ticking clock and sitting there, you know, one of these sort of typical on tenterhooks because by then I began to realise it was, something was going on. And Henry always says he, it was a very strange feeling looking at an X-ray and realising that your wife has a hole in her lung. And so the way I left GBI and Technical and Scientific...

Technical and Scientific, yes.

Was actually to go in to hospital.

Because you had to go to hospital, yes.

Yes. And it was all a bit hysterical because there was a consultant at the Middlesex who originally said he would take me in to the Middlesex Hospital, his name was Doctor Beaumont and he was sort of quite well known at that time. But what they decided eventually was that I should go in to Brompton, the Brompton Hospital.

Mm, mm.

Which I went somewhat hysterical about because I had remembered it as this terrible hospital in the Brompton Road with these, these, this nameplate 'Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest'.

[Laughter]

And you have to remember that in days, those days...

AL: A lot of Consumption, yes.

TB was a very frightening illness. And it was before it had got wiped out as well, and so I ended up in the Brompton.

[30:06]

Mm.

And it was, I mean looking back on it an extraordinary experience.

How long were you there for?

I was in hospital for four months and then I went to a sanatorium for four months.

Mm, quite a big break in your life wasn't it, mm?

Can, can we break now?

AL: Yes, sure.

Pick, pick up in hospital as it were, or coming out of hospital.

Yes, yes, yes.

Could you...? You know, yes. Are we running?

AL: Yes, yes.

It was, it was, it was an extraordinary experience in a way and I, and looking back on it perhaps something I wouldn't have missed because I, I learnt that in a way I was, was really quite lucky because TB was still a very active disease in those days, although they'd discovered Streptomycin and PAS. There were a lot of girls of my sort of age in the early twenties who'd, who'd really got ruined lives whose both lungs were affected and who, if they undertook too much effort in their lives in all probability would break down. But one of the first things that was said to me was that I was a very atypical type, I was sturdy, well nourished. And I, as I said to Henry it was marriage that had, the worry of marriage, managing a flat and having a job which had made me ill. And, and in fact once I was in hospital I did start to recover. But what was the other thing that was very interesting was I was put on what was then a miracle drug, something called INAH, which was, well it was, it was known as a miracle drug and I was treated on it and the cavity closed up very quickly. And then I was given the option, but by Doctor Beaumont after four months in hospital of going home or going to Frimley, which was the Brompton's sanatorium. And really Surrey in those days was peppered with sanatoria, I mean, you know, that was, that was the days when they still existed.

And I made the odd decision in some ways of going to the sanatorium because I knew if I went home to my mother that I, in a way, by the way she would look after me by our lack of knowledge I would be turned in to a lifelong invalid. And so we made the decision that I would go to the sanatorium. And that was, I was there throughout the winter of '52/53 which was the smog winter. And I learnt how to, I swept leaves, I walked up to seven miles a day, and the people used to come down from London looking grey and wan and I was healthier than I had ever been in my life except for my terrible chilblains because they used to have windows open, it was still the days when they believed in fresh air for TB at all costs, yes, yes. And the other interesting story which used to permeate the... The, the males and females were separated except for social days and things, [Laughter] and there was this rumour that went the rounds that if you had TB you had a highly sexual sort of drive.

Oh right, yes. [Laughter]

So that used to, that used to, it used to go the rounds. [Laughter] But it was, in a way it was quite a fun time because it was, it was very restricted and very structured but it was quite... And it was a way of, of actually shedding enormous amounts of responsibility.

I know, yes, making a virtue of necessity as it were?

Absolutely, yes.

By having a nice break.

Yes, yes.

And getting to know a lot of different people from different walks of life?

Indeed, indeed yes. I was, I was with a Turkish, delightful Turkish girl who came from some sort of high, high powered very wealthy family, and in fact Henry used to get lifts down with her very good looking brother who used to come down from, from the Kensington area.

Yes.

So in a way when I came out of hospital it was very, very strange, it was very odd because you'd been surrounded by people and suddenly...

When suddenly...

It was quite isolated.

In home, where were you living?

We were told not to go back. We were still, we were living at Thames Ditton.

Yes.

At that time. We had a, had a flat there when we got married, quite a nice little flat, and really I was told at that stage, it was suggested that I didn't go back to work for a while, it was also suggested that I didn't have children for a while, so the whole combination for me who needed to be active...

Mm, bit of a pity.

Was quite frustrating.

To say the least.

To begin with, yes, yes.

Mm. I expect you were getting in touch with ACTT to find out what was going?

Indeed, indeed, indeed.

I'm sure you were.

Yes. And the first job I was offered after that was a fortnight's work at Merton Park.

[35:00]

Oh yes.

Which from Thames Ditton was quite possible, there was a one very long bus ride which went from, I think from the bottom of the road at Thames...

Because they were turning out features weren't they at Merton Park?

They were doing a vast variety of things. They were doing, because they were a loosely conjoined group of companies.

Mm, with the Guild, yes.

And I went down, supposedly I think to fill in for someone who was on holiday because the, because the editor was quite busy.

Mm.

I went to work for Mickey Barton who worked for Ron Uali [ph 35:30] Associates.

Oh really, yes.

Yes.

Won a, RHR.

RHR, exactly, yes, yes. And, as I say, I went in for two weeks and stayed two and a half years.

Goodness!

Yes. And it was great, I mean I really enjoyed it. It was, it was a place of great variety, the old Scotland Yard films were still being made there I think.

Mm, mm. Yes they were. Jack Greenwood was the, who produced them, indeed, that's right, yes.

Yes that's right. And somebody called Richard, Richard Thomas, Richard something or other who was very active in them. And of course, there were a lot of interesting people there at that time. There was Humphrey Swingler.

Yes.

Greenpark

Who was Greenpark, yes. Ralph...

And now a man called Geoff Muller was cutting for him. And there was a girl called Pam Bunce.

Yes, oh I know her because she, she was at British Art Club Films, she was assistant editor before she married Humphrey.

Was she, but she was at... She married, but didn't she marry...?

She married, she, she...

She married Humphrey.

She became Pamela Swingler.

Oh yes I know that, but I thought she married while we were at, all at Norwood Park.

Maybe she did, mm.

Anyway she, you know, she...

She was for a short time...

It was all a great romance, yes that was, and I was quite friendly with Pam in the cutting, in the cutting, lovely, lovely girl, really a lovely girl really.

A nice girl.

And who else was there? There was Mickey, yes there were lots of, lots of people I can...

Buckland-Smith, was it Buckland-Smith, he was the producer at...?

Yes, that's right, yes.

Greenpark, G Buckland-Smith and Humphrey Swingler. And then there were of course, all the other companies.

Yes, in the wings. Oswald Skilbeck.

Skilbeck, yes Verity Films was it?

That's right, yes, yes.

Yes.

And so I started a very happy period really.

And so, but you were mainly with RH..., RH..., RHR that one, yes.

Yes, yes.

He was a nice man wasn't he, Ronnie Riley.

Ronnie Riley was lovely actually, he was very nice, a very nice man.

Was he mad on cars, cars wasn't he, he was keen on cars?

Well that's right, that's when I started to work on all these cars. And Mickey Barton was crazy about cars you see, and it was quite an interesting time because I learnt all sorts of technical stuff. We were working on films about the Nürburgring and so I learnt a whole lot of technical stuff about cars which didn't actually, you know, about...

So there were films made for the, for the racing industry were there? Or car racing, yes?

Absolutely, yes, yes.

And nice lengthy films on individual...?

Yes, for Shell.

For Shell? Yes, yes.

Yes, yes, that's right.

Interesting.

Yes. It was very, it was very interesting. And so we made quite a few films and we also made films for the...

Did you shoot those on, were they 35mm I suppose were they?

Yes they were, they were.

Or probably both.

They were both in fact.

So what were you, you were first assistant on these were you?

Yes, yes. And then we also worked, fairly soon after I got there we worked on some films for – what were they called? I don't think it was called 'The Gas Board' then but there were films for The Gas Board, and there was dialogue on those.

Mm.

So then again that was quite good experience as well, yes.

You had dialogue, yes and synch? Dialogue sequencing.

And Julian Bond was writing for... Do you remember, did you know Julian Bond?

I know the name.

Yes. He started doing a lot of, well he later on did a lot of writing for the BBC and he did, he did a lot of adaptations, quite well known big series on television he did, but he was really just starting out at that time and started writing one or two films that we were, that we were working on.

Mm.

And he was instrumental really in me starting to, to cut because he wanted me to cut something for him at that time.

Mm.

But I'm just trying to remember. There were, there were some of the other people that were there. There was also the Holding brothers, I don't know, were they later on?

AL: The Holdings?

Yes.

AL: Yes.

Derek Holding.

AL: Derek Holding, production manager, that's it.

He was in the cutting room at that time.

There was one in the cutting room wasn't there, yes?

Well perhaps the other one was in the...

AL: That's right, he was. One was in the cutting room, that's right, yes

Yes. And Derek Holding was doing a lot of dubbing I think in those, in those days, a lot of dubbing editing. Because, as you say, there were a lot of, there were features being turned out as well.

[40:08]

Yes there were, yes.

There was a lot of variety of stuff going on. I think Derek Hyde-Chambers came there at some point as well from, yes, yes.

Mm. It was a good place to be I should think for you, yes?

It was, it was,

Mm, you enjoyed it there actually.

I did a lot, yes I did. And it was int..., it was a good, good, good crowd of people. And, as I say, I took my first stumbling steps in to, in to cutting and I found that I got quite anxious about it I think to begin with, you know, I didn't feel...

AL: What cutting, do you remember the film?

I think it was one for The Gas Board and I think it was one... Oh, wait a minute, was it? Yes, it was one that Julian had written, that's right. But before that there was another Gas... Wait a minute, there was another Gas Board one with the wife of, oh Elspet Gray was in it, you remember she's the wife of what's his name? Brian, the guy from the Whitehall.

AL: Yes, Rix.

Rix, Brian Rix, mm.

Brian Rix, that's right, yes, yes. And she, she was very, she played a bride in it and I think she'd very recently been a bride in fact, and it was all about a new bride learning her way around the kitchen [Laughter] I remember, yes.

Yes.

And I can remember some tortured stuff about a young romance in the first film I cut but I'm damned if I can remember who it was for.

Because a lot of these films were being made through the COI weren't they I imagine?

Yes, yes. I mean when you think of it there was, I mean it was the day of the sponsored film wasn't it?

That's right, yes, and it was the early days of the Br..., of BISFA, you know, you know The British Industrial and Scientific Film Association.

That's right, and when you think about it...

Which was called something else at that point, and they used to have these festivals every year.

That's right.

They used to have at Harrogate or Brighton or somewhere.

And also...

Hundreds of films they used to show.

A massive event. And when you think of it it was the cradle of the feature film director, unlike today where the feature, the cradle is, is the advertising.

Is advertising a lot of it, yes.

And film and music promos. I mean those days all your well known directors like Lindsay Anderson and Schlesinger, all of those people came from, came from the, from the sponsored films.

Quite right, yes, from the small companies.

Yes, yes.

So many of them, it was a very period wasn't it?

That's right, yes. So, you know, the money was very much still around at that, at that time wasn't it?

Mm. We're talking about now sort of 1953/54 aren't we?

That's right, yes.

Mm, yes.

Well 50 some, yes.

So anyway you were the...

So I was there...

You had your couple of years there did you, or with Ronnie Riley?

I was there for two and a half years I was with Ronnie Riley. And, as I say, I started to edit and was sort of falteringly beginning to get some, some experience. And then, I mean when I think back I was, as I say I did work on some, on some dialogue, I also clearly worked on some, some commentary and effects films.

Yes, right, mm. And then music?

And I was with quite a new director, quite a new editor, and in 1955 the most extraordinary thing really happened to me. And if you ask my why it happened I actually cannot remember. I mean a name, a name is going to now come in to things that I haven't actually mentioned before, he was then very instrumental in my career moves and my career progress and I think that I actually must have met him at GBI, and that's James Hill.

AL: Oh Jimmy Hill?

Yes. And James Hill rang me up apparently out of the blue and offered me a childrens' feature at World Wide.

AL: I'm going to stop you there, sorry.

[End of Tape 1 Side B 44:30]

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

Tape 2 Side A.

So anyway...

Yes I got this...

AL: Hang on, hang on.

Sorry.

AL: Vivienne Collins Side Three. Right, okay.

Yes. I got this phone call out of the blue I, I think from James Hill, who I didn't know terribly well at that time. I think I'd met him socially from time to time because he was quite friendly with Patricia, Patricia Evans who I've remained friendly with over, over years, and he must have heard of my progress as well through her. But still he offered me a childrens' feature, which at my stage of experience was extraordinary.

To edit?

Yes, to edit. And I remember discussing it with my friends at Merton Park, and I don't know whether anybody gave me the advice that I would be crazy to take it, maybe they couldn't be honest enough. But I felt that it was an enormous opportunity, I mean it was intriguing to have this offer, and I don't know whether I ever thought through whether I was ready for it, and in many ways I really wasn't, and what in some ways made it worse was the fact that I was going in to a company and working in a cutting room where there were employed editors and I was not, the move was not really popular because I think, and I don't know why in fact Jimmy was given the power to do this because there were several editors at World Wide who were probably quite capable of doing it. And thinking about James and knowing his, his history and his reputation was it just because I was a woman [Laughter] I really don't know. But, you know, Jimmy had quite a reputation for, for womanising in fact, yes.

AL: Yes, yes.

A lovely man but a very strange man really in many, in many ways. And anyway I went to World Wide and to cut *Peril for the Guy*, which was this children's feature. And it was in very difficult circumstances because again World Wide had a cutting room in Old Compton Street on the top floor which again took in, it seemed to be a habit of those days, took in two editors and so you had to co-operate quite well.

Mm.

And I don't think, as I say, I was all that welcome. There was somebody called Ken, and I cannot remember his surname, who I think would have liked to have had this film and didn't. And Kevin Brownlow was there...

Oh yes.

As a very new assistant, was about eighteen, eighteen years old at that time and I think, I don't know if Frances Cockburn was there then. [Pause]

Because she was of course, connected with the COI wasn't she?

Yes.

AL: Oh yes, yes.

But she actually did cut film, for World Wide.

Well she was an editor in her own right in the old days, yes.

AL: Oh yes, yes.

Very much, she was at Crown at, Crown at one time.

Yes, yes. Anyway so I started on this film and it became evident that I wasn't going to be able to accommodate it in, I were to cope with it by myself or to accommodate it...

No you probably had a first, second assistant did you, or...?

Well what happened was that we realised we had to get a dubbing editor because there was a limited amount of time before editing was...

Well that's perfectly normal wasn't it having a dubbing editor anyway, I mean...?

Yes, yes, yes. And I, somebody was obtained off the ACT list who wasn't somebody I knew.

No.

And he was apparently a very charming man and we did a lot of post inking. And I remember these loops hanging up in the bins, and this gentleman used to enjoy his lunch times and he used to come back very late from his lunch and very much the worse for wear. And what I realised, because we were working at opposite ends of the room, what I largely realised was happening was that he would be synching up the loops and cutting them in some way and throwing away the loops in the bottom of the bins or in the, or in the junk and hanging up the synch marks. And I had an enormous struggle with myself, and I just didn't know what to do. I think I had a word with him about it and, you know, suggested that he didn't drink. But you see one of the things was, and it's very interesting to me because I think it affected my career very, very considerably, and I'd be interested really to talk to other women and know how much it happened, it affected. But women were not really brought up to be in authority and

I'd never had anybody working under me and I was used to being compliant and nice and I really didn't know how to handle it. But I re..., eventually I realised that I had got to do something about it because otherwise it was going to be disaster for everybody. So I went, I went and had a word I think with Johnny Price and every, [Laughter] both, I think it must have been Johnny Price because if I'd talked to Jimmy Carr about coming back that drunk from lunch it might have been rather embarrassing. [Laughter]

[06:00]

It wouldn't, well no. [Laughter] That's true, yes, mm.

So eventually I think he was actually got rid of, and do know I cannot remember who came in instead of him or whether Ken actually came in and we worked together on it. Anyway I mean the film went through and was quite a success.

Good, yes. And so you completed it to your satisfaction?

Yes, yes.

And everybody else's?

Yes, yes. And it did and I think it was very...

Mm.

It was very...

Sounds like quite a, quite an experience but...?

It was, it was quite an experience and I think I...

Anyway you were getting a, getting an editor's rate which was nice?

Indeed, that's true, that's true. I cannot, I can't remember what the editor's rate was at the time.

What in '53/54. Were they, was is it, was it Children's Film Foundation was it?

Yes.

So that would be at minimum rate wouldn't it?

Yes.

About twenty-five pounds was it or something? I was, I was getting twenty-five pounds or something like that at Group Three I remember.

Yes.

About, a bit, about that.

Because I remember shortly after that I was offered thirty-five by James Hill and that was absolutely a knockout.

That's right, yes.

And it was a knockout compared with what, [Laughter] what Henry was earning as well at that time, yes, as a, as a houseman too yes, yes.

Yes.

So I went on working at, at World Wide and, but everything after that was much simpler. I went, I worked with John Krish I remember.

Oh did you, yes, mm?

Yes.

Because he was with us for a quite a long time, British Transport Films, mm.

Yes, yes, yes.

Interesting man, yes.

And I worked on a film with him, which was more, much more commentary. And I remember this very clearly because I can remember working endlessly with John on commentary, you know, he, we would move a word up and a word down and, you know, sometimes we'd get past the point of no return.

Of course, he was an editor anyway wasn't he, John?

Yes, yes. So it was, it was quite a different experience actually from working with, with James on this with this ambitious film. But I think it was probably a bit of a rest cure and perhaps what I needed because I actually got pregnant around this time.

Oh right, yes

And...

It was all happening.

And yes, yes indeed. And so in January Ninety..., in January '57.

Fifty-seven?

Yes, I had my first son, Andrew.

AL: In 1957?

Mm, yes, yes.

And so that kept you busy for a bit?

It did indeed.

Apart from the cutting rooms?

We actually, it was a complicated time of life because we were moving house, Henry was going to work in the East End of London and we were, we were moving house and the house was actually was... I mean when I say house was being finished, being built, it was a... I mean it wasn't being built to our specifications but the fact was that we couldn't move in so we moved in with my in-laws for a few months. And after Andrew was born, and I think that that was a very instrumental point in what happened next because I, as was the wont of young wives and young mothers, particularly in those days, I had made no plans about going back to work, I hadn't really thought the future through. Henry was going to work in the East End having completed a year of being a trainee in Kingston, we stayed in Thames Ditton up to the time that Andrew was born and moved out directly afterwards and moved, as I say, in with my in-laws which, who lived at Cockfosters. And Henry was going in to the East End as an assistant, and I would think was earning somewhere around a thousand a year at that time which, or not much more, or not much more than that, which wasn't great.

[10:09]

Mm.

And we took, were taking on a mortgage for the first time in our lives. And when Andrew was about eight months old James Hill rang me up and offered me two films for BP. And my first response was 'I'm a mother, I can't work' you know.

Mm.

And then, I mean it's quite interesting isn't it really how, how things have changed? And then he said 'Well think about it', he said 'what you could do if you wanted', because he was making it under his own steam for BP as an independent. And he said 'You know, what you could do is you could come and work on rushes, break everything down, get it binned up, take, do a rough cut', then he said 'then we could take a halt and you could think again'. He said, anyway he was obviously prepared to be extremely flexible and so he said 'Think about it'. So I went away and I talked about it to Henry and then talked about it to my mother-in-law, with whom I was having a great fight over looking after my baby, because she was very anxious to look after him anyway.

[Laughter]

So it was a heaven sent opportunity for her to take him over.

Mm, I see, yes. [Laughter]

And so... [Laughter]

That's lovely.

So I, that's how I went back in to the cutting rooms actually.

Oh great, yes, mm.

Yes, yes. And I worked on two films for Jimmy simultaneously, one called *A Walk in the Forest*, which was about New Guinea I think, and another film about helicopters, something to do with helicopters and oil rigs I think.

Mm, mm.

Could it have been about oil rigs at that time?

AL: Yes.

Oh yes, very much so, yes they were coming in in the late '50s.

So I think, so I think it was, that was about that.

Mm, mm. These were for BP were they or...?

They were for BP. And I think I worked in a fairly, I cannot remember funnily enough which cutting room we worked in. I have a feeling it was Elstree or Barnet or somewhere out... I remember it was a very isolated cutting room.

AL: Barnet?

Could there have been anywhere? That's why I can't re..., that's why it doesn't make sense to be.

AL: Yes maybe Barnet?

No, you see it doesn't make sense.

Rather a long way for you to travel.

AL: It could have been Bushey.

No, no Barnet's terribly near Cockfosters.

Of course you were, of course you were.

Yes you see.

AL: It could have been Bushey.

No it wasn't Bushey, it would have either been, it would have been Elstree otherwise, it would have been Elstree. I mean it was a fairly isolated cutting room anyway, there weren't lots of people around because I remember, no, there were not lots of people around. It wasn't a studio, there weren't other cutting, you know, I wasn't conscious of many other people around at that particular time.

So those came out well did they those films, did they?

They did, they did. And they were, they were, you know, they were not too challenging in a way, I mean they were, we had composed music I remember, I mean, you know, that was so common in those days.

Oh yes.

And of course, BP's budgets were quite good weren't they on the whole?

AL: Very good.

They were very good. And he was very well in with, with BP at that time, he was, you know, he was regarded as a, you know, a...

Can you remember who composed? Because Edward Williams used to do quite a lot of work for the oil companies didn't he?

He did didn't he, yes?

Yes, it could have been him. Anyway it doesn't matter.

There was also an older man with, with a beard, I can't remember...

AL: What, a composer?

Yes.

AL: Not, Bill, Bill Orwin [ph 13:55]?

No, no, no. Can't remember it, no I can't remember, no. So no, so those films went alright. And after that we moved in to our house and I think that's when I really got a taste for, for going back to work. Because I think I became quite isolated. We, we lived in a small house in Woodside Park and had friends, a young couple next door, but I began to realise that it was really in a way my first taste of real domestic life.

AL: Bliss!

Yes, and I realised that, you know, in some ways it wasn't for me.

Mm.

And I was...

Perfectly understandable after all you'd been doing beforehand.

Yes. I could have, can we take a, a short break?

So we're going.

And I think between '57 and '58 I really began to learn about motherhood and, and looking after a baby and, but I think I by this time was much more open minded about the idea of doing some work. Unfortunately it was not an ideal situation because I think really looking back ideally part-time work is the best thing for women with children and there was no way that you were ever going to be able to cut films part-time.

[15:30]

Not really no.

So that I really had to decide whether I was prepared to disappear for, for some time but it was the days of the *au pair* and there were willing mothers in the background and so it was possible. And in 1959 Jimmy rang me up again and offered me *Giuseppina*, which was really quite a line up. I mean it was an interesting proposition because what came up was it was this film again for BP that he'd written for them and was going to shoot in Italy and it was a day in the life of an Italian petrol station. And it was delightful and it was being shot with some, well with Italian actors for a start and also with I think some, I think base of it, I think there, there must have been some Italian crew I would think probably for union reasons.

AL: There would be.

And it was based, it was actually shot in... Oh golly, where's the place of the, of the mosaics in Italy? Oh I can, I'll tell you later. Anyway on the, on the east coast and very famous and, but it was also, the base was Cinecittà in Rome, and it was proposed at one point that I go to Rome to cut it, but that never actually happened, and probably in many ways was just as well because I didn't have an additional decision to make about whether I actually would leave the family completely.

Mm.

But it was a wonderful summer, the summer of '59 I think which was a legendary summer, and I was stuck in this hot cutting room seeing all this beautiful stuff, all these beautiful rushes that were coming out of Italy. And it was a delightful film and the unit altogether were delightful because the, it was the, the basis of, of the story was this father with his very bored little girl who was Giuseppina, he ran this petrol station and she wanted him to do all sorts of exciting things with her in her sum..., probably her summer holiday, and he said that 'Everything happens here Giuseppina, you've only got to stay here and you will see life'. And so the film was shot in about probably four or five episodes, and each episode was a little contained story in itself. And it was delightful. And it was shot with a minimum of meaningful dialogue which, where Jim, Jimmy had been very clever in the writing of it. And at the beginning of the film Giuseppina is prevailing upon her father to take her to the, to the fair and he

said 'Yes, later, later'. And he was a delightful man, he sent me post cards throughout the, throughout the film so I actually felt I got to know him. I mean the sort of story that happened was that one of, one of the stories was that a British car drives in and it's, I mean it's very stereotypical, all the characters were very stereotypical and this British film, British couple drive in in their Morris Minor estate car with the old wood frame.

Mm.

And I can't remember what's wrong with the car but by sign language they decide, they explain that there's what's wrong I think, what? The rotor arm, I don't know what it was but basically... Now what was his name? I think he was Giuseppe, Giuseppe'll put it right. And what do the English couple do? They get out their picnic table, their umbrella and they sit down and they've had their lunch in the petrol station while he's repairing it you see and Giuseppina goes up and tries to talk to them so things happen in sign language. All, as I say, very Jacques Tati-ish in fact. And then at the end of this little sequence they wave goodbye and he drives out on the wrong side of the road and then you see the car receding and it suddenly swerves towards, towards the right hand side of the road. And, you know, it's all delightful.

[20:12]

Mm, yes. Jacques Tati, yes.

And then there's a sort of wonderful wedding sequence where the young couple are driving in a, their car. They're on their way to their wedding. I think it's the couple and they're in one of these little, tiny Fiats Chinq...

AL: Yes.

Cinquecento?

Mm.

Yes, Cinquecento, the old, the old Fiat 500.

Yes, mm.

And, and they drive in and they're hysterical and he takes them to the wedding and then you see, then you see the wedding. It's very clever, the way it gets you there and you have wonderful, with masses of Italian volatility, you know, and...

Lovely, yes.

And all delightful and open air. And so it really was a delightful film and it was a, you know, it was a...

Did they use some, they had artists do they for the...?

They did.

Like the English people in the film?

Yes, yes.

Character actors?

Yes, yes they did. It was, it was all...

Properly, properly staged, yes.

It was all staged in fact.

Yes.

And, and it was delightful and...

How long did it run, was it about an hour, was it sort of second feature length was it?

No, no, it was, I don't think it was, I don't think it was as long as that.

Oh perhaps not, mm, perhaps it was about forty minutes.

Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't.

Perhaps it was forty-five minutes.

Yes, something like that, yes.

Yes, I...

Yes, yes. And it won an Oscar, literally an Oscar.

Good for them, good for you.

At the, as the Best Foreign Film I think of the year.

Mm.

AL: Just who, I mean who got the Oscar - Jimmy?

Yes, yes, yes. So that was a, you know, it was, it was an interesting...

AL: I thought we've a tape to cut.

[Pause] Probably. We, I actually assembled the stuff while they were still in Italy in fact, a very rough assembly, and I think it must have taken probably ten weeks or so.

AL: Could do, yes.

Right through to dub, yes, mm.

Yes, I think so, yes I think so, I think, I think it did, you know

And of course, you are mag then anyway by then, because it's all magnetic, mm, so tacky lists [ph 22:18] and much more straightforward? 1959.

Yes, it's interesting isn't it, because that's...

Yes magnetic came when? In the mid '50s, mm.

Yes, that was a big switch over period wasn't it as well?

AL: And tape joins.

Yes.

AL: And tape joins.

Tape joins, yes, mm.

Tape joins, yes, yes, that's right, yes. Yes, because there was a certain amount of post inking that of course, and magnetic was enormously helpful for that wasn't it when you think about it, yes? I mean...

It was indeed, yes .

It was an absolute revolution because...

All the virgin loops and things and now you could do it another way.

Yes, yes. Even though everybody was so petrified of not seeing the modulations any more, when you think how you could, when you, when you learnt how to handle it how you could pull it backwards and forwards under the synchroniser to define where markers are to do it.

Oh you could, I mean if it was dialogue that you knew well you could actually read it couldn't you.

Yes, yes, absolutely, yes.

I mean you could read it without even bothering to, you know...

Yes, yes. Yes that's right, that's right.

To listen.

AL: I'm trying to think of the name of the joiners that first came in – those tape joiners.

Oh I can't remember.

Oh the Italian ones were they?

AL: Yes.

Yes, mm.

Oh yes, that's right, yes. No I can't remember. I remember that, that's right, yes, yes.

Yes, I can't remember now, I'll think of the name in a minute.

Yes, it really, it really was a revolution. How did we join tape to start with?

Mm.

AL: I don't know.

I can't remember.

They had sprocketed joining tape at one point didn't they?

That's right, yes, yes of course, yes that's right, yes.

It was a 3M's, it was made by 3Ms.

That's right, so you had to put it on exactly...

Yes, that's right, yes that was rather complicated.

Yes, and I'm not that good with my hands [Laughter] so that was quicker.

Yes, quickly trying to sort it out and hang it of course.

Yes, I had an assistant called Paul Davies on that and I think I sort of lost track of him a long time ago.

AL: What?

Davies.

AL: Oh.

Yes, yes.

So he was your assistant on 'Giuseppina' was he, mm?

Yes, yes, and did a lot of the dubbing aspect of it was well, yes.

Mm, so you were doing a proper feature there so you had a proper, proper...?

Yes that's right. No that was, that was...

Set up?

That was good, that was right.

Mm, good.

And then after that in 1960 my second son was born.

Right.

Robert.

Mm.

Can we take a break?

Yes, that's so.

AL: Keep going.

So when did you start work again then after Robert was born?

I think when he was probably a bit less than a year in fact. And I'm, I'm a bit confused now whether I went to Rank Screen Services and I did a few months there.

Was that, where were they based?

They were in Mayfair, they were in Charles Street.

Yes.

Yes, yes.

I remember now yes, mm.

And...

[25:00]

What sort of stuff were you doing with them?

Well I suppose I, I must have been commercial, doing commercials but it seems...

Mainly commercials, yes.

Yes, yes, it was mainly commercials there. But I...

And did you, did you, how did you find, how did you take to commercials after working on documentaries and features?

I didn't like it really, I...

I quite agree, I found it an absolute nightmare.

Yes, yes.

I used to loathe it.

Yes. I mean I think I, and my first taste of, of commercials, which was really very amusing, was at the Film Producers' Guild, it must have been towards the end of my time at Merton Park and I think Ronnie Riley must have got a, a commercial for Rowntrees and it was my first experience of a whole team of advertising people coming down and making joint decisions. And it was, I don't know whether you ever heard that joke commercial about Bloopers Soup soldiers real good.

AL: Yes.

Well it was very much that kind of experience because believe it or not it was a ditty and it was 'Rowntrees Fruit Gums yum yum yum, five fruity flavours in your tum tum tum', and this was actually what it was, I mean this was part of it. And I can remember, I suppose each member of the team felt they'd got to make a contribution, and so we would go through it. And I can't remember who it was, it was quite a good singer I think, it was quite a good pop singer of the day and we, we in fact... Shall I cut or not?

AL: It's alright.

Oh right. I was going to suddenly realise we'd left that door open.

AL: Just keep running.

I'll keep going, okay. And, yes so this, we went through this little ditty and somebody would pipe up 'I think it, you didn't really quite get the emphasis right, I think it should be five fruity flavours in your tummy tum tum', that's right, somebody said 'You've changed the words, you said "tummy tum tum" instead of "tum tum tum"', or vice versa. And it was just unbelievable and I think...

Yes, I mean grown up people going on like that.

And after that...

Take after take.

I think I was very prejudiced about [Laughter] commercials. So I don't, I don't think I approached them with an open mind after that.

No. What I hated about it from the purely physical editing point of view is that it's like looking for a needle in a haystack, you know, you have this mountain of film and every now and then you find a strip about eighteen inches long that you have to cut.

It had to go in, yes. [Laughter]

Finding it, you know. And the number of people that were involved.

Yes, yes, absolutely.

In advising on the finding of it.

Yes, yes.

You know, these creative consultants.

That's right, oh yes.

People with big cigars, you know.

That's right, yes.

I shouldn't be so cynical because it's a very important area of life but, you know.

Well no you couldn't avoid them. Yes, yes, you can imagine what it's like now with the highly sophisticated commercials that are coming out as well, it must be a lot worse.

With all these special effects.

Yes, yes.

AL: I can remember somebody in, been in commercials was saying about these high powered salesmen who come down from, from clients, you know, 'We've got to make this a sort of memorable performance'.

[Laughter] Yes, that's right, absolutely, yes, yes. And after all you were not using the artist's words or the, or the composer's words, yes, yes. So...

So that was Ranks was it?

I think that Rank Screen Services was not, I think, I can't remember why they did, I suppose probably we needed the money or we were dead then.

Well of course, you'd get paid extremely well actually didn't they?

Yes, yes, I think that's the irony of it.

Yes, mm. Anyway I suppose again it's quite a good discipline for a short time?

Yes, yes.

If you can cope with it.

Yes, yes, I think so, I think that's true. I think I was there about three months probably.

Mm, I think that's probably quite long enough.

Yes, I think so. And then I actually worked in, for BBC Enterprises at Bush House. And I was doing foreign versions for them and I was, we were working on a current affairs programme, I don't know whether, I can't remember if it was actually *Panorama* it was certainly if not it something like *Panorama*. Whether *Panorama* was going that long ago...

Actually in Bush House, you were actually working in Bush House were you?

I was working in Bush House, yes.

And did they have cutting, do they have cutting rooms there?

AL: Yes, yes, yes.

Yes, yes.

Because I worked with BBC and they had cutting rooms in the, in the Queens House in Kingsway which was just up the road from there.

Ah, yes. No, this was actually in Bush House.

AL: Yes, that's right. It was, yes well it was really part of the Overseas Service.

Oh right.

Yes, that's right it was. Yes, it was foreign versions. And we had to take out the tracks, we had to separate the tracks.

Yes, right.

And so that in fact we didn't actually lay the foreign versions so much as we put the effects back, or rather separated out.

AL: The were in English only.

Yes, yes, exactly, yes. And I remember that, you know, it was quite, it was quite enjoyable because there were a lot of interesting people working there and you would see them in the canteen, there were a lot of them.

[30:06]

Yes so that canteen was quite an interesting place, we used to use that canteen for when I was at Queens House.

Yes.

Just a five minutes walk up there.

Yes, I know.

And every nation in the world practically.

That's right, absolutely, yes, yes. And what was his, an Ian? I mean you were right it was Curtis, I can't remember what his first...

AL: Ian Curtis.

Ian Curtis, that's quite right, yes. And he wanted me to stay on actually, and I had gone for a short lim..., for a limited period and I'd gone in the usual back door, you know, I wasn't boarded I was taken in as a temporary to the BBC and he wanted me to stay on, and I just felt with a quite a young child and in fact two children anyway, but one young child at home I just felt I couldn't commit myself. He sad at the time that at the time it would be a very good way in to the BBC on a more permanent basis, and, and he felt I could do it and I wouldn't necessarily be limited to, to [Inaudible 31:06]. It was a temptation but I'd just, at the time I still felt that I should be, should be home some of the time. Whether it was the right decision or not, I mean even from the point of view of the children because it was a sort of up and down sort of existence, I'd either be there all the time or not there, you know, so from that point of view it wasn't, wasn't ideal. But anyway that was the...

You, you went to quite a few different jobs around this time. Did you, did you do it mainly through word of mouth or friends and so on or did you use, did ACTT help?

ACTT helped a bit, it did help a bit, it was mixtures.

AL: Did they help to get the BBC one?

That's what I was wondering.

I think that must have been through ACTT, I can't, I can't imagine that it...

AL: Because, you know, they didn't...

Did it happen that way then?

AL: The BBC didn't like ACTT at all.

No quite.

AL: However there were people there who might have put your name forward.

Mm.

AL: But what did you go as, a kind of...?

I went as an editor.

AL: You did go as an editor?

Yes, yes.

AL: That's right, that's right. Well knowing what I do what happened you didn't make, you didn't make a mistake.

No, no. Ian Curtis, because they were talking about being, BBC Enterprises being enlarged at that time, you know, but I didn't feel that the kind of cutting, certainly the kind of cutting I was doing at that point there wasn't of, of great interest, it was again a moneymaking exercise really more than, more than, more than really career progress.

AL: But you were very confined because all you had to do was M&Es.

Yes, that's right, yes. Absolutely, yes. That's...

M&E and recording?

Mm.

AL: Well no, not even recording.

Not even recording no, just doing the, literally just doing the M&E and sending those off, yes. You didn't do any recording of the versions over here?

No. Because they would be probably going to a variety of countries I would think, you know.

Because, mm...

AL: I know they did, they had, they...

Certain languages.

AL: The did a, I think they did a deal with Fitzpatrick or somebody like that, it wasn't one of, it was that time, perhaps not. I don't know any more.

No, Anyway, you know, I think Ian Curtis at the time took it a bit, a bit personally, you know, that I wouldn't, that I wouldn't stay but, as I say, I felt it was, I think it was the right decision really. And then I...

Then you got on touch with ACTT again.

Yes. [Laughter]

[Laughter]

Well I, yes I mean I think some of the things were from word of mouth by then as well.

Yes, I'm sure it would be, that's what I was going to say, yes. You didn't have an agent anyway?

No, no.

Like Teddy Darbess [ph 33:40] and his agent?

Oh really?

He used to have an agent.

Did many documentary people have agents?

Of course, he was really playing features by then I suppose wasn't he?

Yes, yes, but many documentary...

There were a few. John Trumper had an agent for a time I remember.

Did he?

Of course, he was a mixture of features and documentary.

Yes, yes, that's right, yes.

AL: So anyway it wasn't that desperate.

So then I worked at Wallace Productions in the heart of Soho, in and which I must admit I enjoyed, I preferred really and truly. And that was in Berwick Street I think, yes literally above the market.

The vegetables, yes.

Above the market that was, yes. And I can't remember the name of the producer there. I can remember him to look at but I can't remember his name.

And exactly who was it.

It was a pale faced sort of a, I think he'd be, had been red haired. And I worked on, I don't know, several films to do with coal.

Ah!

Yes, which seems strange now I think about it but...

On Coal Board films?

Must have been I suppose.

Or films perhaps made on behalf of the Coal Board, perhaps, perhaps Cath Francis and people...

There was also steel as well, some film on steel production as well, yes, yes. Because they were the real, you know, sort of classical documentary type things really. And I remember Wolf Sashitski [ph 34:55] shot one of them, yes, yes. I can remember him coming into the cutting rooms, and I can't remember how long I worked there for but for a while, you know.

[35:10]

What year have we got to now Vivienne?

I, well what I do know there is, there's a cut off point so I know it must have been before '63, because we moved house in '63, which in, in effect cut me off from the film business really for a while so it must have been maybe '62, something, something like that.

AL: Because you, it was '61 you started again.

Yes.

AL: Yes.

So it must have been about that. And in, and in '63 we moved over to the other side of London, which really effectively put a stop to, to me working for a while.

Mm.

I don't know... Oh wait a minute, I, yes I think I did go in to Town after that, but anyway sticking with Wallace, as I say, they, I haven't got very, very clear memories and there weren't many people, it was really quite a small organisation that.

Mm.

But I think I quite enjoyed the films I was working on.

You hadn't got a hankering for doing further feature type films in [Inaudible 36:16]

I think, I think the big block obviously was, was in terms of the commitment and children really and truly.

Right.

I think I had a lot of conflict, I think by nature I was quite ambitious but I also had this conflict of about being a good mother. I think I was one of the first women who wanted to have it all, you know, they keep talking about all the women now today who want to have it all and how difficult it is, and I think that's absolutely true it is very difficult.

AL: Well with, with film hours it's terribly difficult.

Yes.

AL: You can't, well you can but...

Yes, yes, and I think I was very frightened of feature for that reason of the kind of commitment that it, that it would mean.

I'm sure you could have got features work on the strength of 'Giuseppina' anyway having had a film with a, which you made and got an Oscar.

Yes, I think that's...

A word from...

Possibly true. Although Jimmy was going on, had gone on to do feature work because he finished off *Born Free*, he took that over from somebody.

Did he, mm?

Yes. But he'd, he was, and he was, and he did two or three features after that.

AL: Yes.

He did one about fox hunting.

The 'Belstone Fox'?

That's it, yes, yes. And I think he was Dan Coates [ph 37:30] I think. He obviously, he obviously liked women editors.

AL: Oh yes.

Yes, yes. And, you know, I think, I think there's no doubt that, that family sort of placed a restrict... Family, you see times were very different from what they are today. I mean today women almost feel guilty if they haven't got a career, in my day you tended to feel guilty if you had got a career and children was that, you know, whatever way it is they seem to have a conflict women really, really and truly. It's, it's not easy I think really.

Mm.

But I did, I mean I really appreciated and I really would like to talk to some women in film business because of this. I appreciated that we were paid equally, which was very, very rare, extremely rare really. And, but I came across one or two quite

amusing incidents, one which actually comes later on where I was, there was some shortage of money about paying out and the producer concerned, and I sort of said something about my money and he said 'Well', he said 'I've paid he men, they need it'.

That's a good line I must say, mm.

[Laughter] It's terrible, you know, when you come across this kind of thing from time to time, there were one or two others. And the other thing which again I'll come to later because I did actually start doing some direction later on and that was actually, that was, that was quite an interesting experience indeed. But anyway in, in 1963 I moved. Henry had decided that he'd had enough, well it wasn't so much that he'd had enough of the East End but that he'd had enough of the practice that he was in, and he applied for a practice on his own, off his own bat. Although he was a partner in this East End practice by now he was doing an unequal amount of the work and the man who he'd started off being assistant for had given him a, a reluctant partnership but also did really hold the strings, he really pulled the strings and I think he really decided he wanted autonomy. And he applied for a National Health practice and got on in El..., in, well not actually in... Charlton, that's right. And we moved in 1963, we moved to Eltham and I busied myself being a mother for a while. I had, but after that, and I cannot remember how I got this job but I actually found a little firm in, in Bromley and was doing some cutting for them. They were making a film for... You know, I don't know if either of you know about the Royal Institution Lectures, they have lectures for...

[40:30]

AL: Yes.

Schoolchildren in the Christmas holidays. Well one of these had been filmed and I was actually cutting it. And it must have been '64/65. And I don't know what else I did there as well but that, but I was in the middle of that when Henry had a very bad car accident.

Oh!

And I had to give that up. He, and I, you know, as I say, I can't remember a lot about it. There was quite a famous man did the lectures, famous scientist did those lectures, those lectures. And it must have been a small sort of film company, there was a cutting room of sorts there.

AL: It wasn't Bronowski was it or...?

No, it wasn't Bronowski. I can't remember, he was, he was a very good lecturer for the children because I can remember he had a lot of charm and he had them eating out of his hand but I can't remember who it was. Anyway Henry, he'd been in this practice for two years and we'd settled down reasonably well as a family, and he came up to meet me in the local shopping centre, for some reason I didn't drive up there, and he, about 200 yards from where he lived, where we lived, a car went in to him on a bend and he had quite a bad head injury, and for a while we wondered

whether in fact he'd be able to go back into in to medicine. And it was a very difficult time because he was in single handed practice and I had, I had to find somebody to put in to that practice. The accident was on the Saturday and I had to find somebody to put in that practice on the Monday. And it's very odd when you think about it that it should be the wife, not an employee, not the local authority, not the health authority's job but in fact my job to find somebody.

Mm.

And anyway, so we went through quite a difficult time as a family after that. The accident happened in May '65 and he was out of action for about four or five months. And we were lucky enough that in fact although it was quite a, quite a bad injury and the neurosurgeon said, you know, 'We won't know the long term results of this for a very long time'.

Mm.

And we had to... The man who went in to it, him was uninsured and unlicenced.

Gosh!

So various well meaning friends told me at the time that, you know, there was no way, you shouldn't retain a solicitor because you won't get anything out of it. But I learnt a lot out of that accident because there is a, there's an insurers' fund run by the insurance industry and we probably did better because of that than if this guy had been insured with some hole in corner insurance. But, you know, meanwhile you can imagine me, the agony in the process.

Mm.

And he actually was able to go back to work, but I think after that was never happy in single handed practice. I think he worried, he knew what I'd gone through having to put someone else in and also I think felt very unsupportive because the result of the accident was he was not able to withstand stress as well as he had been before. I mean we were incredibly lucky that he wasn't left a vegetable I think so a little bit more that, and he would have been according to...

Stop. We've run out have we?

AL: We're going to run out.

[End of Tape 2 Side A 44:30]

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

Tape 2 Side B.

AL: Vivienne Collins, Side Four.

Yes. So anyway you were, had to cope with this situation and you dealt with it very successfully and now what happened next?

Well...

And had he recovered after a few months?

He recovered after a few months, I mean we were lucky enough that he was able to go back to medicine. And the interesting thing, I mean it's very interesting about the brain was because his memory, he's has Aphasia, a difficulty remembering words for quite some time, and one very big difficulty was not being able to remember the name of drugs for example, but he could remember probably the generic name even if he couldn't remember the actual firm's name. But I mean it was interesting in the sense that those medical grooves obviously went so deep that in, in effect they, they were the way he was best able to function first of all, it was in other aspects of life that he didn't function as well as all that for quite a while.

Mm, mm.

So anyway he, he went back to work and we were there for another couple of years, but he never really settled down to single handed practice again, I think he felt he wanted the support of partners. And he tried to get something going in that part of the world, and due to the paranoia of one of the wives he was the, it never took off. And afterwards there was, what came up was a vacancy in Elstree in an area where friends of ours worked who already had a practice, and in fact he applied for that and he went in to practice with these friends in Theobald Street in Elstree, which was a big irony because there I was back in the middle of the film business again. [Laughter]

Yes.

So we moved in...

The studios were beckoning?

Yes, in 1968 we moved back to Elstree. And our sons went to Haberdashers and we sort of settled down, which [Inaudible 02:12] was in Elstree. And I sort, settled, took a while to settle down and then realised that being back amongst the film business was too much of a temptation really and I started, I must have started looking around for a job. And the first thing, I mean what was interesting was that one of the partners in the practice that Henry went in to wasn't anymore a film, wasn't anymore a doctor but

he'd become a filmmaker. And what had happened was I had met him over the years and he was always anyway fascinated by the film business. When he had got married shortly afterwards, it must have been about 1947, he moved out to Elstree and started a practice in Borehamwood, which was a new overspill town in, you know, it was, it was a very odd place Borehamwood because it was made up of the old rural district council and also an overspill town from the East End of London. So there also there was a very high degree of neurosis in Borehamwood of people who never settled down in the area really who were, who were just displaced people in a sense.

AL: Mm, yes, yes.

And so this was Philip Sattin.

AL: Oh yes.

Who actually started this practice up with Carl Hodes, and Philip as one of his wedding presents was given a movie camera. And he very shortly after he started the practice actually started making medical films. And he was one of the first sort of medical films, he started, you know, probably around 1950 I would think, started making medical films for the, for the drug companies. And he did it hand in hand with building up the practice. And two of their partners, Shirley and John Marks, both doctors, were very old friends of ours and I used to meet, meet Philip and always Philip wanted to talk about the film business.

Mm.

And, by the time we went back to Elstree, in fact when we lived in Eltham he had rung up once and offered me a job and I'd said, you know, 'This just isn't on, I live much too far away, there's no way I can, I can work for you from Eltham'. But when we went, when I went back to Elstree, I don't know whether I got in touch with him very soon because actually the first job I had when we went to Elstree was as a music editor on *The Avengers*.

Right.

[05:00]

See. [Laughter] I don't know whether they advertised for someone or what, I can't remember quite what happened. Anyway they had a woman music editor who was going off to do other things and I was offered this job and I took it on. And I don't know, I don't know whether it, I think it must have been when it was... What was it? Nineteen..., about 1970, so I'm not sure whether Diana Rigg was...

So later 'Avengers' it sounds like doesn't it?

Yes, so it must have been Diana Rigg.

Because Diana Rigg was early '60s wasn't she, yes?

Was she?

I would have thought so.

Oh you're right.

Mm.

It was when that strange girl was doing it.

Linda wasn't there, Linda, Linda Thorson, yes.

That's right, you're quite right. It was when Linda Thorson, absolutely right John, it was when Linda Thorson was doing it, yes, yes, yes. And, but the difficulty about doing this job, I mean the well nigh impossibility about doing this job was that the girl who'd done it who had actually held it all in her head. It was Johnny... Who was the, the composer? John someone, Johnny... God I can't remember who it was. Quite well known for, for light music composer, composition. He was an agoraphobic so he hated coming out. Johnny, something like Johnny Johnson or Johnny...

Yes it was something like that wasn't he, yes?

Something like that, yes. And so there were a lot of themes and they were reused many, many times, and she had not catalogued it well so it was, I mean it was okay for her but it was an absolute nightmare...

I mean click on the stuff straightaway because she could remember, yes.

Yes, yes. I mean she was great, she'd done it for many years. And it was a real nightmare actually because, you know, you didn't know where to start, and to actually start cataloguing it was an, was an incredible... So I stuck it out for a few months, and I think while I was there Philip actually got in touch with me and said would I come and work for them?

Mm.

And so then I actually went to work for Eothen.

AL: That was... What was it called?

Can I take a break? Yes.

AL: Well we are recording this time.

[Laughter] Oh I'm glad to hear it. Well going to Eothen, which I think again must have been about 1970, was a very different experience from anything I'd, I'd ever had in the past because Eothen at that stage was very much a family affair. Philip and Sheila Sattin had a big house tucked away off Furzehill Road in Borehamwood and it was, it has quite big grounds, it was quite a roomy house and part of the house was taken, I can't really whether they'd actually built an extension but part of the house was taken up with offices. They, they also had three sons and the cutting room was a

caravan in the garden. And I was quite surprised to see the size of the staff they carried. They carried a permanent camera crew, they carried an associate producer called Ronnie Veltman who had experience, a lot of experience in education. I don't know, I think he was very experienced in film making but he was, certainly had the educational links.

Who was the cameraman, do you remember?

John Hardman.

Ah, ha.

Yes. Yes, John, John Hardman. I think they had, I think the electricians were a crew that they called in, they were pretty regular and the chief electrician was a man called Arthur, and I cannot remember what his surname was, but I remember him being around quite a bit. Although he, I don't think he was there on permanent staff he certainly was, tended to be available when Philip needed him. And Philip when he had had to give up medical practice I think in a way, perhaps because he didn't know much about the traditional film business really started to do something different. He actually financed a lot of production himself and a lot of it was very basic educational stuff which he started to sell abroad. In addition he was in quite a good position in those days for sponsored medical production because I think, as I may have mentioned before, he obviously as a doctor had quite good contacts with the pharmaceutical industry and they appreciated his expertise. And so he did bring in quite a lot of sponsored medical films which, I mean that was the days of sponsorship really, you know, that that was how enormous numbers of films were made. I mean if you think back, sponsored film production was a way for a lot of the early feature directors in this country to get their, to get their grounding. I mean people like Schlesinger and Lindsay Anderson and people like that. I mean Lindsay Anderson I remember used to make a lot of films for Ford, I can't remember so much about what Schlesinger, but that was, unlike today which is, tends to be advertising and promo way in for filmmakers a lot, a lot of directors did come from, from sponsored film production.

[10:55]

Yes.

And anyway. So I came in to really, although it was bigger than I expected it was still very much a family affair because Philip was a producer, did direct some work. Sheila was very active on the administrative side and Paul, their eldest son, was doing a certain amount of work in the cutting room, was an assistant in the cutting room at that time. So, as I say, it was, it was, it was cosy in some ways but, as I say, bigger than I'd expected. I started working on, and this was, I have to remember that this was my first experience in, in medical films and I suppose having been married to a doctor for quite a long time was quite helpful and in a way familiarised me with working with, with the terminology and so on which was probably easier that for a general, general editor. I think I started working... Now it's very difficult, I worked quite early on on a film with Margaret Thompson, which was, was quite interesting. We didn't always see eye to eye but in generally speaking we respected each other. And I

worked on a film on cancer, which was a lot of cartoon I remember, quite a lot of cartoon, and that was quite interesting, and I also worked on some films on physiology. The only, the other aspect of Philip's film making which I didn't really enjoy so much was the loop making which he, in a way, almost pioneered. He pioneered a series of short sound films and training loops, a series of training loops which went along with these reels. They were quite kind of educational packages and they did sell quite well abroad and there were a lot of, and I actually escaped working on many of them I have to say really and truly.

Alan, in I think it must have been about 1972 I was working on this cancer film with Philip and he had a heart attack, unfortunately that, that presaged his death, will it was really a preliminary to his death, we didn't obviously realise this at the time. And I think one of the problems at that time was the fact that the house was so intertwined with the business, because he went in to hospital, when he came out instead of really relaxing and forgetting about it I always remember he used to be phoning me from the house constantly to know how the film was going. He found it very, very difficult to let go, he was a real typical Type A personality, very driving. From that point of view I learnt really quite a lot from him, I always remember when we had meetings about film making, about the films I was, was amazed at the speed with which the ideas would, would be, would come from him. But what I later realised, I mean in a way because I functioned slightly more slowly than this in a way I found it quite difficult to handle until I realised that he didn't always have the judgement to sort out what were good ideas and what were not good ideas and it needed slower mortals like me to really sort of sit down and, and think through what was going on.

Anyway I don't know if it was worry about his health or whether they wanted to sell the house because their sons were growing up but there, they were in fact taken over... I mean this was I suppose the period of a lot of entrepreneurs in, in business and they were taken over by somebody... Oh God I can't remember what his name was, Larry, Larry somebody who was buying up companies with gay abandon at the time and bought up Eothen Films on the understanding that Philip stayed as Managing Director and we moved out of the house and into the studios, into... Now I can't, it was ABPC now, I cannot remember, I think... Because that studio's changed hands so many times, it became MGM, it became Canon and I'm not sure whether this guy actually bought the studios at that time. Anyway he bought up Eothen and we moved out of the, as I say, out of the house and it lost something in a way in, in its cosy atmosphere. And we had a bungalow at the back of ABPC, which was adequate and the cutting room was one of the rooms in that, in that bungalow at that time.

[16:06]

And I was working on a series of physiology films, and I always remember the director he completed them but he disappeared very rapidly indeed and the notes and the commentary were extremely inadequate and I, I found myself writing commentary. I always remember this because one of the films was a... Excuse me I must... [Coughs] One of the films was on blood and circulation and the commentary opened 'If you prick your finger you bleed', and it was for American circulation as well and I think it must have got sent off to the States and it came back very hastily and they said very clearly 'You cannot open a film with "If you prick your finger"' because it was not an accepted word in the States. [Laughter] And so, but I found

myself actually having to write commentary and really put these films. They were, they were inadequately noted, the, the sheets were inadequate and I found myself really putting them together from square one. And I think this gave me an ambition, I felt damn it if was writing the commentary and really putting the films together why shouldn't actually have, try my hand at, at writing and directing? And Philip actually gave me the opportunity to do this, and I think the big problem was, what I didn't realise was that if you're going to start writing medical films you've actually got to have the background knowledge for these films so I didn't, although I had a superficial knowledge of terminology I didn't really have that much knowledge of anatomy and physiology, so I found myself getting in gradually, but I think it was fairly gradual because what I started by working on was a series of the dreaded loops. And I worked on a series on lifting and carrying for nurses, which was quite interesting in a way, first of all I needed to know a bit about anatomy obviously and in terms of what lifting meant to the body, but on the other hand it didn't have to go incredibly deep because it was really a training film, it was showing nurses how to save themselves from the back injuries that were so common really. And we did a series of different lifts for people who were incapacitated in different ways, and we did it in conjunction with Barnet Hospital and an adviser from Barnet Hospital so it was quite an interesting experience for me. And John Hardman, the cameraman, was really very supportive. And so that went reasonably well.

I then started to work on a film on infection. I think this was more difficult, I think I had to do a lot of background work on this if I remember. And writing, I don't think it came that easily to me, I think as an editor you're used to having film in your hand and there's, there's something solid there, and although editing is quite a creative process it's a very different process from thinking about film making from square one, and I think I had to work really quite hard at this. And I think also because the subjects were so factual I think I was afraid of letting my imagination run riot, and what I later realised was that in a way it's not a disadvantage to have interesting and striking openings to your films even if they're going to come down to earth with a bang. But this took me a while, as I say, and I, I, you know, I tended to get a bit bogged down with the, with the actual factorial aspect and making sure that I got the facts right.

[20:30]

Can we take a break for a bit?

AL: Yes.

I think Eothen started to go through some quite severe problems after this, and I think that Philip, who had made this decision to give up medicine and, and take on the film, film making as a career, I think he found it much more worrying than he'd imagined it would be, because whereas medicine because it was, he'd started in the early days of the National Health Service became quite a secure career, it never made a fortune but you never went broke either. And I think that the growing pains of having been taken over I think worried him and he obviously had a heart condition and in 1973 very sadly he died at the age of fifty-two, and this was a great shock to everybody because it, it happened quite suddenly and he'd apparently been quite alright after the, after the first heart attack, and although probably shouldn't have done he'd taken on work

again with his customary vigour. And I think it just wasn't in him to slow down quite honestly.

Anyway things changed a lot after that and Ronnie Veltman carried on as producer. Sheila took over as Managing Director and there was a young man called David Jenner, who'd been groomed as an associate producer, who also carried on and took obviously a more active role in the foreground of the company. I continued to work for them when they wanted me to and made in fact, had my first experience of working on a film which was put out to tender. LRI, which was London Rubber Industries which later became, sort of dropped that title, they had done a lot of work with Philip on, on birth of a baby and contraception but they, things were beginning to change and we were asked to, to tender for a film and write an idea, a proposal for a script. And they'd given us, they wanted it mostly in cartoon form and they'd given us a very rough outline and I enlarged on that. And I suppose perhaps for the first time did, I was beginning to gain confidence as a writer and opened the subject out and took really the emotions of the young couple who were involved into, into account more than the company had suggested. Anyway, to cut a long story short, we did, we got the film and I think that had began to add to my confidence quite considerably.

AL: And that was in, what year was that?

Mm, that probably would have been about '74 I would think.

AL: Seventy-four, '75 then, yes.

Yes, that sort of time probably, probably, yes. I would guess, I would guess so. It's difficult to remember exactly but anyway, and I worked quite closely with David Jenner on this and we, we found we did collaborate quite well. He was very, very different to work with than Philip, he, he was in fact almost the opposite. He was quite slow thinking but very thorough and wanted to be sure everything was, was going to be alright before we proceeded. But we, we worked together, as I say, quite well. And by this time John Hardman and I worked quite well together as well and he was quite a supportive cameraman, he wasn't as, as sexist as some cameraman. [Laughter] Some cameramen rather – cameraman! And he... In fact he and I actually tried to get something going at one point and I, I actually tried... This has in fact just come back to me actually and I really cannot remember exactly the year that would have been, but it must have been around the time that, that work after Philip died I think began to dry up quite a bit because he, so far as the pharmaceutical companies were concerned, had so much to offer and really the people who were there now were very much an unknown quantity.

[25:40]

Anyway I was rung up by an ex-secretary of Philip's who wanted to, to make enquiries about having a film made on, on forestry in the country. And I actually went down there off my own bat and tried to put a proposal together. I mean it was, it was quite an interesting project. Now hang on, I think I've got this out of chronological order because I remember what put him in to it was... Oh yes it might have been right. That a Labour Government got in and the whole business of forestry, which was being used as a, an Inheritance Tax ploy all came to an end so the whole project

became aborted. But it was, nevertheless it was quite an interesting interlude because I had a few visits in order to write this script I had a few visits, a few visits to very rural Somerset and met this very upper crust company who were running this organisation. So it was really quite a new experience for me and quite an offbeat experience for me so although it didn't come to anything I was paid expenses for it. But I remember that John Hardman was quite shattered, he couldn't believe that one had to put so much work in to something and then it would become aborted. And I realised that you needed a very different kind of temperament to be able to do speculative work that, that actually might happen and might not happen, and the solid work of being a cameraman or being an editor was, was really a whole different experience that you could, that... And I suppose I began to realise at that stage what being a script writer meant because you, you might put together a lot of proposals that would never be made and you needed to develop a different kind of resilience almost and work in a very different kind of way.

And I suppose it was, you know, it was quite a whole, a whole different experience for me. And although in some ways I missed editing I don't think I ever thought about going back to it, I think I liked being out of the way, I think I realised that, that in, in a cutting room, particularly in a documentary cutting room you could become quite isolated. You might have an, an assistant if you were lucky but you would be working in a room when all the exciting stuff would be going on, on location, really and truly.

AL: Yes, yes, quite true.

And I realised that in a way although I needed to learn a lot this was where I, where I wanted to be. So, and so far as directing was concerned possibly the confidence again was coming slowly. I knew what I wanted to see on the film, I didn't always know how to get it.

AL: Okay.

Can we take a break?

AL: Yes. We're going.

Yes, although I enjoyed working with David Jenner he, the company as it now existed was not as good at getting in sponsored work and in any case didn't have the financial backing anymore to, to carry on promoting the educational stuff that Philip had done, and Laurie Marsh, the man who took it over, was also beginning to have some doubts about the company, his, his plans were beginning to go wrong. And so far as I was concerned I was, became aware that if I wanted to continue to work I really needed to look, look around with other companies. As a freelance, as you probably know Alan, there's never any, it's never any good in putting, putting all your eggs in to one basket. My problem was that with two growing sons and a husband you couldn't, you couldn't put the same effort in to promoting your career that a man did, it, it tended to having to take the directions sometimes which were, as it were, sparked from outside.

[30:48}

But I did have very loose connections, I knew one or two people who did some work for Cygnet that was also in the same part of the world. That was also an important, important aspect because if you needed to be around and you certainly didn't want to be away for ridiculous hours you, you needed to work in your, in what was a reasonable area. And I think I also realised that although the studios were getting less in Elstree I still didn't really fancy my chances in the feature world, I realised that it was too big a commitment for me in my position. And so far as television was concerned, because there was a television, there was an ATV studios at that time in Elstree I also, for me I suppose it meant a great leap in to the dark and possibly I didn't feel in, that I could in fact take that at that time. Because at that time what? I had a son of, this was the mid, early to mid '70s and I had a son of sixteen or seventeen and a son of, three years younger than that, so very difficult ages needing, needing quite a lot of attention.

AL: A-Level, and O-Levels coming up.

At the time anyway, yes. That's, yes O-Levels exactly, yes. So that I, I put out some feelers towards Cygnet and that was the next move I made.

AL: Thank you.

Yes, yes.

Petrol prices going up?

And the whole thing, it all happened about that, that time, which was, which was a very difficult time. And I think that also triggered a lot of the financial problems as well so...

And I imagine you had quite a few films already in the pipeline when, when this happened.

Mm, yes. Oh he died quite suddenly. What I didn't say before this was that his wife was running the dis..., because they had a distribution side because of the, because of the loops which really they'd made in large numbers. And whenever there was a quiet period of no sponsorship they would make, they would make loops which he would then finance as I said.

Himself?

Yes. And so really every...

Obviously based on demand, I mean the loops were obviously were required stuff.

No. Oh no, no, no they were speculative. That was, that was I think the big problem you see and he, they were attempting to set up, and Sheila used to go abroad. [Phone rings]

AL: You were saying that the, the loops were completely...

They were speculative.

That's right, yes.

AL: And were looked after by his wife?

Yes, who, who was travelling to, to sell them.

AL: To sell them?

Yes, yes, yes.

AL: Saleslady?

That's right, yes, yes.

Fancy going around peddling loops.

But they had quite a, I mean they did have quite a big audience for them.

Samples, mm.

I mean I don't know whether he set them up on the understanding that that was the kind of thing that they, the Gulf States wanted but that was the problem I think.

Mm.

So, are we, are we recording?

AL: Of yes.

Oh sorry. Yes, right, okay. So yes, so, so then very, very suddenly Philip died and the place was plunged in to confusion. But by this time I should, should remark upon the fact that they were by then installed in the studios and I think there was, and I'm not going in to this deeply, but there was, one of the problems was that they had been taken over. And the early '70s was a very strange business time, a lot of businesses were being taken over and there was a lot of merger, merger madness at that time and I think there was some entrepreneur who had said he was going to take them over and I think that this fell through, and I think this was in fact a further worry so that they didn't get the financial backing that they'd been looking for. Anyway things changed a lot when Philip died. He'd had an associate producer called Ronnie Veltman who stayed on he'd been very...

[35:16]

Sorry Ronnie who?

Veltman.

Veltman?

Yes, who'd been very involved in the educational side of things. And there was also a young man he was grooming to be a producer, although he was also working as an editor at the time, and I went on to work with him a lot later on, and his name was David Jenner. And I'm just trying to think of the chronology, and I think that maybe around this time the work dried up at Eothen and I, and I can't remember how I got this introduction, but I actually went to do some work at... [Pause] At Cygnet Films.

Oh yes, now Cygnet was part of Film Producers' Guild wasn't it?

No, not then.

But it became in fact... Oh no not that time no of course, they worked out at Upperton...

When they were independent, they were out at Bushey.

Bushey, that's right yes, and then later they became Film Producers Guild didn't they?

Yes.

In fact they took it over.

Well Rae Evans took it over.

Yes, that's right, yes, Rae Evans.

Yes.

Old colleague of ours, friend of ours from Crown Film Unit days.

I, that's interesting because hadn't he and John Reid...

John Reeve.

Reeve, Reeve.

Yes, that's right, yes.

Been in partner, been in partnership at one point.

Mm, mm.

Hadn't they?

That's right. Well they may have been, well they worked in the same company didn't they?

Yes.

Whatever it was called.

Yes, but by the time...

Mm, mm.

By the time I knew, knew Rae Evans and went to Cygney John, John Reeve had, was working separately in a different company by then. And so I, again I was very interested because Cygnet was a much bigger set up than I'd imagined and Ray had a lot of people. I don't think, again I think he had a permanent camera crew. I mean obviously there were various, there was various writer/directors who came in and I met several people there. And I went to work there to write and direct a film on hypertension. And in fact this was when I began to realise the difficulties of working on medical films because various people said 'Oh you were well away because your husband was a doctor', but in fact if you're going to research and write a film on hypertension you've got to learn much more about it than a GP knows because in fact you're meant to be teaching GPs.

AL: That's right, yes.

Oh yes.

So it was for an American company called Bristol Myers and it was around the time all the betablockers had come onto the market and it was really quite an interesting. And in fact it was actually a life, eventually a life changing experience for me because what I began to learn and, was that the betablockers were an enormous breakthrough for the pharmaceutical companies and they were coming out, I mean it wasn't just Bristol Myers who were bringing out, various companies were bringing them out. And the theory of the drug companies at that time was that people with moderate hypertension they needed their blood pressure kept down because of some hypothetical stroke that they might, or heart attack that they might get, primarily stroke I think, but that they might get at some later time. And the theory was that they were going to put people on betablockers for life.

Mm.

Now what I'd hadn't mentioned because, you know, this is dealing with the work aspect of my life, but what I hadn't mentioned was that in the background of this I had become... This, by this time it was about '75 I think and I had become very interested in yoga.

Oh yes. [Laughter]

In my private life. You may well laugh John but it's actually it's very significant in fact because I had started doing happy yoga for exercises and had fast realised that there was much more to yoga than for happy yoga. And I had started doing, I think by about '75 possibly, maybe later, maybe a bit later than that, I'd started doing a teacher training course in, in yoga. Not really because I ever envisaged teaching yoga but because it was the only way at the time to learn really the background of the

philosophy of yoga. And at the same time as I was getting rather shocked at the researching of this film on hypertension I was also beginning through the yoga to learn about self-help, help methods of bringing down blood pressure so it was a very interesting combination at that time really, really and truly.

[40:06]

Anyway sticking to the making of the film it was, it was an extraordinary experience because it was quite an ambitious, it was a mixed lab action and animation film and...

Who did your animation in fact mainly? Did you get one of the well known outfits to do that?

No. It was a small company... Now somebody called Ken...

Ken, I know who you mean, yes.

You do? Not, not the man in town, not the man who with the, who does so much of the, the work today.

He was out at Elstree wasn't he?

He was out beyond Elstree.

Mm, yes. Anyway it doesn't matter at the moment.

Yes, but it... He did some and also a couple of young men who did it out somewhere in the film, in the Thames Valley and I can't... Ted, Tom and Ted I think their first names were, and a very nice couple and they did the work for this. There was a, some quite ambitious animation on explaining the, the way that the betablockers worked so it was quite ambitious medical stuff. And an American came over and worked with us to a certain extent from the company. And we were also, I was also involved with a doctor at Northwick Park, a Doctor Rathtre [ph 41:28] who was, who was a cardiologist and he, he was the medical adviser on this. And there were several quite interesting happenings about this. First of all we had to explain extremely carefully to the American from the company that once you've settled on your animation you had to settle on your commentary, or pretty well, or the length of your commentary in combination with that because you were fairly tied to length once you'd shot, once you'd shot animation. In fact you were absolutely tied.

Absolutely, yes.

Anyway they appeared to take this in, and you'll hear what happened after that. But the other interesting aspect of this film, I don't, I can't remember, it must have been a fairly big...

Ken Hardy?

Yes, quite right, quite right John, you're absolutely right.

Mm, sorry, sorry to...

No, no. And I, he must...

Brilliant, marvellous animation, yes.

He was near St Albans, he was near St Albans.

That's right.

I don't think he worked on the this stuff but he worked with Philip a lot, he did a lot of the medical animation for, for the, for the Eothen Films.

He did a lot of stuff for us at...

AL: I'll stop you there.

[End of Tape 2 Side B 42:25]

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

Tape 3 Side A

Yes, and I didn't say much about Rae either.

Well yes...

AL: Vivienne Collins Side Five.

Right, carry on.

AL: Sorry it's on Side Six.

Yes. Oh right, we're coming on aren't we? Yes so Rae, yes I didn't, I hadn't made clear but it was absolutely true that I was working at Bushey Studios. And it was an interesting set up because very lively, quite a lot of people in and out of it and also it was an interesting experience to meet Rae Evans who was a most charming man, he was very pleasant indeed. And...

He was a great optimist wasn't he I always thought?

[Laughter]

No? Because I always...

I always call it a fantasist myself rather than an optimist really because he, I mean he, if you thought Philip Sattin was addicted to film making then Rae Evans I don't know what you would call him because at, at all costs he wanted to be making a lot of films.

Mm.

And he would very unrealistically be...

Hence the low budgets, yes.

Yes, took in some budgets.

Shoot films, shoot things...

And I think ours was really a very high budget in comparison, or put it this was, it took me to Dallas Airport overnight to meet Edward Rathtre [ph 01:09] the English cardiologist who was attending a conference in Dallas and it was important that something or other was okayed, so they flew me to Dallas, we met at the airport hotel, we had an overnight meeting, he'd come fresh out of this conference and was really quite tired. We had a dinner meeting, which for me over the years became the most

unproductive form of meeting. I mean how do you actually get down to work over dinner, by which time anyway he was very tired and I can't remember...

So it was really a matter of going through the, not looking at the film itself?

There were certain things being approved.

Script?

Yes.

Scripts?

It was, it was script stage approving really, approving the, the medical aspects.

Session really wasn't it, yes? You probably had to go out there because there was a deadline for completion.

Yes. And also we met the Americans who flew from New York, the Bristol Myers people flew from New York. So there was a meeting of about half a dozen of us and it was quite late in the evening if I remember correctly, and first thing in the morning the Americans were flying back to New York. I mean it was a crazy set up it really was. And I can't remember, I remember feeling very dissatisfied with the meeting but it was to all intents and purposes he had approved it. They were flying back to New York first thing in the morning and they said, you know, 'What are you doing?' And I had American relations in Boston, I thought this is ridiculous I'm not just going to spend overnight. My theory, what I had wanted to do was actually go was actually go in to Dallas because the airport it was actually... Now what was the airport called? It was, it was a few miles out of Dallas, it was about equidistant between Dallas and Fort Worth and I had wanted to go in to Dallas, see the Kennedy Memorial and just have a quick look. I knew it wasn't, was nothing very much to see but I just felt it was such a waste of time to go to the airport hotel and fly back there. [Laughter]

That's right.

But in fact it wouldn't have worked out because I wouldn't have caught, I would have missed a flight. So in fact, well what I did was I flew back to Boston.

Mm.

If fact I probably flew to New York with them and, and got a shuttle to Boston and spent the weekend in Boston. But the whole thing was really, I think it was an early, an early experience of jet setting.

On the other hand I mean if you hadn't had that session there were no, there would have been an awful delay wouldn't there before you...

I suppose there would have done.

Probably weeks?

Although, no, I think what happened, I think that Ted Rathrey [ph 03:35] was going back to England but I think it suited the Americans...

To get the Americans, yes.

Yes, I think it suited, I think they worked out that it was probably less expensive to fly me out to, to Dallas as he was out there and for the Americans to come from New York that for them to come, I think that's what it was when I think about it.

Yes, that's right, that's it, yes. It was a very interesting experience anyway.

It was an interesting but a bit unproductive I would say it was.

AL: This is still on the hypertension?

Yes, oh yes, oh yes.

Oh yes.

There's much more to come on hypertension as well in fact, yes. Because then later on we, the film got made, we assembled it in England and put the, put the animation together and I think put a rough commentary on it and then the Americans wanted to see it again. And we flew, I, no not we, I flew to New York to spend a week working with Bristol Myers in New York. And I stayed at a lovely hotel just off Fifth, Fifth Avenue I remember next to, next door to The Museum of Modern Art. And, but that, my big experience, it was July I think and New York was like warm bath and you went in to the buildings and you froze to death.

Mm.

Because of the level of air conditioning. But what was the most outstanding experience there was that verbal diarrhoea of the Americans. Because when they saw the animation they, they said 'Well we want to...', and they heard the commentary, the said 'but we want to put this on and we want to put that on and we want to put the other on'.

[05:08]

Typical.

And I said 'But you won't have any pictures to go on that, to go against that'. And they said 'Well does it matter'. So I went back to England with a whole lot of extra commentary, and I remember very clearly, and this was an interesting experience because I said to Rae, 'You know, this is ridiculous', and Rae said 'Oh we have to accommodate them'. So I said 'Rae, but you've got to a supplementary budget', and he said 'Oh do we'? [Laughter] I mean I literally had to fight with him for him to put in... And in fact when, it was again very interesting because when he put in for the supplementary budget they paid it without a murmur, but if it hadn't been for me he

would not have done, done it, and I think that was very much the pattern of the way he worked.

Mm, I'm afraid so.

He accommodated his clients at all costs. And, you know, again I mean eventually, eventually it led to his downfall really, yes.

Mm. I would have thought with American sponsors anyway they wouldn't have been too much trouble over the...

Well there wasn't, no.

Over the budgeting. I mean it's someone working the thing at home probably with a very tight...

Yes, yes, yes.

Mm.

And, and so that was, that was my, my big experience.

Yes, well that's, how did the film turn out, was it well used and...?

Well, I don't think I ever knew in fact because I didn't have... Well I did have some continuing connection with, with Cygnet but I don't know how well it was, how well it was used. It depends so much on how they exploit them afterwards. I mean I had much closer experience with, as you'll hear in a minute, with some other sponsor because when, after that I went and had talks with Eothen with David Jenner and I started intertrope [ph 07:00] totally new field, they suggested that if I wanted to continue to make films then I should go out and try and get sponsorship.

Mm.

So this was a whole new field, me I didn't ever fancy my chances as being a saleslady but in fact I saw various people over the next few months and really I think it was quite a catch when I look back on it, I landed Roche.

Mm, mm.

And I think in the light of what subsequently happened it was really quite a, was quite an extraordinary catch as I say. There was a very nice man who was working as their Films Officer at the time, Duncan Fairburn, Fairbrother? Fairbrother probably, a North Country man, who was really very pleasant indeed. And the first thing that they... Now I think I may have left out a film in the middle of all this. [Pause] I think I've, I've left out another film.

AL: Shall I pause a moment?

Well, the question is whether I'm going to go on with this or go back to the other one. I think, yes I think I should put the other one in because again it was, it was an interesting experience. I think that I, I actually it must have been about '76 I went back and did a film for what by then I think had become LRI, which was London, which was old London Rubber but they'd renamed themselves by then as was the tendency to all themselves London Rubber Industries, LRI, which stood for London Rubber Industries. I think that they wanted to lose the, the old connections with London Rubber really and truly. [Laughter]

AL: Yes, yes.

And they wanted a film made on contraception in cartoon, and I think it was my first experience of having to write a film for tender because it was going out in competition.

Going out, going out, yes.

And they gave us a series of still drawn pictures that they wanted. They wanted a film basically to, to sell their condoms and, but I started interest, introducing the whole moral question of how it was to have abortion and... Anyway to cut a long story short we did get the film. And it was a combination of live action and, and animation.

Animation?

And I worked very closely with the animators, and I think they were the ones that Tom and Ted, which were more cartoon than animation.

Mm.

There was a combination of a little bit of, of...

Straight animation?

Of animation of in, information and animation but it was also a cartoon film, and it was a lot of fun and it started and ended with, with live action with a couple of young, young actors who afterwards made a name for themselves in fact. And it subsequently went on to get a Silver Medal at the BMA Competition so I was quite pleased about that.

[10:12]

Mm, good.

Really, it was my first experience of, of actually winning awards, an award. And I think it was after that, I think directly after that because they hadn't got any films that the talk started about me possibly going out and, and selling films sort of trying to get sponsorship basically.

You know, drumming up business?

Drum, drumming up business, yes. As you put it John yes, yes. [Laughter]

AL: This is Jonathan Fairbrother was it?

Yes, well he was the Roche man that eventually I, yes, that I eventually sort of got hold of. And it, the first experience of working for them, which was in 1976, was on the face of it a not very thrilling filming, filmic experience but a most interesting experience generally. It was, I suppose the early stages, first of all a video, and... When did video really start to come to the fore, do you know?

Well it was coming in with us at British Transport Films in the mid, mid to late '70s.

Yes, so it was, would be about that time.

We had our own video department by then.

That's right, that's right, so it would be you're right. And they wanted me to produce an interactive programme, which was quite early for the, for that, an interactive programme for GPs on, mm... I don't know whether I'd, I just fiddled with the mike, I don't know whether you're...

AL: That's alright, go on.

Good. An interactive programme for GPs on infection.

Mm.

And so it was a mix, it was going to end up on video, it was going to ask them questions on the screen which they had to answer. And I'm not sure whether it really was truly interactive or whether they had to press... Because I think it wasn't pressing buzzers at that stage it was probably answering questions on a sheet of paper. But it was, was there were filmed cameos of different infections, and it was asking them the drugs that should be used, the GPs, the treatment that should be used in these various, in these various infections, infective illnesses. And it was again quite interesting because it was quite an ambitious project. And one of the infections was a childhood infection, and I can't remember all of these but I know we went to Stockholm for that cameo at the Karolinska Hospital, so again that was quite an interesting experience. But it was interesting for another rather sideline experience because we went with the usual Eothen unit was John Hardman, an assistant cameraman and an electrician called Arthur something and I can't remember his surname. Anyway we arrived in Stockholm at the hotel and the unit, and we only had a couple of days shooting, and I think we had to shoot the next day after arrival. And it was quite difficult, it wasn't difficult in filming terms but it was quite difficult stuff because the people we were shooting, English wasn't their first language and although the doctors spoke English the children were not quite so comfortable with it.

No.

So although, as I say, it was not a very testing filmic experience it was a testing directing experience. And at the end of the first day's filming we all went up to

somebody's hotel room, and it was really, I think I must have been quite exhausted and the unit had brought in vodka on the, on the plane and they had bottles of lemonade which they'd got. And I had never, I don't think I'd ever drunk vodka, I wasn't a great spirit drinker anyway. And they were plying me with vodka and lemonade and of course, I was quite thirsty, we were eating nuts, I was thirsty, I was probably very hungry because we hadn't actually had dinner.

It sounds as you'd been well away.

And I must have drunk this very freely. Anyway we, we got up from that, it was a very pleasant little session discussing the day and generally having a chat and we agreed that we would meet downstairs in the dining room in about half an hour. And I went back to my room and I did the fatal thing, I lay down. And it was the most terrifying experience because it was like being in a long tunnel and you moved forwards and you moved backwards and you moved forwards and I thought I was dying. And it was very unpleasant, it wasn't like being pleasantly drunk it was, it was very, very unpleasant experience.

No, quite no.

And I got up and I thought well perhaps I'd better tell somebody I wasn't going to be fit enough to come down to, to dinner. And I staggered out in to the corridor and I must have seen somebody from the unit, I think I possibly saw Arthur who took one look at me and marched me downstairs and marched me round the building about two thousand times to sober me up. And it was, it was a very frightening experience, it was and I've never touched vodka from that day to this really. [Laughter]

[15:18]

Brilliant!

But at least I don't think I had a hangover, I think I was able to perform the next day. That was one claim that vodka makes isn't it that you don't get a hangover the next day.

That's right, yes.

A clean spirit.

A clean spirit, yes, mm.

But I didn't feel like a clean spirit at all, it really was horrible.

But anyway you enjoyed, you were able to enjoy your dinner after walking round the block a few times?

I can't remember, I think I was very careful about what I ate after that. [Laughter]

[Laughter] A light dinner?

Yes, yes. But we didn't, we didn't see a lot of, a lot of Stockholm. I think, I think my outstanding experience was of, of an awful lot drunks. I mean I think it was fairly prohibited on the whole, you couldn't buy drink in, in very easily, it was prohibited in...

AL: Had to be licenced.

Yes, something like that, and it was prohibitive, pricey.

And the film, did the filming going on?

But there were a lot of drinks – a lot of drunks sitting in corners in Stockholm. The filming was acceptable, yes the filming was okay in fact, yes, yes. But the paediatrician was a lovely man I remember, he was...

Because he was playing with infected people, I mean you were dealing directly with patients weren't you?

Yes, but I think...

Did they mind being...?

I think...

When you were dealing with some of those subjects...?

I think we weren't, I think we were dealing with this, with a paediatrician who was an, at that point who was an expert in, in childhood infections of I think specific childhood infections and so it was more about him.

Mm. But some of the time you must have been filming quite sick people where you were joined, not necessarily this film but I mean medical films in general.

When would it, in that one? That one it was quite interesting because I, again we, for one of the, mm, one of the cameos we went in to a dialysis unit and met people who were on dialysis and who had got kidney infections. And that was again, you know, for, for that kind of film it was an interesting experience because there was a of variety, and again meeting people with failing kidneys.

Mm.

I remember, it must have been around Christmas because I remember I was being very shocked by the kidney patients saying 'Well perhaps there'll be a lot of accidents over Christmas, will, will there be some kidneys available?'

Mm.

And it horrified me and I, you began to realise cause and effect.

Yes, quite, mm.

And it was, it was again quite a different, yes, quite an extraordinary experience.

But I mean over the years you must have come across in your filming, perhaps detail shooting on sick people and so on, did, I mean how they responded to being filmed or possible they were quite pleased to have it, I mean no more than being... Is it attention they received from the surgeons and so on?

Yes, I think, you see, that probably things like that kidney experience...

That was, mm...

That was probably one of the vague...

One of the...

And I think it again provide, was an interesting thing that we shot them having dialysis in the dialysis unit there. And I'm just trying to think, I don't think I ever...

Well anyway...

Yes I think your, I think I'll to the, actually come to the worst experience in terms of, of really an ongoing fatal illness because it was, again it was a very, and I'll come to that a bit later on. But I don't think that I experienced shooting acutely sick people in hospital really. Mm, I think where it, where it needed that I think we tended to rig it, you know, putting people in beds, I think we tended, we did...

Of course, yes reconstruct, yes?

Yes reconstructions, I don't that that we actually shot, shot sick people. But the other interesting aspect of this, this experience was flying to Basle where Roche had a video, quite a, an advanced video studio. And we put the, these cameos we put them on to video after they were cut and we actually, there was a lot of video stuff of putting the, the actual quiz together. And I remember thinking oh this is going to be a great experience to actually work in a video, video cutting, because you hadn't got all the cumbersome stuff of hanging material round your neck or running material in a bin you'd be able to find it. But in fact to my shocked horror I found that in those days anyway video editing was much more cumbersome really than, that film editing.

Oh yes.

Because you had to shoot from two, you had to shoot from two rolls onto a third roll and if you got one cut wrong you, you had very often to go back and...

Transfer process wasn't it, yes?

Yes, the transfer process, you had to go back and... So it was quite a, it was quite a salutary experience but it was interesting and working in this and being, realising Roche's power and Roche's, you know, because in some ways you could be quite critical, and I was beginning to be very critical about the pharmaceutical companies

because I was beginning to realise the power that they wielded over, over doctors in terms of pressure, pressurising them and, and the way these drugs were pushed under their noses. So I think I was beginning to question quite a lot of things by this, by this stage. But again, as I say, it was, it was a big, big learning experience really, really and truly.

[20:36]

And Duncan seemed to have quite a lot of money at his disposal, quite, it was quite a big budget at that stage and at that point there was... I mean to be fair to Roche they sponsored two different types of films, they sponsored direct propaganda films, advertising films, but they also pro..., they also produced I suppose more, films rather like Shell did, status films, films, PR films.

Mm.

Films to get their names in front of but were, were genuinely informational films.

Mm.

And they commissioned two films in parallel after that for me to write and direct with, with David Jenner as producer and...

The door, even the, even the big PR films presumably were still 16mm weren't, were they when you shot them or did you shoot anything in thirty-five where possible?

No, by then they were all...

Cinema release?

They were all 16mm, and they would blow them up.

Oh right.

Yes. They would, they would blow them up. Because the film, there were two films, one, and both of them in a way were PR because one film on Huntington's Career was really, had such a tiny number of sufferers although they really were, I mean it's a terrible disease, but the drug that they produced could never really go in to profit in a sense, they did produce something which alleviated some of the symptoms.

Mm.

And the other film that they, they commissioned was on sleep, which I suppose indirectly was pushing their, their what they, what they called them, they wouldn't be tranquillisers they would be I suppose sleeping pills. But there was no direct, it was really a quite, quite a big budget production on history and information behind sleep, on dreaming and what, what happens during sleep.

Mm, good for you?

That was quite, quite an interesting...

You'd have some dream sequences?

We did, we did, of course we did. [Laughter] Yes, needless to say, yes. And what was fascinating at the time and pure coincidence was that the medical adviser on the Huntington's Career film was based in Cambridge, and in fact was doing a research project in Cambridge, and we were working around the Cambridge and East Anglia area. And the sleep film the medical adviser was based in Oxford so I was driving in both directions really to the two, the two seats of learning.

Mm, mm.

And it was quite, it was quite interesting one way and another. I became more emotionally attached to the Huntington's Career film. Because you were saying, you were asking me about meeting patients, I mean that was an extraordinarily moving experience because Huntington's Career is, there are carriers, and it's not quite like... What's the blood disease?

Malaria?

No, no, no, the one that's passed down the female line.

AL: Oh.

And... Oh God it's gone, the name's gone but it'll come back. Anyway they, the problem about, I think it was a small population, one in perhaps 100,000, and, but there was a big seat of it in the East Anglia area and that was why this American professor was, had his research funds. And I think in fact probably Roche were, were funding him to do research in to, in to Huntington's Career. And it was passed, as I said, passed, you could be a carrier and not have it. It tended to come on in mid life and so there was an eno..., and of course, genetic counselling and genetics was unknown at that point, but there were big question marks over whether sufferers from it should in fact have children.

What are the immediate symptoms?

Well it, they, it was... You got aphasic movements, it was what they used to call Saint Vitus' Dance.

[25:06]

AL: Yes, twitching.

You, you would, you couldn't control your limbs and eventually you would have brain deterioration and, and go in to dementia. So it's, it was an appalling disease really and you wouldn't know until perhaps your, perhaps late twenties that, whether you were in fact going to have it. And what was very unfortunate was that the most intelligent of the sufferers, or of the family members would make the decisions not to

have it, and often they least, the less would go on and have children. There was a very famous American jazz player who suffered from it. Now what...

AL: Yes, there was. What's his name?

Oh God!

Mm.

The name's gone. And his son, Ar..., Arlo, Arlo Guthrie, and the son went on to have about ten children actually, but I don't know what the outcome was, who... And the problem was is, as I say, you didn't know whether you were a carrier either, that was the, that was the, it was a, it was dreadful disease. And we followed various families and the stories, and they weren't allowed either to, to adopt because of the possible, the possibility of getting the disease when you were, when you would be a young parent, so that the outlook for those parents who were very responsible was, was very bleak indeed. And the medical adviser, Ted Bird, was such a delightful man and became very involved with these families so he was a wonderful liaison with them, so the whole experience very moving indeed. And as I say the...

The sort of film that would be, it's like the sort of definitive film would it? I mean it's, is it still being used?

It might well be, it might well be.

Mm. I don't suppose there have been many made...

In fact he wrote to me from the States saying he wanted to make, because he'd gone back to the States and he wrote back and said he would like me to make another film, and I think at that time I couldn't undertake it so it never, it never happened. But we forged a good working relationship as well really so it was a good, you know, a good but upsetting experience.

Of course.

Yes. And in conjunction, and I think in some ways it was a shame to be working on them in parallel because the sleep film was quite an int..., an exciting project as well to be working on but I think I gave all my emotional energy in a way to the, to the Huntington's film, which was...

I mean was it shown like, I mean you remember BISFA we had this every year we had this festival of, well not really a festival but a big screening of documentary films at Brighton and so on.

Yes. I don't know whether...

I was wondering whether it was entered for something like that because...

We certainly were entered for the, for the BMA had a, held a competition.

Oh they had their own...

Competition.

Competition, yes, mm.

So whether it went in to this, because in fact those two films won awards, the, the sleep won a gold award in fact, won the, won the top award. And the, the Huntington's Career I think won a bronze award for it in fact.

But it was a shame in a way those films are seen by so few people.

Yes, I agree. I agree, true

You know, because being highly specialised but obviously enormously skilfully made and well worth watching for anybody who's interested.

Yes, they were... I felt quite, you know, in a way quite proud. It was a modest budget the, the Huntington's Career film unfortunately.

And presumably the soundtrack would be fairly simple wouldn't it? I mean you would have your commentary and dialogue perhaps and...

You had some dialogue, you did have some dialogue from the family.

Mm, so the dubbing side was fairly simple on those films I imagine?

Yes. You did fairly full, fairly full effects. And I remember doing, I actually, I was quite pleased with myself because I'd written an opening sequence for the film which sort of introduced the families. And in fact the weather was so awful that we made an on the spot decision and we went onto the Norfolk beaches. And it was a bleak day but it was, we got some wonderful photography from it of a family, one of these Huntington's Career families playing on the beach.

Nice.

In fact, yes, yes. So it was, it was quite nice, it was a nice, it was a nice spot decision to make, to be able to make. So it was an, it was a particularly absorbing project I think.

Mm.

The sleep film was in its own way was as well because we were able to write, write dream sequences in. But I didn't forge nearly the same relationship with the medical adviser on that, I found that he...

What sort of length were they the, roughly these films? Half an hour were they, sort of the order of that?

Yes. The, the Huntington's film was about, was half an hour and the sleep film was longer, it was about fifty minutes I think, round about that, yes. Because again there was animation about what happens during sleep, about the different types of sleep.

[30:06]

And you'd have 16mm copies of them and, and video?

Yes.

Presumably they were shown on...

Yes, by then they were shown on...

Shown mainly on video were they?

By then they were beginning to...

Yes, so you probably went straight from neg from 16mm on to, on to video?

Video, yes, yes.

Like, yes, that's what we used to do too.

Yes, yes, by then they were being shown, particularly Roche were, were beginning to show things on video as well, yes, yes. And it was interesting because by then I was beginning to question, although I did find these experiences extremely interesting, because of what I said I suppose I was becoming quite immersed in working for the drug companies and I was beginning to question, I think I began to have a crisis of conscience really about working on drug company films.

I think it was a combination of things actually. I was very immersed in the whole yoga and self-help. Because what had happened, and this had nothing to do with the film business, but I'd through the yoga I'd gone to some lectures with a doctor on the physiology of yoga and I was beginning to learn more and more about self-help methods of helping various things, particularly, as I say, like hypertension, like stress, which was, I mean stress was almost unheard of then because this was the end of the '70s. And I was attending a little unit at Barts, a biofeedback unit and learning about self-help methods of helping disease. And, as I say, I think by then I was going through a crisis of conscience about working on those films. And I think, I mean I only realised this with hindsight, I think that, '79, that I probably would have liked to have gone on to working in television. I think I, in a way questioned... I didn't so much my ability I don't know whether I felt a bit hesitant about pushing myself, I think I was also questioning the whole thing about getting involved in a totally overwhelming career, I think I'd managed to balance everything quite well in a way because I certainly had time at home, I had time for the family, who by then were actually growing up and so that makes the whole thing very ironic really. But what started to happen was that I got taken over by these self-help methods of, of helping people and I started training in... And in a way it sounds an incredible thing, and it sounds incredible to me now, I actually let the films go at that point, I didn't push it

anymore. And I think Eothen particularly was going through a period of crisis, things were beginning to change a lot by the end of the '90s and the beginning – the end of the '70s and the beginning of the '80s.

End of the '70s, yes.

Yes, a whole new more highly pressurised field was beginning to take over. And I think, as I say I questioned whether I was beginning to feel too old to take on the pressures of television, not that I felt too old to make films but to, to try and immerse myself in a completely, in a, in a... Because sponsored films were changing by then.

They were.

The whole, the whole film business was beginning to change and, and there were not as many sponsor's films being available. Things, cheaper video setting was beginning to be held.

That's right, video was a revolution, yes.

Yes. And I actually didn't want to get involved in that. If I was going to get involved in anything...

I don't blame you.

I really felt that I would have wanted to be more ambitious, and something held me back from that. I have some regrets about that but in fact my life took an interesting turn so I, I really in a way let it go I suppose.

But that was a, an interesting period though, that with Roche I mean that it...

Very.

Some very, from your personal point of view directing and all that.

Yes, very interesting, very interesting.

Writing, directing...?

Yes.

And you had a, did you have an editor working with you then?

Yes I did, my own, yes. Because I couldn't have, you know, I couldn't, couldn't have edited those and so I did have an editor. And that was again an interesting experience.

What, having another editor working?

Yes, yes.

Yes. And you were sort of itching...?

Yes, sometimes I was, but also realising that, that the graft, the hard graft of it I was quite pleased to hand over in some senses, yes, yes. So can, can we, can we take a break?

AL: Yes. We're going.

Right. So the way I let the film business go, at that time almost without a pang because I was so interested in what I was doing in this whole, the early days of the self-help methods of... I mean I was quite fascinated, I think it was a combination partly through having been married to a GP for so many years and observed how people put their hands, themselves in the hands of the doctors and said 'Make me better', and how often the doctors would make a botched job of it and often people would not take responsibility for their own bodies and knew too little about them. And I think this was the start of the period when people were beginning to be interested, beginning to see how it was possible to, to take some responsibility for themselves for changing their responses. And I found, by this time I was actually teaching a bit of yoga and I was attending this Barts unit, which was a biofeedback unit.

[35:48]

Now biofeedback was a mode of learning about your own responses. You had, you had the feedback in to biological responses by a variety of machines. And what we used to use in the Barts unit was something called ESR machine which measured galvanic skin resistance, but there were also machines which would measure the brain waves, alpha waves or delta waves, and by this time they were beginning to talk about certain waves being more a sign of relaxation than other waves.

Anyway they, I had sat in on these groups to begin with. They were running relaxation groups, and this was very early days, this was way before stress was the trendy word that it is today and it was considered very way out. And the unit was funded by the Professor of Medical Electronics and who was very interested in this whole research area of biofeedback, he was quite fascinated by it himself. And what was beginning to happen although this unit was run on what's called 'soft money' as it wasn't an effectively a National Health Service unit they used to refer people with Migraine from the Migraine Clinic and they used to refer people from the Gastroenterology who had something called Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

Mm.

And they never knew what to do with these people because they had no organic illness and really their responses were a result of stress.

Mm.

And what happened was that because of my yoga background when one of the young men who was running these groups left they offered me a group, they said would I like to run groups there? So I gradually I became part of this unit. And of course, what did I do gradually, I decided I wanted to make a film about stress.

Yes, mm.

And the professor was so again enthused about the whole area that he gave me some money and...

You showed him some of the films you'd already done I expect, mm, mm.

Yes, yes I did. And he was fascinated anyway to have somebody from the film business there anyway so. So I, again it was an interesting experience. We decided to make a cartoon film and I was put in touch with a young student at Royal College of Art who was a very brilliant young cartoonist and we wrote and made a cartoon film about stress and about the physiological happenings. But it was, obviously it was very simple but it was a fun film and it was a very good lead in to the groups. You could run, run this film and it would break the ice so to speak.

Mm.

So I managed to get a fairly low budget for that and managed to produce that film. So I kept my very tenuous links with the film business through that period.

That was mainly animation then was it really?

Yes it was.

Yes, mm, mm.

And I cut it obviously as well, well I did, you know, explain...

But you...

But it was to a certain extent it was a two man band that really.

Great, yes. I'd like to see that.

Yes. So, oh right.

Have you got a copy of it?

I have got a copy of that, yes.

It's on sixteen...

Oh it's only, it's a very short film.

On video?

Mm...

No, sixteen?

I think I've got, no I've got a video copy of that.

I'd love to see it.

I have got a video copy of that, yes. It's very simple John that film if I can find it.

Yes, mm.

And then by this time, this was the early '80s, and in '82 my mother had a stroke and my mother in fact was at that time eighty-two because she was as old as the century, and my father was four years older than her and an extraordinary man in many ways because he was very, he was quite healthy and my mother became a hemiplegic so, but she still... I mean she, she had a, a left sided stroke but she still retained ability to talk, which was very lucky.

[40:12]

Mm, mm.

And we moved them in to a flat very close to where we lived in, in Elstree, and my father became her carer. And we had help from district nurses who used to come in and wash and dress her. And he, I mean he flowered in his late eighties, he enjoyed this, he took centre stage because my mother had always been centre stage before that, he took centre stage and he learnt all sorts of new skills of how to shift her from wheelchair to the toilet and how to get her in to bed. And in, I think it must have been '84 perhaps my friend Patricia Ingram who was producing *Link* which was a community project that Central ran at the time in the days when Central, when, when the independent un-centralised ITV companies still did run some community daytime television and they, they found the money for that. And *Link* was about the disabled on the whole, and the elderly.

And at that time I think, I don't know if it was the Year of the Carer but anyway Patricia wanted to make a programme on the, on carers, which were very much an un..., they were very much an unknown and an un..., unsung factor at that time. And she said that she wanted to produce a hopeful film about carers, not a, not a negative film. And she knew my parents and she knew what was going on and she said would I like to make a film as, as the opening section of her programme on, on carers? And so I made a, a ten minute or a quarter of an hour film on my parents which was probably one of the most difficult things I've ever done. [Laughter] To direct your own parents is really quite difficult.

Mm.

But it came out quite well. It was, we, we made it as a sort of a day in the life of, of Alf Golding, who was my father. And he, Gillian Reynolds interviewed him and he talked about what he did, what his enthusiasms were. We, it... Hey I've just remembered, it must have been a bit later, it must have been '85 because my parents had their Diamond Wedding Anniversary and we, we shot some stuff from some pictures, and they were newspaper pictures of that and we shot some of that as well as part of that film.

Yes.

So we were able to make a film, and I, I went up to Central in fact to, to dub it and to record so, that was, who was still in Birmingham at the time. And very different in those days.

Yes.

It wasn't a wall to waller it was a proper studio with lots of people.

Was that your first BBC film?

That was Central.

Oh Central? Yes, sorry, yes.

Yes it was Central, Central ITV.

Oh yes you said, yes I was thinking....

No it wasn't BBC, no it was Central Television.

Central Television, yes, mm.

Yes, who were at Birmingham at the time.

I was thinking of Pebble Mill or something.

No, no. They, Central had, they had a big functioning studio then at that time, yes.

That's right, yes.

Because Central, Central don't exist do they? Oh they do, they do exist but they're quite different, they're a wall to wall, I think they commission their stuff now, most of their programmes today.

Mm, mm.

So yes, so we, we shot and Gillian did a, a lovely interview with Dad and we didn't, in the end, show her at all but we had voice over and him, and we didn't use any voice over commentary we used his words to play over the action of, of him actually of the things he did, how he went out shopping by himself, how he lived, you know.

Nice film to have.

It's lovely actually, except I sort of look I get rather touched when I'm... [Laughter]

I'm sure you do yes, lovely to have I nevertheless.

It is nice to have it.

Mm.

AL: Stop you there.

[End of Tape 3 Side B 44:12]

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

Tape 3 Side B.

AL: Vivienne Collins, Side Six.

That form then went out on a, on a linked programme but it went out in conjunction with a, a discussion programme with, in fact she still is, the, the head of the National Carers Association, which in fact has come much more to the forefront now. And I got involved in this discussion with her and a woman who was writing a book, a kind of guide book for carers at that time. That was a somewhat uncomfortable experience because Jill, Jill Pitt-Kethley was actually quite snide about my parents because she was saying they were very fortunate, they were not a typical picture at all, that people were being dumped on their doorsteps but none... That the ill patients were being dumped on the doorsteps of carers and the fact that I'd been able to keep my mother in hospital for four months before we, we took them, put them in a flat it was all privilege. And she was, she was really in a way quite unpleasant about it. But I, I suppose I stood up to it reasonably well but she really was, and I suppose still is, the champion of the, the carer who has a very tough time. But I think what's happened now, because I'm actually doing some voluntary work for carers which came out of that, is that they are teaching carers assertiveness and how to stand up for themselves.

Mm.

In an increasingly hostile environment. Because in a way since the Community Care Act came into being the, it, a landmark decision very recently was that carer and their patient can be as..., and the person they care for can be assessed for needs, but if the local authority hasn't got the wherewithal there is no, it's not incumbent upon the, on the, on the local authority to provide those needs, and really it makes a mockery of the whole Community Care Act.

Anyway really that was in a way the end of my, my film career. I am still an active member of BAFTA and extremely interested in film making. I went on to have a whole other career in counselling and stress management and went on to work with an organisation called the Holistic Medical Association, because the whole, during the '80s the whole self-help movement burgeoned and I almost, almost, almost was before my time and I worked with the educational arm of, of the Holistic Medical Association, an organisation called Marylebone Centre Trust, which actually has gone on to become part of the University of Westminster. So again it was an interesting place to be during the '80s and I, and I really had no regrets about that because the whole area was opening up, I met a lot of interesting people and went on building another career for myself.

If I look back on the film business and my own part in it I... Several thoughts occur to me. I'm, I'm, I welcome and feel privileged to have had the experience, this, this experience of being able to go over it all because it makes me realise the enormous

interest of that career and the years it spanned and what, in a minor way, I managed to achieve I suppose at the same time I have to say as being a wife and a mother. And I feel when I go over this what seems to me the enormous gap which occupied a lot of my life was being a mother, and that really doesn't come out over this at all, and so in a way that's a huge gap which, as I say, took up huge amounts of energy. And if I actually sum up what I did, I think the difference between me and perhaps today's young career woman is that the women sometimes will explore and follow the career to their full extent. I feel that I always kept a brake on myself because I was always aware of those other responsibilities. And when I look back to that period in Elstree at Eothen and at Cygnet I think that perhaps given another set of circumstances I might well have been more ambitious at that stage, but I thought because I had teenage children I really regarded them as my first responsibility, and obviously as the wife of a GP although I must say that Henry was always reasonably self-sufficient, could always make his own lunch thank God.[Laughter] Anyway...

[05:18]

[Laughter]

And never, and I think was quite pleased that I had interests of my own, never felt that he wanted a little wife at home. And I think it probably helped our marriage survive in many ways because I think I would have been, if I'd ever had attempted to be a wife and mother and not followed a career I think I would have been a very bored and frustrated woman.

Mm.

So I think, to sum up, I feel very grateful for what I did and what I had and what I'd love to go on is explore other women in similar positions of that period to see what their experiences were because, as I say, I think today's young women are possibly fulfilling or following their ambitions to their fullest extent.

Much more than they used, yes that's right, yes indeed.

AL: What was the high of, you know, of your career do you think?

[Pause] Very difficult. I suppose in a way the, the high film perhaps, which was *Giuseppina*, but I think so far as fulfilling experiences were concerned possibly something like the Huntington's film which was such an absorbing film to have...

Mm, I thought you'd, I thought you'd say that, yes.

Yes, yes. It was a...

Because that was totally your...

Because Ted Bird was a lovely man to work for and with, with. And the experience of meeting those people, and as a, although it wasn't filmically a totally ambitious project, the, the sleep film was a much more ambitious project but, as I said earlier on, I think I became emotionally much more involved with that.

Mm.

And I think that is, that's the crucial part really isn't it, becoming involved?

Mm, mm.

In what you're doing really.

That's right, yes, mm.

AL: What's the, was there a really low point in that career?

I think the difficulty... [Telephone rings] Low point? Career low point you're talking about not life, not life low point?

That's right, career.

[Pause] Mm.

AL: [Laughter]

Difficult really.

Perhaps you didn't have any really, sort of particularly low points. You may have had some boring points, I mean we all suffered from that didn't we?

We all suffered a lot, didn't we? Yes, yes we all...

Yes. But I mean you are, one the whole you were, you were gainfully employed most of the time, I mean you weren't sort of...?

Well once you go on to freelance work...

That's right, yes.

You are, you really have got to focus on, on the job haven't you?

Mm.

I mean and if, you know, because... Career low points? I suppose career low point, yes very early on in a way, yes. Was that the, what was that?

AL: [Inaudible 08:15]

[Laughter] Oh you're joking.

We're going to, we're going to stay while the building falls down around us.

Oh right okay. Mm, yes. I suppose career low point was almost, early frustration at Crown.

That's right, yes.

At not being, not being allowed to go in to the cutting room at Crown, because I really think I made John Taylor's life a misery and, you know, he just... He, I think he was in a very difficult position at that time because I think Crown may have been slowing down a bit and, you know, there, there really wasn't the room for me. But, and had I hung on I obviously would have got there, and I was impatient, let's face it.

Yes.

[Bell rings] [Laughter] What on earth is going on?

AL: If you could start again would you change courses do you think?

[Pause] Well I think if... Now are you talking about starting again at that time or starting again today?

AL: Well yes.

You see starting again today I think, I think I probably would have tried to go to a film school because I think to get that all round experience, even if it isn't in the real world is something that you cannot replace. I think, I think one of the things that was a big problem for me actually was making that transition from, from cutting room to, to director, direction particularly.

Yes.

Because I think that I never, admittedly again I didn't stay the course and I think I probably should have done, gone on but I think that I never felt fully comfortable in charge of a unit, and I think if I'd gone on for longer doing that I would have, I would have achieved that really.

[10:00]

Mm.

And, and, I, I think again, you know, to have been to have been really familiar with that earlier on would have been a tremendous advantage, yes. I do think, I think it's very sad for people like John and me that the, that apprentice scheme never, never came off did it?

No, that's right.

Because we were going to be given, we were going to be given a chance to go through, you know, and I think I would have been particularly interested in photography because I'd done a course in photography as well.

Mm.

So I think, yes I think that's a, that I would have changed, I would have tried to get all round experience. I think that's irreplaceable really if I think about it.

Well just the one thing to be fair, The Crown Film Unit, if you did stay, if you had stayed on there you did get quite a lot of experience there because it was a big unit.

Yes.

And there were different departments and if you were really interested in it you could find your way around. I certainly...

I think you...

I certainly found my way around.

Ah, but do you think a woman would have done?

Well I don't know. I mean alright. No that was 1940s.

AL: But things were different, there's a different attitude now.

Very, exactly, that's why I asked the question whether you, whether you were meaning if I had my career, you know, if I were lucky enough to be able to relive my life today or anyone...

The Crown Film Unit was always considered a very good training ground because you did have the opportunity of going out on location or if you were in the cutting rooms, likewise if you were on production you could go in to... You know, all this because it was that sort of unit, you know.

Yes, yes.

But most, so many small units round and about and you were...

Yes. You see that the, I mean if you... Yes, you see I didn't in the end make the decision to leave.

No.

If you see what I mean because Tony, because Tony Harvey offered me his job at, at GBI and I could get in to the cutting room...

Yes, of course, yes.

That was why I took it up.

Naturally, naturally.

Otherwise I would have stayed at Crown probably.

Yes, mm.

Yes, yes. And yes, it's from that point of view that's, that's a shame. That is true. But it was, at the time the combination of the frustration of going all that way, an hour and three quarter journey every day to go and sit in the library [Laughter] when I had the opportunity to go to Elstree and be in the cutting room, I don't think it was much of a choice at that time if you look back on the things.

AL: Hobson's?

Yes. Well no it was more positive than that, I'd been, you know, it seemed good and really a very good opportunity, which it was, yes, yes.

AL: Anyway thank you Vivienne.

Thank you very much, that was great, yes.

Yes, yes. I enjoyed it.

[End of Tape 3 Side B 12:18]

Transcript Queries – Vivienne Collins

Page/Time	Query
Tape 1 Side A	
8 18:00	'Launchbury'? House. Spelling/Doubtful Word – CFU London premises.
9 20:36	'Pentiac Jack'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – nickname for Adelaide Pentecost?
13 25:48	Lucia 'Krakowska'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – colleague.
15 30:24	'Rayam'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – film company/location?
15 30:26	'Rayam'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – film company/location?
16 31:30	'Bullham's'? Yard Spelling/Doubtful Word – part of Elstree complex.
16 31:32	'Bullham's'? Yard Spelling/Doubtful Word – part of Elstree complex.
17 32:20	...could hear [Inaudible] going backwards...
19 36:00	'Unbong Chappie'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Film director.
22 40:12	'Bullham's'? Yard Spelling/Doubtful Word – part of Elstree complex.
Tape 1 Side B	
27 04:30	Sue 'Arandale'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – colleague.
27 04:31	Sue 'Arandale'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – colleague.
31 12:50	Walter 'Lasley'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Film maker.
34 16:15	'Teesler'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – doubtful context.
34 16:42	...wrote all [Inaudible]
45 35:30	'Ron Uali'? Associates. Spelling/Doubtful Word – Film company.
Tape 2 Side A	
58 13:55	Bill 'Orwin'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – film music composer.
62 22:18	'tacky lists'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – doubtful context.
68 31:06	...limited to, to [Inaudible] It was...

Vivienne Collins DRAFT.
Tape 3 Side B

70	33:40	Teddy 'Darbess'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – documentary actor.
71	34:55	'Wolf Shashitski '? Spelling/Doubtful Word – cameraman/director.
71	36:16	...films in. [Inaudible]
72	37:30	Dan 'Coates'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – film maker.
Tape 2 Side B		
75	02:12	...down which [Inaudible] was in Elstree.
87	41:28	Doctor 'Rathrey'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Northwick Park cardiologist
Tape 3 Side A		
89	01:09	Doctor 'Rathrey'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Northwick Park cardiologist
91	03:35	Doctor 'Rathrey'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – Northwick Park cardiologist
92	07:00	'intertrope'? Spelling/Doubtful Word – context uncertain.
Tape 3 Side B		
111	08:15	Inaudible question.

