

This material is the copyright of the ACTT History Project, Daphne Anstey widow of Edgar, editor with the National Film Board of Canada under her maiden name, Lily, interviewers John Legard [JL] and Gloria Sachs [GS], recorded in her home, in Hampstead Garden Suburb, 3 May 1989. Recordist Alan Lawson [AL].

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

JL: Daphne, could we hear about your early days, who you are.

DA: I'm Daphne Lily Anstey.

JL: Where you lived in your early life

DA: I was born in Quebec and when I was three I moved to Niagara Falls, when I was six we went out to Canada .

JL: When were you born?

DA: October 1915. I went to school in Calgary and then I went 2 year's school in Vancouver Island and then I came back and went for two more years in Calgary, and then I went down to London, Ontario, to University for a year because my grandmother lived down there and every summer we used to go down and stay with her, she had a farm outside Calgary, outside London Ontario. Then I went back and I hadn't the faintest idea what I would do, back to Calgary, and I was obviously very difficult because I thought I would perhaps like to perhaps fly planes, this was now the beginning of the war and women were flying transport planes in the States and I thought this would be great, so I took the test, stood on one leg and held my breath and passed it and I said "Oh, now I can fly. They said "Yes Miss Lily, if your father will buy you a plane and train you. I said "In the States they do this. They said "This is not the States and that was that.

So anyway I think my father felt I ought to be given some opportunity to do something. I was working in a bank which I didn't really much care for. The bank was very nice but I didn't like the work. So one day I came home and he said "All the people in Ottawa, the men, are all going overseas in the army, and they want women so if you go immediately you can go down to Ottawa. And he said "I'm sure there are lots of interesting jobs down there. " So I went and I was very sad, I said I'd love to skate in the skating park first. He said "Sorry, you have to go immediately. So down I went.

JL: What year was this.

DA: It must have been about February '41 .

GS: Can you tell us something about your family background, what your parents did, whether you have any brothers or sisters.

DA: I have one brother who is 12 years younger than I am who lives in Vancouver now, and my father was in the bank, manager of the Bank of Commerce but he left that because his father came from Newfoundland and then he went to Montreal, he was a pioneer, 1907 he went up to Calgary and set up an insurance adjustment agency. And he decided in 1922 that he would like to have some of his children come and help him so he wrote to me father and he wrote to my father's younger brother who was a solicitor in Halifax, who was married to a

Halifax girl, my father was married to a London Ontario girl, we were from the East, we had no contacts with the west, I remember as a little girl of five or six hearing him say "What will we do? he was only 28 and he'd just been promoted to the manager of the Bank of Commerce of Western Toronto which was rather good. Finally, they decided they better go if dad says so, so out we went. I can't remember much about leaving but I remember arriving.

Later on my father tried to get back into the bank but they wouldn't have him back, Anyway he quite enjoyed it, And my mother eventually liked Western Canada but at first it was very different from the East, especially in those days, the early 20s.

I settled down and shared a room with another friend from Calgary who was also working in Ottawa and I went one afternoon to a tea party and somebody said I 've just found an interesting job for a friend of mine. I said "I wish somebody would find me an interesting job. They said "You 've got a job. I said "Yes, but it's not interesting". And the next day Grierson's secretary who had been at the tea party and I met her, Janet Sellen, phoned me and said "How would you like to work for the National Film Board of Canada?" I said I would love to. Because I'd wanted to be a journalist actually, I'd taken a year's course in journalism at the university.

JL: Can we just go back before the journalist course and your actual schooling, what schools you went to.

DA: I went to Park, a primary school. And then I went to a boarding school on Vancouver Island called Lodge which was a school which had been made over from the hotel, it had been a big hotel, and it was a very nice school and I had two years, but at the end of the 2nd year unfortunately the headmistress, who was English, unfortunately wasn't very well, and we all did very well in our exams there, but when the final year, the end of our 4th year, which is senior matriculation, which is the A levels over here, practically everybody failed because they came up against the State examinations for the first time, so my father said "I can't send you back. He said just come back and try in the high school and if you don't like it, well. Well there wasn't any hope of going back so I had to go back again to the senior school. So I got my university degree, and two days before I was writing my final exams he said "I think it would be nice if you spent a year with your grandmother down in London Ontario, so if you could be ready" - it's a three day and two night trip from Calgary to London Ontario-
"You could go off just when you've finished your exams. I had a fairly lively childhood. So the next thing, very shortly I found myself down there for a year.

GS: What did your mother feel?

DA: I don't think she had much to say about it. Then I had to make my bow to society, that was the done thing in those days. So they had a big military ball, and actually Irene Spry's son in law who just recently died, Dan Spry, was my escort at that party, and there were two shorter girls, who came to my shoulder, we just had to make a little bow, that was all. But my uncle was running for member of parliament at that time, so it was all very lively. But I had only a year there and I was brought back.

JL: You'd just joined Grierson.

DA: I had to be interviewed by Grierson. So when Janet Sellen asked me if I'd like to work with film, I said "I'd love to. I then said to her "Doing what?" And she said "We're organising the filing system." I said "Janet, I don't know anything about filing systems. She said it's easy, you can learn. I said "I don't know when I'm going to learn" because I was in the main branch of the Bank of Montreal, on the till, they'd never had women on the till before, only as

secretaries or something. So I knew this was going to be a little bit of a problem for them because they'd only brought me down a few months before. Anyway, I went to see Grierson and he was sitting at his desk with his feet up, tipped back in his chair with his feet on the desk looking at me with those eyes, terrifying, he was bored with the filing system as I was or I would never have got in really. Janet had said to me "Whatever he asks, you say yes".

JL: How do you spell that?

DA: Janet Seelen. She became a great friend of mine. Unfortunately she's dead now, she went to New York to work and married, and died a few years ago. I said " Janet, I can't tell a lie, I was brought up I musn't tell lies. " She said " I'll sit in the corner and when Grierson ask you something, look at me and If I go mm and you'll say "yes Mr Grierson". So he was very nice and he asked me a few questions, not an awful lot and said "Alright, I'll see you on Monday Miss Lily. Monday, " I said "I'm afraid, it was the first time I 'd said anything except "yes Mr Griffith [Grierson?]", "I'm very much afraid I can't come in on Monday, I can't come in for a month. " A month." he said. I said "Yes, if you 've brought someone down from Western Canada to work for you and they just walked out, what would you think? " He said "See you in a month Miss Lily". That was my entrance into the National Film Board of Canada.

JL: When was this?

DA: The summer of 1941. It's the same year, Sidney Newman was coming in, the same time, I met him, this was the old Lumber Mill in Ottawa. And I remember meeting Sidney just shortly after I came in. And I can tell you the filing containers stretched from here as far down as long as the length of this close. It was enormous, huge. I was supposed to reorganise these. I didn't manage to do any more than just file things.

GS : What were these files of ?

DA : They were files of the Film Board.

GS: When were they started?

DA: 1939?

JL: So after two years they already had all these files?

DA: They seemed to have. Perhaps I exaggerated. It couldn't have been that long because the building wasn't that long. It did seem that long to me, it was very long. Beth Bertram hadn't been taken on very long before that, she's still alive living in Ottawa, she's not awfully well physically, she has back problems, she can't get around an awful lot, but full of beans otherwise, and she was setting up the negative cutting room downstairs. Every evening I used to go down and help them, I just asked, I went down the stairwell when they were doing this and I went and helped them. Then Margaret Grierson was got in, for nothing, but she came in to teach us.

JL: John Taylor's sister.

DA: Grierson's wife, John Taylor's sister. She was a wonderful person. She had been a negative cutter over here in England, so she came in and just helped. Grierson said will you come in and she wasn't paid or anything, she just came in to show us, because we were cutting by hand then, we had no fourway synchroniser, we had a big barrel, we had our white gloves

and we held things up and a lot of the film had no edge numbers on it either so you had to do it by matching.

And one night, one day, we used to work at all hours of the day and night, one night Beth said to me "I think we should have a fourway, let 's just go and take one from the cutting rooms upstairs, so we went up the stairs and went into an empty cutting room, because it was in the evening and a lot of people had gone home, there were some people still there. And we carried it downstairs and set it up, and when the people came in upstairs the next day, it had gone-

Then everything became different, we got more people into the negative room, finally it must have been about 12 people in the negative room. It was really great fun, it was a very nice group of people. Then some of the directors decided they wanted to have their own negative cutter. And Stuart Legge, who was doing the World in Action programme, he started off with Canada Carries On and then he did World in Action.

JL: That started presumably a year or two before you joined?

DA: Yes, they had been sending the negative out to be cut, to a lab in Montreal, but they decided to set up their own, they had their own lab but they decided to set up their own negative cutting room. And so Stuart decided he would like to have his own negative cutter and this turned out to be me, I 'm not really quite sure why.

I joined his little unit which was up the stairs, and Margaret Ann was working as a researcher and Tom Daly was there as an editor, so we were a little group. I cut the negative of a lot of the Minds, Gates of Italy, a lot of the quite famous films.

JL: And presumably you had your assistant negative cutters?

DA: Margaret Ellis might have worked for me but I 'm not sure that she did. I don 't think I had an assistant. And it was all done from stock shots because Stuart 's World in Action, he did not have shooting, it was all made from captured war material or from old films from over here, And I was very close to the library.

JL: There was a library?

DA: There was a big film library, which had been built up over the years since they had begun, because they had a lot of film from captured war material, they also had their own cameramen out with the army. But the things that we used to use, for instance, The Gates of Italy, I can tell you about cutting the negative of the Gates of Italy because Stuart said to me the night before, "Now Daphne tomorrow morning I 'd like you to be in it - we had a little theatre, "I 'd like you to be in the theatre at 9 o 'clock because I 'm going to screen a great deal of stuff ", which Margaret Ann I think had got somehow from Italy, she hadn't been over to Italy but she got it somehow. So he sat at the back with his desk and big pieces of paper and his light, and he put it on and we sat there looking at those films from 9 o 'clock to 12 o 'clock. We never had a cup of coffee, we never spoke and when he finished he tore them off and said " There you are, go and paper them up Margaret Ann is to go down to New York and get everything I need and there 's the film. And by golly it was.

But I was incredibly impressed with him, I was slightly terrified of him, I was terrified of him until he made a trip back here, in fact, we were all slightly terrified because he was very fierce, he was slightly cynical. I remember we came back one night from having dinner, we were in the middle of cutting something and a lot of us, about four of us, had gone down to the hotel at

Ottawa, and we came back and we stood outside the door, we rang the bell and whoever was there to open and open didn't come, and he said

"If they don't come in a minute, I'll kick the door down." And he had a long black coat and a fedora hat and stood there, fortunately the door opened. But to go back to Stuart, I think we were all a little bit nervous of him until when he went over to England and he came back and he held our hands, just said, that was when he was going over, he said "Goodbye Daphne.

And looked at me and I knew suddenly that all this fierceness was really not true, that he was really a very kind and loving person, that he liked his little unit very much. So after that we had a very warm close unit, very interesting, he was quite....

JL: What was the size of the National Film Board of Canada at the time?.

DA: There were two sets, there was the theatrical unit and the non-theatrical unit. The theatrical unit had Stuart in charge and that was World in Action and Canada Carries on which Sidney Newman was in charge of for a while because I worked for him later, and Sidney was also film Commissioner, I can't tell you all the different things he did. Those were the two theatrical units.

And there were a number of non-theatrical units and Stanley Hoars was in charge of the non-theatrical units, he was at the top. And then there was Graham McGuinness, he had a unit of his own, I worked for him for a while Then I ended up by working for Canada Carries On again, this time I was an editor which is what I always wanted to be from the beginning. But this is really my story at the film Board. I went out on location on the unit run by Graham McGuinness, under Stanley Hoars, the non-theatrical unit, to make a film called-

I felt suddenly that there ought to be a film made on the Banff School of Fine Arts, which was only 80 miles from where I came in Calgary. And so I went up to the little group of writers, there was a group upstairs of writers. The editors were all in their different groups but the writers were all in one quite big group and the negative cutting was all downstairs and the lab. I went up to a man called McFarlane and said "I have an idea for a film but I can't write the script but if I give you the idea and it's decided to make it, may I be part of the unit, because I'd like very much to go out on location. " I said "You may not even like the idea. He said "OK give it to me. I said I thought there should be a film about the Banff School of Fine Arts, it's very popular, A. Y. Jackson goes out and teaches and they have very good artists, they have film, they have a theatre. He said "Ok, give me a little while. " And to make a long story short, I went out as assistant in production, something like that. I have a letter from Tom Daly who looked it up for me, what the name of it was on the film. So that was great. I went out there and shot, I think I was rather joe body,[?]

I had to do all sorts of things, and one night before he went to bed Leslie said to me "Tomorrow morning about 11 o'clock, I'm going to be on the roof over there" and the school is moved now, it's gone up the mountain to a beautiful place, this was an older school, and he said "I want you to- 11 o'clock in the morning, I want you to have the students coming out of the front door, I want two students to go by on a double bicycle and I want a mounted policeman walking past, you just get that, will you? Goodnight." And I did. I don't know where I found them. That was a rather amusing task.

Another film I did, and again I'll have to give you the name of it later, but it was about the veterans coming back. The Banff School of Fine Art was done in 1946, this other one was done in 1945, at the end of the war, when the veterans came back and they gave them various, I don't know how much they gave them, they gave them bits of farming to do of various kind. So we went across Canada shooting small holdings of farms, that is what it was. I had to go

ahead and chose the location. The first one was in Saskatchewan, and I don't know where I found this farmer but I found this farmer and presented myself and said "I would very much like to, the National Film Board of Canada was coming out and could we perhaps do some shooting on his farm?" He said "Yes, of course. I said "Could I go up to the top of the grain elevator and look down, I'd like to see what it would be like?" He said "Yes. " And I don't know if you know those grain elevators but they're enormously tall and you have to go up by talking up an enormous steel ladder that goes up to the top. So I managed to get up, and I looked down and there was the most wonderful view which nowadays would be terrific to shoot, but only after I looked and said "This is fantastic, you can see for miles" did I realise that they would never get the camera up, these were the old fashioned cameras I had to say "I'm terribly sorry, I've been very stupid I didn't realise the size of the camera and the size of the window is too small and also getting the camera and equipment up would be too much". He said "Never mind, now we'd better get down". I said "I can't walk down.

"Oh dear", he said. He was an enormous big farmer. He said "There's this little machine which comes down" and it was this little square, the size of this, with four ropes on each corner, and he said "You just get in and let yourself down. " I said "If I step on like that, I'll be down in two minutes and that will be the end of me. He said "Well, alright then, I'll get on and you get on and I'll take us both down. So somehow, how we did it I don't know, I wasn't quite the size I am now. So we got down, that was one of those things.

We also went out to British Columbia to a small holding, there which was on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, and he had an orchard and a small field with some cows and he had fishing on this. And Stanley Jackson was the director on this, Stanley said to me "I think Daphne you will have to go and buy a salmon because we can't catch a salmon, so get a big salmon and bring it back. So I went out and came back with a salmon which cost me 10 dollars and they put it on the fishing hook put it in and pulled it out and took a picture of it. So when I sent the money in, a very indignant letter came back from the Treasury, I think they felt we had it for dinner, we probably did have it for dinner.

GS: Did they pay you?

DA: They did eventually. Then we went to Toronto and then we went finally to the Maritimes so we covered most of the different parts of Canada in that film. And then Grierson, this was 1945, Grierson left and set up the World Today in New York and took Stuart with him and Margaret Ann with him. And I just thought, I was awfully fond of Stuart and Margaret Ann and I thought it's not going to be the same so I think I'll go down and I'll go down as a freelance editor in New York. So I went down to New York and I left I think after Christmas of '46, I think I had the Christmas in Ottawa and then I went down.

And I had been doing some work, I had been down there, I had been sent down there to go and look at Kodak, so I had some friends down there. So I went to New York and became a film editor in New York for Standard Oil on a freelance basis. Now Standard Oil and Shell over here, I'm not absolutely sure that I've got this right, but they were both competing for some work with the Shell Film Unit in Venezuela and the man I worked for, whose name has gone from my mind, he has since died, but he called me in one day and said go and see someone in Standard Oil, they want to know how the Film Board works, you know the work you go and talk to them. He said "If you're nice to them perhaps they will send you to Venezuela. So I went but I don't think I was very impressive because they didn't send me to Venezuela, but a few days later I got an invitation for a party being given for a representative from Shell in the United Kingdom, who was coming over and going to Venezuela, and his name was Edgar

Anstey and would I go. I said "I'd like to go there because I know about Edgar Anstey" I'd heard about him, I had been away when he'd come up to Canada, he had come for a visit to Canada, but Benoit Levy who was the head of the film unit of the United Nations will be there and I'd love to work for the United Nations, it would be nice to go and I'd like to meet him there. Well I didn't get any further than meeting Edgar Anstey there. That is how we met.

Also while I was working at Standard Oil, Flaherty was making Louisiana Story for Standard Oil, so every now and then I used to get a chance to see some of those rushes coming in, and his editor, Helen Van Dongen, was there. And dear Flaherty, when he used to make a film, he used to do an awful lot of shooting and the films were pouring in and finally the head of Standard said "You've got to stop, Helen you've got to start editing quickly". Anyway it was very nice and it was a nice time to be working at Standard.

Then Margaret Ann was sent over to England to get some film and when she was over here she met Arthur Elton, she came back to New York, to World Today, but she did announce that she was going to go over to England to be married to Arthur Elton. So they needed somebody else, so they asked me if I would come and work, so I moved to World Today and Spottiswoode, Raymond Spottiswoode was there, in fact I worked with him. Weisenbourne was there, they were both from the Film Board, and we worked there for a while, I cannot remember how long because they were having quite a bit of trouble. Grierson had already come back to England and Stuart was running it and then Stuart called Weisenbourne and me in one day and said "I feel terrible to say this but I can't keep you on, I can maybe have you back in on a freelance basis. So anyway we went off with a very good relationship.

Then, I wish I could remember the name of this man at Standard, anyway he called me one day and said Look Daphne, they're setting up a new film unit in Puerto Rico and they want someone to set up and run the editing department, would you be interested? "I said think I would", because I really began to feel I had had enough of New York and I think World Today had folded and I was back freelancing and Stuart had come back to England. I wrote to Edgar and said "Could you just tell me what you think of this business of going to Puerto Rico, is it a good idea?" He said Just don't make any final decisions until I get there, I will be coming to New York next week. And he had another proposition, so I accepted that and came over here, on March 10 1949 I came over here and I stayed with Margaret Ann and Arthur.

GS: Was this the second time you met him?

DA: No I had seen him on and off, I'd seen him a number of times, I'd seen a lot of him, every time he came through and he was coming backwards and forth five or six times a year to Venezuela, so I used to see him. I got to know him quite well. We were married on 2 April 1949. And I remember he didn't force me in any way, he said "You ought to see what England's like because I realise I'm taking you away from your country, your continent and your country and you can stay with Margaret Ann and that will be nice. That was March. But about the end of March he said "We will have to make up your mind because I am going to set up British Transport Film on 1st May and if we want to go and have a honeymoon somewhere we have to get married pretty soon. And also I have to go to a UNESCO meeting and perhaps we can go to Paris first. With Edgar it was always work first, so I said "Ok, Ok. "And we were married in a registry office and then Eve Disher who had been with Arthur, she lent me her flat, and Margaret Ann got all the food and Jo Golightly, he was the best man, and Kay came up with her daughter Pamela. And that was all that was at the registry office. And then we went to the George Pub which is in Hampstead and had a drink and then fully fortified we went to Eve Disher's, and all the people hadn't been told it was a wedding, they'd just been invited to a party

for Daphne Lily. And so when we got there Edgar unrolled the marriage certificate and pinned it up, and that was that and we had a lovely party. So then we went to Paris and he went to his UNESCO meeting for two or three days and then we went down to S [?] which is in the centre of France for about a week and then he came back and he set up, and I spent a great deal of time going round getting London [?]

GS: Where your parents still alive?

DA: They were both alive but they were in Western Canada and there was no way we could go out, we didn't want a great big wedding, Edgar was in his early 40s, I was in my early 30s, we didn't feel we wanted a great wedding, had Edgar's parents been alive it would have been different. It was very nice.

We sent cables off in all directions to North America. That was the last I was in film myself except for a short time I worked for the British Film Institute which I've always felt very warmly about. And I think what I did was, I set up some children's films, I got films for children and showed them little bits.

And then I was offered a job as an editor and I was very excited about this but I also had my own two children and Edgar said "it's a very hard time here now and I've got a good job and you don't really need a job and I think it would be better if you didn't take it." I didn't feel, Carol Ann was only about 4 and I didn't, I stayed and looked after the children until they were older. And then I got involved with the Associated Country of Women of the World which was equally involving.

JL: Do you think we could go back to the National Film Board, you've mentioned Margaret Grierson, was she, did she work with Grierson.

DA: No, Grierson got her in only for a month or so. I don't know how long it was but she came in for a short time anyway, just to teach us. She wasn't paid. What she did, and I took lessons, she was a very good painter, and she set up art classes in their flat and I used to go once a week and I remember we had a model and everything, it was very interesting. She was a darling, I like her so much.

GS: When you say you got a job here and there, was there any formal facility for getting one, was there a union.

DA: Yes, there was a union and I joined the union, and I remained a member of the union for a long time, this was in the States, they didn't have a union at the Film Board, they have one now but they didn't have one when we were there. I can't remember but upstairs I've got a big box with my union card and I belonged to the editing union.

GS: Did they have an employment bureau or did you have to go out and fend for yourself.

DA: I didn't have to do an awful lot because of Standard Oil and World Today but I did do one or two freelance jobs, and I was only a freelance employee of Standard Oil, I didn't work with them all the time.

GS: How did you get the job with Standard Oil?

DA: I can't remember, I think it had something to do with the Film Board but why would it have to do with the Film Board I can't remember? I'm sorry, I can't answer that question.

GS: How easy or difficult was it to get work.

DA: Immediately after the war, when I first went down there it was quite easy to get jobs, but the reason I began to think about going to Puerto Rico was that it was getting more difficult. And I think I just got them through people. I knew an enormous number of people. There were a lot of Canadians had gone down after the war, from the Film Board, and I had relations down there. It was a good time.

GS: Did you meet any prejudice in being a woman?

DA: Oh yes I did, in the United Nations, I thought of going to the United Nations, that was why I was interested in meeting Benoit Levy at a social, it wouldn't have done any good I don't think because I remember speaking to somebody saying "I would like to try the United Nations" and they saying "As a woman you aren't going to have a chance. No it wasn't all that good, and the reason we got our jobs at the Film Board as we did was because the men had all gone overseas. And when the men came back, they didn't actually put out any women who had been there, Jane Marsh Beveridge, she ran Canada Carries on, she was the producer of Canada Carries On and Margaret Ann had a good job and I finally got in the editing department, but that wasn't easy for me. Grierson taught us all, when Grierson set up the Film Board, he only brought over Stuart Legge, Stanley Hoars and Spottiswoode, those are the only three, they were the only ones who knew anything about filmmaking and Badgely was still there.

Badgely had been the head of the National Film Board for years but they had been making mainly travelogues and things like that. And he was still there and there was quite a feeling between Badgely and Grierson and finally Badgely retired. And he retired very close to the time that I went in there. I'm slightly confused about this because I would have retired before I went in there but it must have been in the autumn, I think he probably retired in the autumn of '41 because at one point someone said "You could do some typing for Badgely, And I said I don't want to do it. And somebody else said "Badgely wouldn't have her because she's a Grierson employee. I do remember that so he was still there when I got in there.

JL: When the war ended, 1945, and people came back, at that time the Board expanded didn't it?

DA: Yes it did.

JL: Possibly as big as the Crown Film Unit, 100+

DA: I can give you no idea but we had big premises and they were all full. Downstairs we had a very big negative room and then you went up the stairs and there was Stuart's office and there must have been at least four cutting rooms, perhaps six. And at the far end there was Grierson's office and at the right end was the big room that had all the writers of scripts, the writers' room.

JL: And a theatre.

DA: We had two theatres, one about the size of the one which you had and one smaller. And then we had a film library, a very good film library.

JL: Did you have a dubbing theatre?

DA: I think so, I think the dubbing was all done there but we used to use a, later on we had our own lab but certainly for quite some time we used a lab in, perhaps we just used it for the theatricals, in Montreal, I'm not sure.

JL: Was there also a shooting stage?

DA: Yes there was. The stage was in the big cinema, I'm pretty sure you could move the things away and there was a stage behind.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

JL: Could you tell us who Margaret Ann was?

DA: Her father was an Icelandic doctor in Mannitoba and Grierson met her on a trip out West and brought her back to the Film Board. But when I met her she had married someone called Alan Adamson, probably from Mannitoba, but they finally got divorced and much later on she came over here and she married to Arthur Elton.

JL: The next on is Gordon Weisenborne.

DA: His father was a very well-known American artist, Weisenborne. Grierson had got him in because he had met in his early days when he was a student in the States he had met Weisenborne there, the father who was a very well-known US artist, and Gordon, who sadly has died, because he was younger than I am, I'm sure, he worked as an editor with World in Action, fulltime while I was there, he was very good as was Tom Daly.

AL: You talked about the Canadian Film Board having cameramen in the army, do you know their status at all.

DA: Terribly sorry but I don't, but I didn't have much to do with them, I know they went off and material came back, I would have thought they were more like correspondents but I wouldn't like to say.

JL: You said you had another story to tell.

DA: Just War for Men's Minds, they kept changing the titles, I don't know how many but it seemed an awful lot because I had to keep cutting the negative, and I said "If you change the title anymore, there's not going to be a first shot". Stuart's shot were about this long and every time they changed the title I lost a frame.

JL: How long did they stay at that studio.

DA: They stayed there till the early 50s, there was a man there, who was doing architectural drawings of the new Film Board, but I don't think they finally used him because they moved down to Montreal several years after I left them, because I left the end of '46 and the beginning of '47 and they didn't move until the early 50s and now they have a very big centre, enormous.

JL: And they're continuing fulltime.

DA: Yes they are although they don't have as much staff as they had before. We went back, I never lost my contacts with the Film Board because it always meant a great deal both to Edgar and me and in 1975 they had something called Four Days in May, which was the women. Suddenly through the mail I got a letter which said we've decided, the young women of the Film Board today decided not enough was known of the women of the early days of the Film Board and we would like to have a gathering and we will fly you over if you will come and put you up with one of your old friends and we will have a good time, and we're asking Margaret Ann too. So Edgar said "Of course you must". So I went over, Margaret Ann and I flew over together, and when we landed in Montreal, suddenly there was a great announcement for

Anstey and Elton and we looked at each other and said " That much be us. Somebody was meeting you at the airport, and when we got down there was dear Bessie Brown who is still alive and still a dear friend of mine, she was there and I stayed with her, she took us back. And we had a wonderful four days, I've got all sorts of articles about it because they gave us dinner parties; it was very exciting not only meeting young women there today but meeting old comrades who I hadn't seen for 40 years and the door would open and somebody would come in and we would all look at each other, in 30 years you change a bit, but after 5 minutes, it was really as if we hadn't been separated, it was wonderful, and it's a time we've always remembered. And they were going to make a film about it. They put out a very good book, magazine article, Four Days in May but they were going to make a film about it and we were all interviewed for about 20 minutes and I don't know what happened, they just never made it, which was a great pity.

Then Edgar and I were invited over in 1980 to take place in a seminar at McGill University on John Grierson and the National Film Board of Canada, and Edgar couldn't go because he was going off for the British Council somewhere in the South of France, so we did a joint paper and I gave it and I've got the book next door, they published the book with all our talk. Then we had discussion and it was very...

JL: I'm slightly confused by this 4 Days in May, why was it called that?

DA: Because it was 4 days in May. It was International Women 's Year, 1975 was International Women's Year and they have had a women's unit for many years, Unit D has been the women's unit, not when I was there but later on they had the women's unit at the National Film Board of Canada, but I have a feeling somebody said recently it's been dismembered which I feel is a great shame, but anyway this women's unit wrote to us and it was they who decided that they would like to know about the roots of the women's unit and the early years. And a lot of people were over, Marion Lee, who lives in France now.

GS: She was with the National Film Board here.

DA: But she was also with the National Film Board in Canada. And her husband was a very famous sound man, Walter Lee, and he went into the war and was killed. And years later she did marry somebody else who's also died. Her son Andrew Lee is also over here, he is the manager of the Old Vic.

JL: She had another son called Julian Lee

DA: Yes who is in sound. There was a daughter who is married and is in the States, I'm not sure if she is in film or what's she doing.

JL: You mentioned Haydon Size.

DA: I don't think that when the time came he did the centre. Now the Film Board has a union but it didn't have a union at the time, I don 't know when that was set up, this is why when I went to the States I immediately got myself in the union there. And I had to be fingerprinted and all those things.

GS: Was it difficult to get into?

DA: I don't remember having any difficulty.

AL: Probably because you were Canadian, you weren't English.

GS: When one thinks how difficult it is to get in the union over here.

DA: I don't remember any difficulty.

AL: Was Len Lye over with the Board when you were there?

DA: He was stationed in the States but he came up, a lot of people came up at different times. Len Lye came up and Johnny Fernot and the other very well-known Dutchman who made 400

Million, Joris Ivens. They came up and did a film for the Film Board, I knew them all, but I knew them here, not there Joris Ivens and John Fernot came up from the States and worked for a while.

JL: There was also Norman McLaren

DA: Yes, he came not from the States, he started in Scotland, he is the big name now, there is a McLaren building being opened. He set up the whole department there and he was painting on film and doing other things.

JL: He started before you.

DA: Yes I think so, I think he was already there when I got there. Yes he was because he and had an apartment across from Margaret Ann's and we used to [?]time. It was a very nice time no hostility at all, I just remember as a team, Grierson said "We were weren't allowed to have our name, altogether three films, because I did go there for parties all the [?]be there, I don't remember any, us all co-operating, we worked, working as a team, and we, I think my film is on make another film for Canad

Carries On called Arctic Jungle, and that was cut from a film made by a woman who had come up from the States, I remembered these names a month ago when I was interviewed by the Film Board for a cassette they were doing for CBC but that was, my name was there, when I came over we hadn't been married very long and Edgar said we should go and see a film at the Dominion, in Tottenham Court Rd, he took me down there and there was a short film and up came Arctic Jungle with my name on it, he knew this when he took me there .

AL: You were saying that Grierson didn't encourage credits.

DA: No credits at all, just World In Action, Canada Carries On, they didn't have any credits, not during the war years there were no credits but afterwards, of course, the credits started to come. And so, my name is on, I didn't realise until Tom Daly. The Banff School of Fine Arts film which was made in 1946 which was 20 minutes and in colour was Holiday at School, and the director was Leslie McFarlane, the photography was Grant Crabtree and the production assistant was Daphne Lily, music was Murray Goldburne and it was edited by W. A, who was called Bill Macdonald, assisted by John.

And the other one, the Veteran Land Act was called Home to the Land, which was in 1945, it was 18 minutes and in black and white, and Graham McGuinness was the producer and Stanley Jackson was listed as assistant but he certainly did the directing, and the cameraman was Edgar Loew. Graham McGuinness wasn't out with us all the time, he did come with us to Toronto but mostly it was Stanley and the cameraman, Edgar Loew, and the electrician and me, just the four of us in most of the places.

AL: Were many of the films made in colour or was it all black and white?

DA: No, there were some colour films.

AL: What on, 3 strip?

DA: I was sent down at some point to Kodak, I actually went to Kodak to see about the colour but I have a feeling that the one I went to see about, it was 16mm colour. But some of the later ones must have been made in colour, but most of the war ones were in black and white.

JL: 35mm must have been in black and white, 16 mm in colour.

DA: I think so, the Banff School of Fine Arts was in colour, whether it was shot in 16 mm I can't remember .

JL: If it was in colour it would have been 3 strip. There was nothing else at that time.

DA: How did they get shown these theatrical films, did they have a fairly wide distribution?

JL: Yes, the theatrical ones were shown all over Canada in the cinemas, once a month Canada Carries On and World in Action and they were 20 minutes long usually. Actually World in Action was made for the minister, I think, sorry War for Men's Minds was made for the Communications Minister and it was much longer than 20 minutes and then it was cut back to 20 minutes. I didn't remember this, I just read about it recently. The non-theatrical films were distributed, as Grierson did over here, the producer went off with his little truck and his projector and he took out the programmes to rural circuits and industrial circuits and they were shown in little halls and they would be shown in little halls and talk about them and they would have a discussion afterwards and the projectionist was also the one who showed the films and knew all

about them. And they were usually men who had been retired and they were specially trained to go out and do this and they had a very good distribution system all over Canada .

JL:They covered vast distances.

DA: They did indeed. In the Cities they showed in schools and town halls, and in the villages it would be the village hall they'd show them in, and in some places, people had never seen them, one was shown somewhere near Labrador and a woman had never seen a film before.

GS:Do they still have this?

DA: No, the non-theatrical stopped a long time ago, but I couldn't tell you when. When I came over here I lost touch, well I didn't ever lose touch completely with the Film Board but I didn't know all the details and I've only been once to the new offices in Montreal. But when I left, Margaret Ellis took over the editing of Stuart Legge's film and she edited them a number of years, she may have edited them longer than I did. But she and I last time I was in Ottawa which was 1983 I think, but she drove me down to where the old Film Board had been on John St and now it's all been knocked down, it's a park, it's right opposite the French Embassy which is a beautiful, I don't know if it is marble, but it looks like a marble building looking out onto the river going by and the Canal comes up to the side. And they must have hated us when we were there, we were quite a novelty in Ottawa, because I don't know if we actually wore jeans but women wore trousers and not many women did during the war and we were all fairly colourful I think, and sometimes I think we were almost too colourful for the French Embassy. And we had a fire one night and we had to get all the tins out. Anyway it's now a very beautiful park.

I've got some pictures upstairs showing the old days with Sidney Newman and Hazel Size but they were lovely days.

JL:But that was a problem in those days, all the film was nitrate and presumably you had the same severe restrictions on smoking. .

DA: You weren't supposed to smoke but Stanley Hoars used to always be over the thing with a cigarette in his mouth, I've always remembered this. I used to see Stanley, a wonderful man. They were good days.

JL: What was it like, living in Ottawa?

DA: I spent the first year on the top of , I didn't know till I went down there I had some quite important relatives down there, my father had never mentioned them but when I went down there he said "By the way I've got some first cousins down there, you really ought to know them, here are their names, get in touch with them, they will probably be helpful to you. They were wonderful, one of them got me, my other friend was working with me also in Ottawa, she and I shared the top floor of a very nice house quite close to the Film Board, and then later on three of us got a fla that was quite close to the Film Board too, that was the only two places I lived while I was there.

JL: Were you great film goers?

DA: I don't remember, we never had any time, I do remember coming home one night, or one morning, pushing my bicycle along by the Ottawa river and I met the milkman and I stood there and drank a pint of milk because I hadn't had anything to eat. And there was a dear little cafe where we used to go and have our meals, but we decided after a while the best thing to have to

eat have was boiled egg, I don't think. it wasn't the cleanest cafe in the world. We all used to go in and have our lunch there.

AL: What were conditions like working at the Canadian Film Board?

DA: I think they were fairly rough, they were fine, it had been an old lumber mill, it was just a conversion, it's very elegant now, their new building, it's very elegant, we had all the equipment we needed, it was all right.

GS: Were you paid overtime?

DA: We were never paid overtime. One nice thing was that if you worked late at night you could get in late the next morning, there was someone at the door and you could come in at 11 o'clock in the morning and say you'd worked till 2 o'clock the previous night. And he would say ok, but I don't know when they started having proper hours.

I got paid more there than I got paid at the bank, I got paid 90 dollars a month.

GS: What were you getting paid in the bank?

DA: About 50 or 60. Of course, it wasn't very much pay but it was enough to live on. We are going back a long long way. Edgar told me that when he started he was getting £2 a week or something in the '30s.

JL: I started at £2 a week plus 10 shillings and 6 pence war bonus.

DA: My Film Board life ended at the end of '46 and then I went on with my film life in New York and when I came over here I moved into Edgar's life. I went with him, he went to an enormous number of conferences and things and we did have an au pair girl here, when the children were little, and I was able to go with him, or Auntie Kay, Auntie Kay was working at British Rail and she would come and live here, that was his Sister, Kay Hoar, she's still alive, she's 87 now, she was 5 years older than Edgar. She was wonderful, she was working but she used to come and live here and the au pair would be here during the evening so I was able to go off. And we went to Athens, that was for the International Scientific Film Association, while Edgar was busy with the films I went to see the sights. I went to some of the meetings. And then we flew to Crete just for the day which I thought was silly, I thought it was pretty silly just to fly to Crete just for one day and we took a five day classical tour round Greece.

JL: What date was this?

DA: The early 50s. But in '63, I went with him the first time he went to Moscow, to be a judge on the Moscow International Film Jury, and he went every other year from then on really, practically every other year. If you were on the jury you could take somebody with you and their expenses were all paid. So I went with him in '63, and when John was 18 which was '68 he took John, and when Caroline was 18 which was about '71 he took her and I said my turn next, but unfortunately he didn't go back again. He went back as an honorary member but he said he found it very boring, he only liked being there when he was on the jury. He had a lot of trips to Russia and we made very good friends with Alexander S. He made some wonderful films, very well-known films, he is still active although he must be in his 80s now. They were allowed out of Russia to some of the International Scientific Film Association films and Edgar was very involved in the International Scientific Film Association.

Edgar had so many involvements. He was the chairman of the British Academy of Film, he was also chairman of the British and Scientific Film Academy, for one year in each case. And then he was very involved with BISFA, there did seem to be a great many involvements. But I was never involved with any film he made, I was never involved in the film-making. He once said you've never gone out of films, after all you're involved with my films. I said "Well, not that much involved". He wasn't very chauvinistic but he was a little bit, I think everybody was in those days.

JL: Now we've got onto British Transport Films, that was 1949.

DA: That was May 1st, 1949. He set that up.

JL: And they started in Petit France, but there must have been an awful lot going on there getting the unit together, obviously you were very much aware.

DA: I remember taking John, because they used to have screenings at Christmas time because I took John when he was about this big and we sat in the front seats, and a train came by like this and John got up and ran over here and he said "Where has it gone?" He wasn't aware that he was seeing a film, he was about two and a half, he was very little.

JL: 25 Saville Rd that was presumably.

DA: Yes it was. They used to have screenings every year, Christmas parties.

AL: Your involvement in the Associated Country Women of the World.

DA: I went, in 1964, I went to a party at Canada House and there was Irene Spry, who is Graham Spry's wife, Graham Spry was very known in Canada with CBC. We happened to be talking and she said "You're from Western Canada, the Farm Women of Alberta would like to have you, you could be useful as a council member of the ACWW". I said "I've never heard of the ACWW" I said I came from

Alberta but I was never a farm woman. "Never mind," she said "They're desperate". When I say this to her, she's over soon from Canada, she says "I would never have been so tactless.

I didn't say that. I say "Well perhaps you didn't but I always remember this. I said "I don't know, my children are very little but I'll try if you like". And so she put me in touch with them and I represented them. And I went to the First International Conference, they had international conferences every three years in different countries, and the first one when I was there was in Dublin and I went and I've represented them ever since and been to about nine conferences I think. It's a women's organisation, its aim is to raise the quality of life of women and their families and to sponsor international friendship, so women come from all over. Each constituent society can send five representatives and I usually go as a representative and they come from all over the place, from Africa, and they come in their national costume, it's a very interesting organisation.

AL: Is it active now?

DA: Yes, it still is.

GS: You're still involved?

DA: Yes I'm on the United Nations committee. At one time I was the chairman of the executive, and that was when we had our conference in Perth Australia and I had to go and I had all

expenses paid which was rather nice. But I must say that that the Farm Women used to pay half my expenses and so I only had to pay half my expenses and we had conferences in Nairobi, in Hamburg, and Norway, Canada, and two in the States, one this year which I won't go to and one a number of years ago, because I feel that is close enough for them and they should use up their five representatives from there, but I did go out to the one in Vancouver.

JL: There were other people in films which belonged to that organisation, wasn't Winifred Holmes a member,

DA: She was indeed, she represented the Town Women's Guild, in England there's the Townwomen's Guild and the Women's Institutes, the Young Farmers I think those are the three organisations.

JL: Did you go with her on any of the trips?

DA: I expect I did because I used to know her quite well. Perhaps that's why. I was very involved in it, I was on their executive for many years, but they've done away with the executive.

Edgar used to come to meetings, if they had an open meeting with husbands coming, he could come, he was quite keen for me to be involved in it.

AL: Kept you out of film.

DA: That's right. I was part of something called CHECK, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, I'm on their executive. I was for many years on the Women's Advisory Council for the United Nations, but I'm not on the executive any more, but yes it kept me busy and out of films.

AL: Did you have any regrets?

DA: I don't think I did. At the time I missed it, I missed it quite a lot but when the children were little I was quite busy and then I got involved with ACW. I think if I hadn't got involved with ACW I might have gone back to films, but there had been a big gap in between, I don't know, anyway I didn't.

AL: Your children, have they gone into films?

DA: No, but Caroline is with the BBC in radio, Caroline is the editor of a programme called Analysis which comes on Thursday night and Friday morning on Radio 4 and it's rather an updated current affairs programme. She has had an extraordinary life, she worked as a while as a research assistant for James Callaghan and she has a thank you note in the front of his book because she helped him with his book. And John is in the Forestry Commission in Scotland.

AL: Is it a disappointment that none of them went into films?

DA: No, I don't think Edgar wanted them to go into films. He felt that the film industry was *comme ci comme ca*, but he, he wanted them if they wanted to. John at one point was quite interested, he did come and work a little bit and work one holiday when you were down in Marylebone.

JL: I think he did.

DA: And he was quite interested for a while but then he studied civil engineering up in Scotland, and then he thought he would like to be a potter too, he's very good at pottery, but anyway he's now with the civil service in the Forestry Commission as the chief engineer, the engineer to the Western Scottish forests.

When I first went down there, the United Nations was further out, it wasn't in New York, it was on the outskirts of New York and a friend of mine who was an actress, she knew an actor, none of them were very well known actors, but she knew an actor, they used to go travelling round, a travelling actor. And she said he would be out of his apartment room would be empty for the next three months, you could start off there. So I went in there, I went up these enormous number of steps, up and up and up until I got to the top and it was one room at the top which I had to share with an enormous great cat called Tom. He didn't like me anymore, I liked cats but I didn't like him, he was a pretty fierce cat. It was just one room, and he said I'm sorry there's no bath but there is quite a big, like a laundry tub. I said I'll come over to your house and have a bath, you don't mind do you. Anyway we shared the loo across the way with two other people next door to us, so there were three of us up there I think and we each had our own room and we shared this little loo.

One day I met one of them in the hall, he said I happen to know you don't have a bath, we'll be out tonight if you would like to use our bath. I said "Yes I'd love to. " He said "Here's the key. " So they went out and I went in, and they had a bath, just a bath tub which they had up on two boxes, and then they did have water came in, but it was all rather complicated, I didn't use it more than once, I went back to Kitty.

Kitty Crowe had been working at the Film Board, her husband was an actor and he had gone, he was with the army in the Far East and while he was away she came up and worked for Graham McGuinness as a manager. And when I went out on the Veterans Land Act Film, I kept writing things back to her and she was my contact. But to go back to New York I stayed there for a while and then I can't remember any of the films I worked on except that, Spottiswoode and I worked on a very well known, famous film from Italy. It was made during the war, it was made by, his name is the same as her name but they aren't married or anything. it was a very well-known film and The World Today got it over and we cut it down and put it out to show in the States, it was a documentary and he was a very well know documentary film maker and I'm sorry I can't remember his name.

AL: Italian?

DA: Yes.

JL: Where did you work in New York, the premises?

DA: I worked the 52nd floor of the RCA Building which was Standard, that was very elegant. And last time I was in New York I went up there to see if it was still going but it wasn't. I had had my own cutting room which I shared, it wasn't on 42nd St, but somewhere near there, I used to walk through there. That was a very good time, but all I made for them, I made some wartime documentaries for them.

JL: That was a complete unit on the 52nd floor?

DA: Yes, it was. But the cutting rooms, but the cutting rooms were at Cutting Room Centre on one of the main streets in New York, and that is still there because I passed it a few years ago when I was in New York.

JL: You were there for how long?

DA: I got there early in '47 and left early in '49 so I was only there for two years. And I was about a year at World Today and so I must have been about a year with Standard Oil and then one or two bits and pieces, in fact I think I did some negative cutting. I think I did and then I was told by the union that I wasn't to do that. So I didn't, I was just helping somebody cutting, but that was just between jobs really.

JL: And the World Today, where did you do the work for them?

DA: They had their own editing bench, and we'd take the things out to a lab to have it done, and the negative must have been cut out, we didn't cut the negative. It was a very small unit. In fact, I wasn't there when Grierson was there, Grierson had gone, there was Stuart and a man from Quebec, Montreal, Spottiswoode, Weisenborne and me. I think that was all, but I don't want to say that for sure because if anybody else heard this they might say no she's wrong, because Margaret Ann was there first and it was when Margaret Ann left that I went in.

JL: You must have been involved with a great many films during your editing career.

DA: Yes, I was, I was involved in more of them in my negative cutting career, but the only ones I remember clearly, I remember them very clearly, War for Men's Minds and Gates of Italy, they are the two I really remember, and then the Canada Carries On one which was The Arctic Jungle. I wish I could remember the name of the woman, she's very well-known and I could look it up and find it. It was called Arctic Hunters, she used to come up from the States and she made a lot of films for the Film Board in colour. I think I could find you her name by looking through my material.

Then they decided to recut this one and make it into a Canada Carries On. But I don't really remember an awful lot more than that. I finally ended up in New York with my own flat and I had the furniture for the flat from this man from Montreal whose name I can't remember. He had the furniture before and when I was looking round for somewhere to stay he said he would take over my flat and I'd leave my furniture in it. And it was a one roomed flat but it was a much more elegant one than the first one I'd had and I had that for about a year and then he went back to Montreal and had to take his things back with him. And then I went and stayed with several other people I knew in a flat, in a room actually, upstairs, a room quite close to the Metropolitan Museum. There always seemed to be so much to do. Then I also shared a room with Jane Marsh Beverige who also had a flat and Ted Size had had it for a while. And when Ted left, Ted left to come over here, I took over his room and she and I shared a room and that was in Washington Square really, it was in the village. And I used to come back. This is the thing I can hardly believe. I used to finish making films, sometimes working on a film till 2 o'clock in the morning and then I would get on the bus and go down to Washington Square and walk from Washington Square to my little flat in the village. No one would do that now. It isn't safe. There was no problem. it was just incredible. I would get on the underground and go along. I lost my wallet and had it returned. I got my wallet, when I got back to my flat there was a little note in my letter box saying I've found your wallet, if you'd like to give me a call, you can come round and pick it up tomorrow. So I took somebody with me in case it was something. And it was a young man. He and his friend had come back from having a drink and this wallet was lying on the pavement.

He picked it up. This was when I was working for Standard Oil, it had a Standard Oil cheque in it and everything was in it and I got it back. This is a thing nobody will believe now.

[End]