

# Manny Yospa (cameraman, focus puller)

by [admin](#) — last modified Jul 27, 2008 02:54 PM

**BIOGRAPHY:** Manny Yospa entered the film industry as a teenager through his connection with the Young Communists League and the Worker's Film Association run by 'Alderman' Joe Reeves from Wardour Street in around 1938. He joined the ACT as a cameraman, having filmed footage of various Co-Operative film society fetes and similar events. During the war he worked at Welwyn Studios on MOI shorts and trailers, including the 'Food Flashes'. The first feature film he worked on was Thursday's Child (1943). Yospa also worked at Welwyn on Halfway House (1944) and Man from Morocco (1945). He moved to the Gainsborough studios at Islington under Betty Box, working on films such as the Huggetts series, Miranda (1948) and When the Bough Breaks (1947). After Gainsborough closed, Yospa worked for various companies, including the Film Producers' Guild at Merton Park, Rank and various others. Productions he was involved in include a travelogue of Egypt, Stryker of the Yard (1953), The Bulldog Breed (1960), In the Doghouse (1961), as well as television series such as The Return of Martin Kane (1957), Danger Man (1960), William Tell (1958), The Invisible Man (1958). During the late 1960s Yospa got a contract to film stories in Britain for an East German (GDR) newsreel company, and later he became involved in selling film-stock and equipment for the East German ORWO company. **SUMMARY:** In this interview, Yospa talks in detail to Charles Drazin about his career in film. He discusses the personalities and productions he worked with, giving a good account of the political film movements of the 1930s and the working atmosphere at Islington in the mid 1940s. He is particularly interesting on working relations between different departments - the sound and camera departments for instance, and on the relations between the ACT, NATKE and the ETU. Yospa is also particularly strong on technical matters - he talks briefly about the implications of the introduction of Panchromatic film stock, about Rank's Independent Frame process and about experiments with different colour processes at Gainsborough. He gives a detailed comparison of different makes of camera, and what their strengths and weaknesses were, including the Arriflex, the Vinten, the Mitchell and a camera made by Turnward and Newell [?] of Norwich. Involved in Union activity throughout his career, he also gives a very interesting account of ACT negotiations, and the role that the labs often played in disputes with producers who had defaulted on wage payments.

## BECTU History Project - Interview No. 347

[Copyright [BECTU](#)]

Transcription Date: 2004-02-26

Interview Date: 1995-03-14

Interviewers: Charles Drazin

Interviewee: Manny Yospa

Tape 1, Side 1

**Manny Yospa:** ...musical comedy, she had a small part in one, she acted the gypsy really. [Chuckling] And I was travelling in my car so I gave her a lift home, a lift into London. And we started chatting and it seemed as though - [chuckles] she told me that she was born in Carnaby Street and her father had a tailor's workshop, although that was long before my time, it was a coincidence. But anyway my mother had to just work day and night, because we had three children. And when I - instead of carrying on with further education I had to -

**Charles Drazin:** You had to leave to -

**Manny Yospa:** I had to leave to get a job, and I had a series of sort of office jobs. In those days they had things called office boys, [chuckles] I don't know if they have them now, but I was the office boy. I had several jobs and then at about seventeen or eighteen I had TB, tuberculosis, and I had to go to hospital and have treatment and I had an operation on my lungs. And then when I came out of there I went back to work and had some various jobs, and I was out of work for a time. But with a sort of group of lads, actually it was The Young Communist's League - and one of them, his father owned a building in Wardour Street, 145 Wardour Street, and his workshop was on the top and we used to meet on the top floor in the workshop. Underneath that floor was The Worker's Film Association, Alderman Joe Reeves, I don't know if you knew him?

**Charles Drazin:** The name rings a bell, yes.

**Manny Yospa:** He was actually the film department of the Labour Party, the Trade Union Congress and the Co-operative Movement! And below him were the ACT -

**Charles Drazin:** [Chuckles] Which would have just begun, presumably?

**Manny Yospa:** Well it was a few years, because this was about 1938 this was.

**Charles Drazin:** Right.

**Manny Yospa:** It had been going a few years and this was their sort of first office, rather than being in a sort of café or... And one day Joe Reeves came up to us, we were there, and he said that he'd like one of us to do some messages, run around and just help occasionally. So I was out of work, so I said, "Well I'll do it." So [laughs] I started and I'm still in the film industry!

**Charles Drazin:** So you came into films through politics really?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, but I was interested in films all my life, I mean when ever any new Russian film came over or a new French film, I went to see it, and all the well known British and American films.

**Charles Drazin:** Now at that time it was quite difficult to see Russian films, they were very much frowned upon.

**Manny Yospa:** Er yes, hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** And presumably you'd have to go to a Film Society to -

**Manny Yospa:** Well there was a film in Villiers Street where the Player's Theatre is now.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** That was called The Villiers, and they showed Russian films and all foreign films. Actually that's er - I've never known another thing, cinema, like it because what they did - they had the projector behind the screen. And the audience would sit in front of the screen. Well they must have reversed the negative or something. Because it was underneath the arches, I don't suppose it was...

**Charles Drazin:** So was this like a small repertory cinema?

**Manny Yospa:** More-or-less yes. Then there was another one, a cameo, that was in Charing Cross Road, which occasionally - because living in the West End I was able to get to these cinemas. Well anyway when I went down to work with Joe Reeves there was just Joe Reeves, his secretary, that's Gladys Hall[?] and myself - [laughs] because we were the film department of the Labour Party! Although the war - it was just before the war started and well our first main job was to look after the library, it had quite a considerable library of all the - you know progressive films in those days, all the main documentaries - I forget their names now. And we sent them out to various film societies and when they came back I had to check them through, clean them and any broken sprocket holes, mend them. And then after a time one of the co-ops wanted a - they were having a fete and they said, "Can you send someone along with a camera to take a picture?" [Laughs] They gave me a camera, a 16mm camera - I'd never held one before! And I went out and I took pictures of the fete. Then I said, "Well I'm a cameraman now," so I went down a further floor and I joined the ACT! [Laughing]

**Charles Drazin:** And so what did you do for the ACT, as a cameraman? Did you actually...

**Manny Yospa:** Well I joined as a member.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh I see, you became a member, right.

**Manny Yospa:** So that must be fifty years - sixty - oh all those years ago - something like that. And then after a time The Worker's Film Association moved into Transport House, which was the headquarters of the Labour Party and the TUC at that time, in Smith Square. And when we used get in the lift to go up to our office, Herbert Morrison and Ernie Bevan would come in [laughs] and they started chatting. And yes of course at that time the war was on and we had to do - we all had to take our stint of fire-watch. And [laughs] I was paired up with Sir Walter Citrine! So when it was our turn I went up on the roof with a tin hat, watching for firebombs and he was in his office down below. And er - oh yes after a little while later the Worker's Film Association moved up to Manchester, where the headquarters of the Co-Op[erative Movement] is

**Charles Drazin:** And this was still during the war was it?

**Manny Yospa:** Through the war. And er - I didn't go up with them, but at that time there were a lot of jobs going in the film... I wasn't called up because of my TB, I didn't pass the medical. So I started work at Welwyn Film Studios - er Warwick Ward was the pseudo-manager, chief of the camera was Ronnie Anscombe, who is quite well known. And he took me under his wing and he taught me everything about cameras. And we were doing feature films there, and in between the feature films we did a lot of war material, instructional films for the forces, propaganda films, and what we used to call Food Flashes. They're just like the commercials nowadays, but they only lasted about a minute or so. And they were shown on the cinema screen - sort of how to make the best of your food and stretch your rations and...

**Charles Drazin:** Showing delicious recipes with dried eggs and that kind of thing?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, all that sort of thing.

**Charles Drazin:** Yeah.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes. And the first feature film I was on was a thing called Thursday's Child, the...

**Charles Drazin:** Oh Rodney Ackland?

**Manny Yospa:** Rodney Ackland, yes he was the er - yes he was directing it. I liked him, he was a very friendly chap, we got on quite well together. And Sally Anne Howes, that's Leslie Howes's daughter, she was only twelve, she was acting at that time. And, the next feature film I think was Halfway House - it was supposed to be made at Ealing but they didn't have any room so they pushed it over to us. That was Mervyn Johns and his daughter Glynis Johns, and she was only sixteen at the time [laughs] - got to get them all when they're young! And er - it was a sort of ghost story. And then various other - I remember we had the Norwegian cabinet in exile, so we filmed a little adventure story of them going through the woods with mines going off around them... Trick-Ver-Lie[?] was one. And then another thing we did at Welwyn. They flew Hitchcock over secretly during the war and he made three films in French for the French Resistance. And it was astonishing the way he worked, and everything was - he drew out - like nowadays they have storyboards for commercials...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** ...and he did the same. And I kept some of those but... [laughs]

**Charles Drazin:** So every single scene was mapped out and he knew exactly...

**Manny Yospa:** Yes, and he drew the composition, er - and he was very keen on pace. Because I remember he had his stopwatch and there was a sort of conversation between two French people and he timed it and said, "We want it a bit quicker." Until he got the speed he wanted...

**Charles Drazin:** And how did the actors respond to this treatment?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes they - well it was their job I suppose and - they did what he was telling them. And another film we did was Man From Morocco - Anton Walbrook. That was - I think that was because Casablanca had just come out earlier and it was a sort of copycat sort of film, because Casablanca was so successful.

**Charles Drazin:** And what was Anton Walbrook like?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh he was very friendly. In fact I found all actors were, when they were with us, you know, they act themselves, they don't put anything on.

**Charles Drazin:** What was er - is it Max Greenbaum [Mutz Greenbaum]?

**Manny Yospa:** Max.

**Charles Drazin:** Max Green.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes he filmed that.

**Charles Drazin:** Was he - did he direct it or did he - ?

**Manny Yospa:** No he filmed it.

**Charles Drazin:** He was the cameraman? [NB he is credited with direction]

**Manny Yospa:** Cameraman, yes. I think Margaretta Scott was in it too. And er - and then after that I left Welwyn and joined Gainsborough and that was about 1946, '47.

**Charles Drazin:** So that was after the Ostrers had left and Sydney Box had come in?

**Manny Yospa:** Yeah well I think I was in the last lookings of the Ostrers and then Sydney Box came in and took over.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. So why did the Ostrers leave and what was the situation?

**Manny Yospa:** Well - I don't really know [chuckles]. No, the Ostrers, they were the Odeon people weren't they?

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** No I don't know why. But I was stationed at Poole Street in Islington, though I occasionally went over to Shepherd's Bush. And of course the head of the camera department there was George Hill who was a very well known mechanic. And they'd got a good camera crew there, and we were the - and Dudley Lovell the operator, myself as assistant focus puller, we were the sort of resident crew at Islington. We did everything there - yes, we did two or three films a year there, and they took about three months each and they were all shot to a budget.

**Charles Drazin:** So were the Huggetts shot at Islington?

**Manny Yospa:** Yeah at Islington, yes. Oh yes if you'd like to know anything in more detail, I'll do my best to remember about this period cause this is the period you're...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes that's fascinating. Now if I'm right, 'The Huggetts' first appeared in a film called Holiday Camp, as characters.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh.

**Charles Drazin:** I mean Jack Warner um...

**Manny Yospa:** I think they did, but that was made at Shepperton that wasn't made in house. [NB Actually, Shepherds Bush. See below where MY corrects this error]

**Charles Drazin:** I see, and...

**Manny Yospa:** You see there's the crew of 'The Huggetts' - oh there's a - [MY looks through pictures] - this is 'The Huggetts'.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** [Looking through pictures] Ah, that's all the um...

**Charles Drazin:** The three films.

**Manny Yospa:** The three films. [NB Here Come the Huggetts, Vote For Huggett, and The Huggetts Abroad]

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And er...

**Charles Drazin:** So they must have been immensely popular at the time?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh I think they were, yes. And as I say they introduced Diana Dors, was first in that and then there was Petula Clark and Tony Newley, and of course Jack Warner.

**Charles Drazin:** What do you think was their appeal?

**Manny Yospa:** As a family film, it was almost like the soaps nowadays, you know you get a...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes, the Coronation Street of the forties.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes. I mean they each had a character, you got into the character and followed the story. They were the first of the soap operas, and then they did another two after that.

**Charles Drazin:** And so there would be a 'Huggett' in the studio perhaps every year?

**Manny Yospa:** No actually we did the three straight off, one after the other.

**Charles Drazin:** Really? Really?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes.

**Charles Drazin:** And what else were you doing at the time?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh, actually before 'The Huggetts' we did a film called Miranda, that's about a mermaid, Glynis Johns was a mermaid.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh yes that's right, yes.

**Manny Yospa:** I think they made another one after that called Miranda, but this was the first one. [Chuckles] It was quite funny, we had to do two versions, one for England and one for America. In England she had long hair and a sort of tape to her breasts, but for America she had to have a huge pair of bras full of cockleshells as a bra! [Laughing]

**Charles Drazin:** And so you would play the scene twice, the American scene and the English scene?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** I mean did that happen much? I mean were you aware of censorship and having to...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes! Oh the censorship was so ridiculous in those - because we all had to conform to the American Hayes Office.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And it was quite funny. I mean if they had a married couple they had to have separate beds in their bedroom! [Chuckles] Double beds were right out! And things like that. If they were on the bed they had to have one foot on the floor all the time, and silly things like that. The peculiar thing about Miranda is that we started it off on the floor, and then it was going for about two weeks but they got into trouble with time and everything, because we had a director who had an idea that he wanted to shoot it in sequence. Instead of shooting everything in one set-up and then editing it later, [chuckles] he'd shoot against that, and then the reverse, he'd move the whole thing round, move the set round and they had to shoot that, and then back again for the reaction[?]. And er, so they got fed-up and Sydney Box cancelled it and then started it up again the next Monday and they brought in two young lads from his own set-up. They were quite - youngish lads, and they were fairly nervous cause this was their first feature. And Ray Elton was a cameraman and the other was Ken Annakin! [Laughs] But we took 'em under our wings and er

- because by that time we knew the ropes and they soon knuckled down and they made a good job of it - Ken Annakin and Ray Elton.

**Charles Drazin:** And then you went on to do Holiday Camp and all those - all the 'Huggett' films?

**Manny Yospa:** We did the 'Huggett' films and some other films we did, there was one called The Blind Goddess - and that was another young girl, sixteen - Claire Bloom, her first film. [Laughing] Because that was a - a sort of a legal film - I've forgotten the name of the actor who was in it.

**Charles Drazin:** So how many films did the studio do a year?

**Manny Yospa:** About three - three or four year.

**Charles Drazin:** What sort of size were the Islington Studios?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh er - it was actually I think an old power station. I know there's a door - you go down there, you can go down a lot of steps and come to the underground. Yes, we had a ground floor and then another floor, you had to move everything up by lift, all the cameras and... And it also had a tank in between, where they did a lot of the swimming scenes for Miranda. It was a tank with holes - glass.

**Charles Drazin:** Actually in between the two floors?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes. There were two stages, and also they had the ancillary, the dubbing theatre and the rushes theatre and the - and of course all the building, all the set building. You had a lot on the other side of the road where they did the building and then just...

**Charles Drazin:** So it strikes me as actually a rather awkward set-up for a studio?

**Manny Yospa:** Fairly awkward, although we coped. Yes and of course in the middle of London there were quite a lot of studios like that where they...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** It wasn't sort of big layouts like MGM or...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** I remember during one winter, it was a very cold, freezing winter, and we had power cuts and power rationing so we hired a circus generator to um - we went on shooting with that. [

**Manny Yospa:** consults his notes]. We did the children's film of Dusty Bates in which Anthony Newley was very - a young boy. We did a film - we did a series of four short films called Quartet, the Somerset Maugham stories.

**Charles Drazin:** Was Harold French um...

**Manny Yospa:** I can't remember the actual director. Cecil Parker was in the -

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** I remember 'The Colonel's Lady'.

**Charles Drazin:** Were you very much aware of the presence of Sydney Box running the studio?

**Manny Yospa:** No we hardly saw him, but his sister, Betty Box, she was running the studio.

**Charles Drazin:** So she was actually responsible for the Islington part?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes she was at Islington, yes. And er [chuckles] I can't remember names! No I can't remember his name, who was the actual studio manager [NB Antony Darnborough - see below when MY recalls this]. But she was sort of producer-in-chief.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And she was very friendly. Because the one thing about - in the film world, everybody knows each other by their first name, from the producer to the chap who sweeps the floor, everybody is on first name terms. And [chuckles] I remember once, one of the Ford brothers, Maurice Ford[?], his son, he brought his son into the industry and he had just left a very posh school, Merchant Taylors, I think and he came to me as assistant. And they kept calling me "Sir" and of course that's unheard of in the film industry! [Chuckling] So I had to keep telling him off, he mustn't call me Sir! I was only his immediate thing - I wasn't very high up. Yes, that brings me to another point, is that - I think one thing which changed the face of the industry was the union having, making an agreement with the producer's union. And that was the first time - there was a lot of discussion and argument beforehand, and eventually it was knocked out, we all had minimum wages for our grades, we had set hours and set holidays and sick pay and all the various - you know. And the employers were very - kept very much strictly to the agreement. In fact they kept telling us [chuckles] when someone tried to undercut the agreement! Yes, because the relation [relationship] between the workers and the employers were - apart from being in the film industry - were quite friendly.

**Charles Drazin:** Well what year would this agreement have come in?

**Manny Yospa:** I think the first one was about 1947.

**Charles Drazin:** Ah.

**Manny Yospa:** And then when it came out we all got [chuckles] better pay packets, and we were highly delighted, and there was a bit of back pay in with it. And every studio had a work's committee, which the three unions were - that's the ACT, NATKE, that's the stagehands, and the ETU, the electricians. And er - everything worked very smoothly, there was no trouble. And not only that, but it seemed to give the workers a sort of - they sort of belonged more.

**Charles Drazin:** What do you think accounted for this? I mean why do you think there was this harmony when you...?

**Manny Yospa:** Well the thing is they had a place, they had a bit of dignity in their work. And everybody in the film industry, they were very - they kept up a high standard of technical - and they strove for that - must have the best, must work the best for everything. Everyone was critical of their own work and when they did a good film they were very pleased and they had a party afterwards. And of course the other thing about filming is that it's not a one-man job, you know? [Chuckles] Despite what you...

**Charles Drazin:** Hmm, well a very important point.

**Manny Yospa:** It's not a one-man job. Every member of the crew has got a contribution to make. And that's probably one reason why they had a sort of proprietary interest in the finished product. And everybody knew their jobs and they knew how to work together in co-operation with the other. I mean the camera and the sound people, I'd keep telling 'em to keep their mikes out of the picture! [Chuckles] And the - and the soundman would tell us to keep our cameras quiet! But we all knew our functions and our jobs and we worked almost as a team. Because I remember once, this was later, we started a film and there was an American who came down as a director, and I don't know how he got the job, he must have been a very good salesman, but he hadn't the slightest clue what to do. And the first thing they said, "What's the first set-up?" And he hummed and he haw'd and he disappeared and at about ten o'clock eventually I put the camera in the normal establishing shot, which is what we usually did to start off with, and he came down and I said, "Will this do?" And then eventually he sort of... But one thing he did recognise was that he was dependent on us and we did do a lot of the work for him. We do that occasionally.

**Charles Drazin:** It must have happened quite a few times I would have thought?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, you have to carry a director...

**Charles Drazin:** One thing that strikes me as extraordinarily unfair is the credit system.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh that, in those days too. In those days only the, sort of, producer, director and the lighting cameraman had a credit, none of us had any credit - I mean screen credits. We had credit lists where we...

**Charles Drazin:** And was that something which was changed later on?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh I suppose it's er - well nowadays the credits run for hours! [Chuckles]

**Charles Drazin:** Well yes and when you look at a film nowadays they seem to have just absolutely everybody...

**Manny Yospa:** Everybody, yes - the assistant caterer and the driver! [Chuckling] Of course that may be union pressure, I don't know.

**Charles Drazin:** So what happened when Gainsborough closed down in what - it must have been the late forties?

**Manny Yospa:** Forty-seven, forty-eight, something like that. Well we closed first and we were scratching around looking for other work. But I had quite a bit of work I think, in documentaries - Shell Film Unit, they were quite a big and prestigious unit in those days.

**Charles Drazin:** Did you come across Arthur Elton when you were there?

**Manny Yospa:** Er - Arthur, no not Arthur Elton, Edgar Anstey.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh Edgar Anstey.

**Manny Yospa:** Well no he wasn't at Shell. Er - oh Sid Beadle was a cameraman at that time. In fact I did do some work with them before the war as well, or during the early part of the war - something on civil liberties, er civil defence in Bristol. And er - I went up to Liverpool, also before the war, with them, and I was surprised to see children there still running around barefoot - this was just before the war. We didn't see that in London, but in Liverpool - shook me a bit that did.

**Charles Drazin:** So why did Gainsborough close?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh I think Rank took over - was it Rank? Or did Rank take over when Sydney Box...?

**Charles Drazin:** I think Rank bought Gainsborough up when the Ostrers were there.

**Manny Yospa:** Ah yes, hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** ...and then the Ostrers went off and...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes I think they wanted to concentrate on Denham more.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And you know this is the first of the sort of shedding of the...

**Charles Drazin:** So was it that he thought those studios were too small and he wanted to... ?

**Manny Yospa:** Hmm - yeah I don't know if he wanted to concentrate more production at Denham, because they had several large stages there. And although, as I say, we were making successful films quite cheaply in the long run. And the thing is, just before we closed they spent a lot of money on the sound department, and re-soundproofed all the stages. And they had a lot of brand new equipment from British Acoustic moving in when we were moving out [chuckles]. I don't know - it sounds typical!

**Charles Drazin:** Typical, yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes, we were moving out, yes.

**Charles Drazin:** So what happened to the building once Gainsborough... ?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh I think it was left derelict for some time.

**Charles Drazin:** So they didn't use it in any - no TV company took over?

**Manny Yospa:** Well I don't think - there weren't any TV companies in those days, just the BBC! Er, no filming was done there, I think a carpet company has taken over lately. It's still there, the building. But er - then I did a lot of casual work, documentaries. There was also a lot of work at Merton Park with the Film Producer's Guild. At that time they'd just started doing some series for television and they did a series called Stryker of the Yard - [chuckles] I'm trying to think of the star in it - Bruce Sheltzilt[?]? [NB Clifford Evans] Actually he was a baronet but [chuckles] he was sort of Stryker of the Yard! And then a lot of other small films at Merton Park, they did a lot of documentaries. Then I worked at the Film Producer's Guild doing various things. And also, as I said, television series started coming in then and that was quite a good thing because you had to do thirteen stories, and to do that it took about a year, so you had a year's solid work straight through.

**Charles Drazin:** So there was a consistency which you wouldn't have known before?

**Manny Yospa:** Hmm, oh yes. Although I did work on several feature films but I can't sort of...

**Charles Drazin:** And the TV films would have been shot where? I mean were these shot at Merton Park?

**Manny Yospa:** Er no - one of the ones was William Tell, I don't know if you remember the series William Tell?

**Charles Drazin:** I think I do, dimly, actually.

**Manny Yospa:** Conrad Phillips and Willoughby Goddard was the - oh he was the villain anyway.

**Charles Drazin:** Now that must have been at about the same time as Robin Hood, presumably?

**Manny Yospa:** It was just after I think, yes.

**Charles Drazin:** So there was a kind of vogue for that sort of character?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes but the studios we used were the National Studios at Borehamwood, which is now BBC - er not BBC, it's the ITV Studios, they've got EastEnders there and - they used to be the Leslie Henson Studios [NB actually, the Leslie Fuller Studios] and the Rock Studios.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes, cause there are four or five quite big studios all concentrated in...

**Manny Yospa:** Upper Borehamwood.

CD:...in Borehamwood.

**Manny Yospa:** And those have all gone now! [Chuckles]

**Charles Drazin:** So what was the difference between working in films, feature films and working for TV series?

**Manny Yospa:** Well it was the same sort of process, I mean the motives for doing it were the same, the technique was the same, obviously. Well of course we had a set-up, a set and we used that for all the run and then for the next one we used - in fact we did several films at a time and it took about a week doing each one. So they were always catching up with us.

**Charles Drazin:** So you would have a complete series of perhaps ten films and then you would use one set-up or...?

**Manny Yospa:** Well actually there were usually thirteen films in a series.

**Charles Drazin:** Thirteen films - and you'd have different scenes and you'd shoot um...?

**Manny Yospa:** Well I was er - because sometimes we overlapped the stories and er - and as I say if they were using the same set, one day we could be shooting for one film and then the next film or the film afterwards, so they were permanent sets. We went to North Wales for the Swiss, for the mountain scenery on that. Yes that went quite well, and then after that another series I was on was The Invisible Man - thirteen of those. We did a bit of trick work in that as well, and a lot of it was puppetry. The chap on the gangway with fishing lines, lifting up...

**Charles Drazin:** [Chuckling] Lifting a cup of tea presumably, on the string?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes and the cigarettes and a bunch of keys and then walking across the...[chuckling] Oh yes and also when he took his things of he had black - which we sort of, the labs sorted out later. One thing, in those days, any of these special effects we had to do ourselves in the camera in the labs. There was none of the electronic stuff or the marvellous things they do now.

**Charles Drazin:** Computer manipulation, yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Nothing like that then, it was all mechanically done and you had to blank off half the screen, you'd blank off half the screen when he was talking to himself.

**Charles Drazin:** So you'd have an actor acting out a part on one half and you would have to...

**Manny Yospa:** And then we had to rewind it...

**Charles Drazin:** Rewind the camera.

**Manny Yospa:** Rewind it and er - you had synch marks so that it started at... And it was done to playback as well. And travelling mattes we had as well, we had a sort of blue background and they acted in front - this was when colour came in, before colour came in, but they used back projection a lot, which was quite tricky sometimes. Actually I enjoyed doing the special effects because it gives you problems to solve.

**Charles Drazin:** Was there a particular point when back projection came in, in a big way? Because David Rawnsley experimented with Independent Frame in the late forties.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes that...

**Charles Drazin:** I was wondering if this really took off in the TV side in a noticeable way?

**Manny Yospa:** Um, no actually it had been going since before that. I remember Independent Frame because we were part of the experimental er... Yes oh it was a huge fiasco it was! [Chuckles] They built huge girders and things. But the thing is that they spent all this money getting all the gadgetry right and made silly mistakes. Because I remember one scene we were doing, this was - and we saw a boy in the background, through a window, they were coming in and then they came in through - the door a different door he came in! [laughs] It's so different and er...

**Charles Drazin:** So it really was organisation, they hadn't really thought it through?

**Manny Yospa:** No they hadn't thought it through. And I think it was so cumbersome, the way they were doing it. I suppose the idea would have been good - but of course they were thinking of shooting it like television sort of - instead of cutting backwards and forwards and setting up each - do the whole thing, instead of going out on location, do it all in one...

**Charles Drazin:** Because it must have been terribly restricting if you um - changed your - you couldn't, it didn't allow for a change of mind on the set?

**Manny Yospa:** No, not only that but you couldn't move the - the camera wasn't - it wasn't flexible. It all had to be sort of planned out and er - no that didn't last very long. There was another experiment we did at Gainsborough - some bright spark came along, he must have been a good salesman, and he sold them the idea of what he called "booster colour." It was shooting

colour films on black and white but having coloured gelatines in the shutter so that one frame was red and the other one was green! [CD chuckles] After a time - and George Hill fitted up the shutters on the projectors and on the camera. And they worked quite well - they put up a tableau of coloured balls and curtains and things and it looked quite nicely on the rushes. But then one day they rolled the ball over, the coloured ball stripes, and moved the camera and everything went haywire! [Chuckles] Apparently - I actually told them that they could have done it if they'd shot at thirty-two frames, it would cut out the flicker. Because it was er...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** But that would have meant them projecting at thirty-two frames [chuckles] - they didn't take any notice of me, inevitably! And then funnily enough about a week or two after I went to the Science Museum and was looking at some of the very old cameras they had, the original ones. There was one about 1905, and that had a shutter with coloured gelatine in it, so they must have had - [laughs] - so obviously that didn't last very long! Another thing - yes with Miranda I think they used a first Newell[?] camera. The first Newell camera was made by Turnward and Newell[?] in Norwich. And the thing is what happened is that the Mitchell camera, its patent had run out...

**Charles Drazin:** I see...

**Manny Yospa:** ...so they did an exact copy of it. But they weren't camera engineers, they were precision engineers. And I remember when it first came over [laughs] you could hardly turn over because everything fitted so beautifully. And George Hewlett had got it for about three weeks to sort of run it in! And they gave it to us to - and I had to sort of - but the thing is when they had to change the mounts to put a different type of lens in I just couldn't pull it. But they had their own engineers standing by all the time to do that. And of course the Mitchell camera, you put your hand at the back, you swing it over to look through the lens and then swing it back to shoot, it was a terrific struggle to...

**Charles Drazin:** So was the Mitchell camera the workhorse camera of the studios in the forties?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes it was, oh yes I mean we were using Mitchells that were about forty years old and they're still going strong. Oh yes the Mitchells - I don't know what cameras they use now, whether they still use Mitchells but they were 'the' camera. [Break in recording]

**Charles Drazin:** Yes, so the Newell[?] camera - settled in eventually?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes it would, because it was a well-made camera and precision - of course we must have precision in the camera movement, otherwise you'd have [possibly MY mimes an unsteady movement with his hands] - it must be... It was quite a thing to - they had to keep the gates scrupulously clean after every shot, we'd check the gates and hold it up and see if there was any hair in the gate. [Chuckling] And it would cause consternation if there was one, cause they'd have to shoot the whole thing again.

**Charles Drazin:** And you'd find out presumably, you'd have to wait until the rushes were shown to...

**Manny Yospa:** Well no, they'd just shoot that scene, because after every shot you'd check the gate.

**Charles Drazin:** I see right, so you'd know that was going to be no good.

**Manny Yospa:** You'd know that was no good. [Chuckles] If it was a big scene with thousands of extras in they didn't like it, but it was better than in - some other time.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. How often would you leave the studio? Would you ever find yourself - when you were at Gainsborough would you ever find yourself going off on location?

**Manny Yospa:** We did occasionally, oh yes it's er - but I wasn't very lucky with locations! Because a lot of the crews were - there was a sort of 'golden circle'. And for all the big films you'd have locations in the South of France and the Bahamas - they always got that job! [Chuckles] I never got that, I usually got factories and back streets and - airfields, especially shooting at night at an airfield, it's bitterly cold! And of course we had to keep the cameras warm and er - No it was...

**Charles Drazin:** But they tried to more-or-less shoot what they could in the studio? It would be very rare...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, it's er - well unless of course it called for it, or a country scene, you went out into the country and shot. Yeah of course we used to do quite a lot in the studio - films at sea, they had the boats built on rockers and they're rocking and water coming in, flying water! [Chuckles] Yes I think the only time I went abroad on a series was a film called Martin Kane [NB Probably The Return of Martin Kane]. There was a chap, an old American film actor called William Gargan - he was quite big before the war, and he was quite elderly in this and he acted as this detective, Martin Kane and he went over to Denmark for a few shots. That's about the only sort of... [laughs]

**Charles Drazin:** Otherwise Islington! [Chuckling]

**Manny Yospa:** Islington! Of course when they did some documentaries I went abroad a couple of times, once to Egypt for the Egyptian Tourist - and - that was quite a pleasant one, the Sphinx and the Pyramids at dawn with the light, and then down to Luxor and Alexandria. Another one I did was for - I think it was for Shell, it was the er - there was an aircraft carrier, The Albion, and we spent about three months on that. And of course we were in the officer's mess, and every evening we had to dress into our - evening dress, you know black tie and...

**Charles Drazin:** Oh that sounds marvellous!

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yeah. In fact we had to - I didn't have a suit of course and we had to hire one from Moss Brothers! And by the time we came back, the hire charge came to almost exactly the

cost if I'd bought it! So I said, "All right, well" - so I bought it for - you know, there was a few pounds in difference, so a couple of quid - I'm still using it! [Chuckling]

**Charles Drazin:** And so you were actually at sea?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh, I went down through the Bay of Biscay through to Gibraltar. And of course we were filming aircraft being catapulted off and landing and the various instruments they had for it. And they were landing - they had a couple of mirrors where they had to line up their wings with the mirrors and they just came down. And the catapults - oh not the catapults, the elastics or the elastic ropes caught them and they... I did quite a lot of filming like that. And from Gibraltar they flew us home. Actually on that trip I was the first person, I must have been the first cameraman ever to shoot film from a helicopter! [CD Chuckles] Because they had a helicopter and they wanted some shots of the...

**Charles Drazin:** So this was in the fifties was it?

**Manny Yospa:** I think so, quite some time ago - fifties, yes. I thought that it would be a bit of an operation so I got some rubber sorbo[?] stuff, the foam stuff and rested it on my knee and took some pictures. [Chuckles] And I had the command of the older director, and I said, "A little bit to the starboard, a little bit to..." [Chuckles]

**Charles Drazin:** So you went up in this helicopter.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes and the film we got, they were beautiful shots, the only thing was that there was vibration then there was a little...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes...

**Manny Yospa:** ...you just couldn't control it.

**Charles Drazin:** But presumably they have some kind of pivot system for the camera now?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh nowadays they have a sort of gyroscope and special springs and things which - there's no sort of vibration transmitted.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Then when I came back one of the chaps came up to me, he said, "Now you filmed from the helicopter, how did you do it?" [Chuckles] [Laughing] And I told him to use some foam rubber and hold it steady! Oh yes it's...

**Charles Drazin:** Did you ever shoot colour at Gainsborough? I mean I was just wondering.

**Manny Yospa:** Er no, it was all black and white there.

**Charles Drazin:** When was your first encounter with colour?

**Manny Yospa:** Er - I've forgotten when it was, but I remember when Eastman er there was colour before that of the three-strip Technicolor system, I was filming on that. In fact we did a lot of back projection - the travelling matte with that, because you had the blue strip separately and you can er... But when Eastman Colour first came in it was a bit of a headache for us because the labs hadn't worked out how to do dissolves and fade-ins and fade-outs on Eastman Colour, so we had to do it all in the camera. It was nerve-racking, because with the Mitchell you had a shutter fade, you can fade-out the shutter. But the thing is, for a dissolve from one shot to another shot, sometimes you had to note exactly where it was, mark the film and...

**Charles Drazin:** Wind it back.

**Manny Yospa:** ...and wind it back. And the thing is, you couldn't make a mistake because if you made a mistake, [chuckles] the other one would go!

**Charles Drazin:** So you'd ruined two bits of film...

**Manny Yospa:** Yes.

**Charles Drazin:** Yeah.

**Manny Yospa:** It was fairly nerve-racking but luckily the labs soon picked up the - soon got the hang of doing the lab dissolves and...

**Charles Drazin:** What was it like working with those huge Technicolor cameras?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh it was all right once you'd got used to it. Of course when you had to move it you had to have the crane from the gantry and lift it up and put it on the dolly because it was so heavy! And you had to - you had three-strips and you had to - when you reloaded you had to reload the three of them, but be careful not to touch the sort of prism in the middle where they split a beam. [Chuckles] Because if you got a finger mark on there it was... Apart from that there was nothing special about it as far as we were concerned, except that of course it was a huge thing and not all that mobile. Then there was another camera came out about that time, a Vinten, they made a camera. It had two magazines, one each side. The thing about that, they had a patent and no other camera had it, that was a split-level viewfinder - range finder. So when I was pulling focus on it I just looked through, I didn't have to bother to run out with the tape. But the thing is, having the two magazines each side and the sort of two twisted loops made it quite noisy and the sound people complained so much that eventually they stopped using it, stopped making it. Apart from that it was good, because you could look through film - no, no they had a mirror shutter, you looked through the mirror shutter...

**Charles Drazin:** Ah so you had to focus it through...

**Manny Yospa:** ...like the Arriflex. Yes, because the Arriflex was the first one to have a mirror shutter, because the Mitchell you couldn't look through the lens whilst you were shooting, you had to use a viewfinder on the side. And the operator had to sort of know exactly when, who would pull focus was on the cam, and as you pulled focus it sort of turned in and - so that the

operator got an idea of where the centre was if nothing else! And before that, when was it when we had what was called a Vinten Model H, and that one, the cameraman actually looked through the film while he was shooting. So he had to have his eye right up against the eyepiece all the time and er - because in those days we shot everything wide open, the lenses wide open, they had to so he could see it quite well. And they had to be well lit because the film wasn't as sensitive - except when he went outside on location and then he had to put a black cloth over the camera and himself and sit glued to the eyepiece [chuckling] till eventually he was able to see...

**Charles Drazin:** Actually through the film.

**Manny Yospa:** ...through the film, yes. When Arriflex came over they had what was called the mirror shutter. They had mirrors on the shutter so when the shutter was cutting off the film for it to move, for the intermittent movement, the operator could see - and the mirror and it was reflected through a prism mounted to the lens.

**Charles Drazin:** So the operator would see the same image as would register on the film?

**Manny Yospa:** He could look through the lens, he could see through the lens because the lens had a sort of prism, sort of, and when the shutter was cutting off the picture from the - through the lens for the intermittent movement to take place, twenty-five times a second, then the mirror would - then the mirror was opened so that the operator could see through the actual lens itself.

**Charles Drazin:** Right. Now with the Mitchell there's a sort of parallel viewfinder...

**Manny Yospa:** Yes, yes.

**Charles Drazin:** Now how accurate would that viewfinder be? I mean would there be any degree of...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh no, no, because there was about a foot difference between the actual lens and the viewfinder.

**Charles Drazin:** So the operator would have to make allowances for this difference?

**Manny Yospa:** Make allowances in the viewers. And especially when sort of - the composition would be a chap in foreground a chap in the background, you had to quite often not be able to see the chap in the foreground.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes, so you could very easily lop off the head if you weren't careful?

**Manny Yospa:** No the headroom was all right...

**Charles Drazin:** Or lop off an arm?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes. But the thing is we had rehearsals.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And the viewfinder had to be very carefully set each time. In fact we used to - sometimes I used to stand out or sometimes we had a sort of cross and measured out five or six feet. And the operator lined up the lens and then lined up the er - then they had to focus onto that and he had a little knob for adjustment so that they coincided. That was a - they don't do that now! [Laughing]

**Charles Drazin:** So what about composition? I mean who would um...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes well actually it was the director and the operator who worked closely together, they were - whereas the assistant cameraman and the lighting man, they worked closely together.

**Charles Drazin:** Right.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes, because the director would give roughly what set-up he wanted and then the operator would position the camera so that he'd get - And fix the places of the artists, giving them little marks to walk to, and then arrange all the furniture and the set and all the pieces so nothing clashed and it made a nice composition.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And that was the operator's job. And if any - and of course the assistant cameraman, he worked with the lighting man, they had to work to his - put the aperture he wanted. And also any lights, because quite often they had a lot of back lights and if they were shining in the lens, the assistant cameraman had to sort of black them out, so that they didn't shine in the lens itself. Well nowadays it's - [chuckles] they can't have a foot shot without the lights shining right in the... Oh yes it's er... Oh going on from that, I worked on two series of Danger Man.

**Charles Drazin:** With Patrick McGoohan?

**Manny Yospa:** Patrick McGoohan yes. And that lasted quite a long time, it was er - Aida Young was the producer. And of course each of these series, they had a different director and a different scriptwriter for each episode. So one thing, it was a good sort of training for new directors and of course we seemed to have the same scriptwriters for a long time. After John Schlesinger did Terminus, one of his first jobs was - he came onto one of our series, I think it was on William Tell.

**Charles Drazin:** So they were a training ground really, those series?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes quite. Of course actually they were all done to a formula more-or-less, almost the same story each time! [Chuckles] You know, finish up with a chase - funny with these chases, the chap being chased, the crook, he always ran up stairs and when he got to the top he couldn't go any further! I don't know why they did that, I suppose it made it...

**Charles Drazin:** And where was Danger Man filmed?

**Manny Yospa:** That was at MGM, MGM Studios. Brendan Stafford was the lighting cameraman on that. Oh yes, and David Tomblin was the assistant director and he got very friendly with Patrick McGoohan and at weekends they went off shark fishing.

**Charles Drazin:** Shark fishing?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes off the er - Cornwall. Yes they got on quite well together. I think that was the last series I was on.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Then I got a little job with Morton Lewis, he's the son of 'Kid' Lewis who was once the lightweight champion boxer of the world. And we got friendly, and he was running a little company doing commercials. Because that was another standby for me when I was sort of freelancing - commercials. Get a couple of days commercials and you'd made enough money to - for the week! And he had a contract with BAT and I spent a lot of time just photographing cigarette packets and cigarettes with smoke coming up and the light catching it! [Chuckling] I used to be an expert on those! And also, between shooting all these commercials and things, I helped them in the office, because knowing bookkeeping and things I - so that was a steady job for two or three years. And then - I don't know what happened then - I think he had a row with one of his partners and they split up - and then they broke up and I went to another friend of mine, a chap called Stanley Foreman - you know Stanley Foreman?

**Charles Drazin:** No.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh, he runs a company called ETV - it wasn't called ETV then - that's Educational Television Films. He imported a lot of instructional films and documentaries and shorts and features from the communist countries, from Russia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and all that. And he had got a business, if the BBC wanted any library shots or shots from there, and er... And one day he had a call, well contact with an East German, with the GDR, Actuala Camera[?], its television news...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** ...and they wanted a chap over here to do anything that might be of interest. So I got the job with him - well I'd been friendly with him for years and years. And that's the other job I liked, I was working on my own and I had to do all my contacts - I wrote to the press offices of everywhere and got press passes for everything. And I had this 16mm Arriflex and I went round filming as many things as possible for them. But of course the thing is, the GDR wasn't recognised in those days by the - so we couldn't send the rushes direct to them. We were working for a company called Nord Reporter in Stockholm, so when we'd finished filming demonstrations and peace things and any Russians or others coming over here - and also things which might be of interest to them, you know London trademarks - not trademarks, er...

**Charles Drazin:** London sights?

**Manny Yospa:** Sights, oh yes the sights, you know Greenwich and things like that. And when the Bolshoi came over I filmed them and [chuckles] - it was quite funny, when they went to Greenwich, doing handsprings on the meridian, the dateline]. And of course when The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra came over, I enjoyed that, I followed them all around, all over England with concerts and er...

**Charles Drazin:** So this would have been in the sixties?

**Manny Yospa:** Er yes, the sixties, in the sixties. And er...

**Charles Drazin:** But how did you er - I mean you were one man with your camera...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes it was newsreel thing, and that's the newsreel crew, just the one man and his camera. Oh I remember once I nearly caused an international incident. Philip Noel-Baker, he was the foreign secretary at that time, he was giving a speech somewhere in Leighton and he was speaking about something or other and the GDR asked me to sort of cover that speech cause it might be of interest to them. So I went down there and filmed it and got big close-ups of him speaking away. And then [chuckles] a few days later a terrible row broke out! Because when they showed it on television it gave the impression that he was giving them an interview, and the foreign office blew their top! Oh dear! [Laughs] I think it all blew over in the end! Another time I had a sort of madman, a mad director came over from Berlin, he was from West Berlin, but I was working for them. I was making a documentary called British Habits and Customs, you know wedding customs and queuing at bus stops and Chelsea Pensioners. But when he came over, the first thing he said to me, "I want a close-up of the Queen!" [CD laughs] And I got it for him!

**Charles Drazin:** How did you manage that?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh there was an exhibition, GDR had a stand, farming equipment, and the Queen was going to visit that.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh I see.

**Manny Yospa:** And she was coming up the sort of stairs, the aisle, and I managed to get right at the top of the stairs amongst all the official cameramen - because the newsreel cameramen had a quota, only certain cameramen had...

**Charles Drazin:** Right, could...

**Manny Yospa:** I had to film mute. But I filmed her and she came right up close and smiling! [Laughs] Oh yes, that was great fun! And then after that - I didn't do much film-work after that. There was an exhibition, a film exhibition and the Germans had their Agfa - Agfa Films, there were two Agfas, one in West Germany, which took over Gevaert, and there was the original Agfa at Wolfen. And they called their film ORWO which was Original Wolfen.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh I see!

**Manny Yospa:** And they wanted to market it over here. And I had a friend who - he was one of these go-ahead salesmen and he - he managed to find out that they wanted someone to - they did have someone but they wanted someone connected with scientific instruments over here. And so he got the job and I went up for an interview, but obviously when I knew everything about it, and we just the two of us started selling ORWO Films. It was quite a good film, and we did get one big order from Technicolor - because they were processing Pathe News at the time and they wanted two-hundred copies of every newsreel every week, and we supplied them - and that kept us going! Unfortunately, that coincided with the time when everyone was changing over from black-and-white to colour. Because they had a very good black-and-white negative, but the demand for it was falling off and they wanted us to judge it... But they also had a good colour film. The only thing about the colour film, it wasn't compatible with Kodak's for processing.

**Charles Drazin:** Right, oh I see.

**Manny Yospa:** So the labs didn't want to, cause that means you have to set-up a separate bath.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh.

**Manny Yospa:** And they kept onto us to sell their positive, because that's where the money is, in the print film.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** They couldn't make anything! But I suggested, my plan was to use the negative, because the negative film was very good and we could flog a lot of that because we were doing it a couple of pence a foot cheaper than Kodak.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** And everybody was sort of poverty-stricken, they would buy a lot of that, and they actually got one of the labs, Kays to set up a bath for that. And they'd be willing to set up a bath for that and the good thing about it was that the print film could go through the same bath, which would be a great - which is an advantage over Kodak. But they didn't want to [laughs], they said, "No, we wanted you to sell the..."

**Charles Drazin:** I notice that now...

**Manny Yospa:** They even got a commercial chap to do a test on this colour film, and he was very pleased with it. But they wouldn't let me...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes it's a shame. I notice now, or since the fall of the Iron Curtain, all their films are very easy to get now and it seems to be...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh! They do a lot of roll film for still cameras.

**Charles Drazin:** Hmm. I mean I have an old Standard 8mm Cine camera and ORVO seem to be the only people who still do standard 8mm film.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes. There's a lot of black and white reversal.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes because they do all their film stocks and everything... But the thing which finally put the kibosh on it was - India had the row with America, so instead of using Kodak film they switched over to ORVO film. And there was such a huge - Of course India has got such a huge, big film industry that...

**Charles Drazin:** Absolutely!

**Manny Yospa:** ...they were hard-pressed, so we had quite a bit of film in stock, and they said, "We'll take all that!" [Chuckles] And then ORVO closed down. But the other chap he'd left some time before, he made a fool of himself and... But I stayed on and I took over the scientific instruments division, their stocks, and sorted that out because that was in a terrible mess. And I stayed with them for thirteen years, doing the Praktica, Because they also did Praktica cameras. And eventually when I was sixty-three, because I was happy to stay on, the management consultants walked in [laughs]. Oh dear, they're a menace, they are. Because the first thing they did, the only thing they did, they interviewed everybody. And the only recommendation was to sack half of the staff! Because actually I had quite a nice little job, it was an important job, we did something, but it was quiet. But they retired me early, I didn't actually get the sack, I was retired early. But the thing is, being redundant, I had redundancy money as well, and I've still got a little pension from them. That's [indecipherable?] Scientific Instruments, they're very big, you know, microscopes and - they had some marvellous instruments there. And from then on - when I was there a chap called Bovey Johnson, who I used to know as a cameraman, he was running an 8mm job and we started to talk. Because we knew each other from previously. And he said, "Why don't you join the veterans, the Cinema Veterans?" So he got me in and from there we went to one of the reunions and I met all my old friends from the ACT! And Adrian Brunel, he said, "We're starting up this history project, would you like to join in?"

**Charles Drazin:** Is this Adrian Brunel?

**Manny Yospa:** No this is his son.

**Charles Drazin:** Christopher Brunel?

**Manny Yospa:** Christopher is his son.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Unfortunately he died a few years ago. Oh yes, Adrian Brunel, I never knew him but I knew his son very well, we were very, very friendly. And from then on - that's my only

contact, now, with the film industry, is through the veterans and also the history project. I'm very pleased with the history project because it brings back my youth.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** People I used to know forty, fifty years ago, I'm interviewing and er...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. So was it Christopher Brunel who was behind the history project? How did you come to...

**Manny Yospa:** I'm not sure, I think Roy Fowler, I think was the guiding light, he started it off, and Alan Lawson, he joined it. Because I never knew Roy Fowler before but I knew Alan Lawson from years ago.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. So you must have met a lot of people you hadn't seen for about thirty or forty years?

**Manny Yospa:** Thirty or forty years! And some of them haven't changed and some look so old! [Chuckles] Oh yes, in fact I'm very happy with the history project. And this is the only time I've been interviewed - [chuckles] all the others have been.

**Charles Drazin:** Looking back at your career, what do you think gave you most satisfaction? It seems that you've really had quite a varied career...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh well it was all satisfying, I don't think I've had any bad times at all in the film industry. Although at times when work was a bit scarce and you had to scratch around and get the phone and ring - I got my little address book and would ring everybody for - that's a job I hated doing.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. Because when you were at Gainsborough you were an employee working full time?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes full time on the staff.

**Charles Drazin:** And then at some stage um - I mean, when were you a freelancer and how did that differ?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh well the thing is I had to look around for work and ring people up and er...

**Charles Drazin:** And was that fairly standard by that time?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes. But also - cause I'm not a pushy type, I'm not a good self-salesman. I had a few regulars, who employed me regularly, so I always had a bit of work, and in fact I don't think I had more than two weeks without any work at all. So it was very varied - but I never got onto the big stuff, the big names. I think there must be a - a lodge, a freemason's lodge and they all

sort of gave each other jobs, because it was always the same people doing them! And I never got in on that. Anything else you'd particularly like to - if I can remember?

**Charles Drazin:** Well I'm quite interested in your time at Welwyn.

**Manny Yospa:** Ah yes.

**Charles Drazin:** Now presumably - now who would have owned Welwyn?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh it was the BIP, British International Pictures, they were the same people who owned Elstree but Elstree was closed down during the war.

**Charles Drazin:** Right.

**Manny Yospa:** And all their films were made at Welwyn Garden Studios.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh I see, so they would have switched production to Welwyn would they, during the war?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes. I think the big governor there was a chap called Robert Clark, he was big in the City. He used to come down quite regularly and funnily enough he and I seemed to have been quite friendly.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh so when Halfway House was shot at Welwyn they leased out the space to Ealing, because Ealing...

**Manny Yospa:** I presume so, yes. Yes in fact quite a lot of the stuff - because I was on the staff at Welwyn - quite a lot of the things we sort of finished off films from Denham where they had to move out because another film was coming in. So they - bits and pieces - yes.

**Charles Drazin:** So that must have often have happened actually?

**Manny Yospa:** Hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** I mean there would have been a slate for so many films going through Denham and then a film would be kicked off..

**Manny Yospa:** Well if it runs over time, runs over schedule and there's another film waiting to come in then they use sort of - and it was usually only a few small sequences. Oh, there was often a studio, you know, rented out, that sort of thing.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes. I can remember seeing a film called The Night Has Eyes - um - James Mason, which was shot at Welwyn...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes.

**Charles Drazin:** Was that during your time there?

**Manny Yospa:** I think that was before my time. Yes I'm trying to think of other films that were shot at Welwyn. I remember one army instructional film we were shooting, and one of the shots was to be in a trench and there's a sort of rag curtain hanging down, and they wanted a shot of gunfire, machinegun fire raking this... And so we had the camera set up facing it, and I was by the side of the camera, the machine-gunner was behind me [chuckling] - so I was hoping that he was a sergeant! But I put my trust in him and he missed me! [Chuckling] So that was a terrifying moment.

**Charles Drazin:** What sort of size was Welwyn Studio?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh two stages, and the lot. Yeah it was next-door to the Shredded Wheat people, they had the big Shredded Wheat things and those - I remember once one of the producers came in and he was so pleased with himself. Apparently he'd got a tin of Nivea Cream, he said that he'd got it from America. He said, "It's marvellous!" I said, "Well it's only made down the road!" The Nivea factory was just down the road! [Chuckles]

**Charles Drazin:** Did you ever come across Leslie Arliss who directed a lot of the...

**Manny Yospa:** No I didn't come across him.

**Charles Drazin:** It's just that he directed *The Night has Eyes* at Welwyn.

**Manny Yospa:** Hmm, well he was before my time I think. Because I was in filming mainly just at the start of the war, and then through the war and...

**Charles Drazin:** What were relations like between the studios and the unions during the war?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh reasonable. Oh yes, they were still working together, because during the war of course there wasn't much industrial conflict at all. Everybody was working together as a -

**Charles Drazin:** And you had a real sense of pulling together?

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, pulling together. They only had one strike there - actually I was shop steward at the time and I was the only one who wasn't on strike! [CD Laughs] Yes cause I had to go to hospital for a little operation on my lungs, and it lasted a week and when I came back [apparently they'd] been on strike! [Chuckling] Well cause one of the assistant directors, I think they tried to fire him for some reason, which other members thought was unfair. So they came out on strike and he was reinstated.

**Charles Drazin:** Right. Were you aware of - I mean were there a lot of interruptions during the war because of bombing and that type of thing?

**Manny Yospa:** Not at Welwyn I don't think, no.

**Charles Drazin:** No, it's far enough out of London.

**Manny Yospa:** Far enough out, yes. No we didn't have any interruptions there. In fact all the studios were probably a little bit out of London.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** I mean only one studio, was it Worton Hall had a direct hit, and killed a chap called Doc Solomons[?] who was the sort of studio manager and big shot. Apart from that I don't - yes it's - I don't think there's anything else I could...

**Charles Drazin:** I think that's pretty much it isn't it?

**Manny Yospa:** Yes. As I say I think if in your book of you can sort of put what the...

**Charles Drazin:** I think the trade union side is...

**Manny Yospa:** The trade union side is - it did make a terrific difference because as I say it gave dignity and the work force worked. Because I think nowadays the - well because I've been out of it for some time but I'm sure the morale is very low in films.

**Charles Drazin:** Hmm. It strikes me - I mean looking back at that time it strikes me there were characters like Anthony Asquith who played a very big part in...

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** ...in the union. And in a way he had a foot in two camps and perhaps that helped to um...

**Manny Yospa:** Well actually I think he was more a technician with us, you know he wasn't a...

**Charles Drazin:** Yes but as an extremely influential director he was someone that the bosses couldn't ignore.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh yes, yes, hmm.

**Charles Drazin:** And so perhaps that was a force for um - bridging differences. I don't know.

**Manny Yospa:** Well, of course actually I was on the - for a time I was on the film negotiating committee and we negotiated any updates with the bosses. We met at their head office in Mount Street and there was quite a big to-do going through every clause, by clause and there was a bit of a tussle, and sometimes they won and sometimes we won. And afterwards [laughing] we all had drinks together in the pub! And we were all on sort of first-name terms. But in fact a lot of it was sort of gamesmanship. I remember every summer when the days were getting longer and they wanted more overtime shooting outdoors, we would put in for a rise in pay and they would completely reject it. It happened every single year, the same time, they completely rejected it.

We had our meetings and they - and all the branches voted for a work to rule, go-slow, which means you didn't do overtime. And eventually we had this sort of work to rule for a couple of weeks, then they caved in. But we knew they'd cave in! This was only a sort of gesture to reject - as a bargaining thing. And eventually we sort of came to an agreement.

**Charles Drazin:** A compromise.

**Manny Yospa:** Compromise.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes.

**Manny Yospa:** Yes it was a sort of dance! [Chuckles] But nowadays I think it's a bit more vicious, they mean it.

**Charles Drazin:** Yes I think things have changed enormously.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh it has. No, I'm looking forward to the day when we - start modernising ourselves back into the nineteenth century and really become modern. Well I hope you've learnt something about your particular subject, the forties.

**Charles Drazin:** Oh yes it's been really, really helpful, very useful indeed.

**Manny Yospa:** Oh good. Right, shall we...?

**Charles Drazin:** Yes let's er...

**Manny Yospa:** Call it a day and then... [Break in Recording]

**Manny Yospa:** This is a BECTU History Project and it's Interview Number 347 of Manny Yospa. This is Manny Yospa speaking. The original interview was on the 14th of March 1995 and today is the 3rd of May 1995. The reason I am making this recording is to amend some errors I made in my first interview and also to add to the story. In my first interview I made several errors. It was a slip of the tongue when Charles Drazin mentioned Holiday Camp and I said it was made at Shepperton, where of course it was not, it was made at Shepherd's Bush. And I also talked about Eileen Harrison when it should be [Kathleen Harrison] who was in 'The Huggetts'. And I couldn't call to name the studio manager of Gainsborough at the time - it is Tony Darnborough. Yes, I'd like now to sort of elaborate on the camera work during the 1940's when I started at Welwyn Studios. It was all of course shot in black and white. The film had just become panchromatic which means previously to that it was - the blue light was very, very sensitive and it er - and all the other colours did not register very well. But Kodak, I think they put in a filter layer or something and it evened up the recordings of the different colours, green, red and blue. So it was more realistic.

Well of course we used a lot of filters in those days, doing exteriors, filtering out excess blue skies and deepening the blueness of the skies. And the film then of course was not so sensitive as it is now. In fact we had a - we used to shoot at the aperture of F2 which is wide open, that is on

the Taylor-Hobson-Cooke lenses, they had just come in at that time. And we also did a lot of soft focus work, putting gauze and diffusers in front of the lenses, and I well remember my first or second film, we had an old German cameraman, Gunther Krampf, and he just loved soft focus. He had his own special diffuser which he had in front of a lens all the time, his own private one. And then in addition to that, especially on close-ups, we had to put in various diffusers as well. And everything looked a bit soft and he loved it. But I was a focus-puller at the time and quite often [chuckles] unjustly got told off, they said, "It looks a bit soft!" But of course we eventually got round that.

And the lenses also were not so wide-angled in those days, in fact we mainly shot on a 50mm or a 40mm, and the widest was a 35mm. Which means that the longer the focal length of a lens, the less depth of focus there is. And when I used a 35mm I had a bit more focus to play with and it was quite good. And also the thing is the different angles on the lenses alter the perspective. In fact when you have a very wide-angled lens and you have someone in front of you and someone two feet behind, it looks much further away. Whereas if you have a very long focus lens, say a 75mm and they're standing in the same place, they look almost on top of each other. And you have to sort of remember that when you're setting it up. And also on the 75mm the depth of focus was very, very small and it was difficult pulling focus, as you had to do when they moved towards a camera or the camera tracked. In fact there was a calibration was what was called 'geometric progression'. From infinity to about twenty-feet, the gaps between the footages were very small but as you came closer there was a larger distance in the calibrations, so when you were tracking in, you had to alter the speed of the - er - so that it went faster the nearer you got. And er there was quite a bit of judgement. Eventually it became automatic and we were able to do it quite well.

But also at the beginning a very, very big influence in the photography, cinema photography was Citizen Kane. It was like a bombshell when it came over here, because the depth of focus was very, very deep. Because Gregg Toland the cameraman, he stopped down to about F8 which meant that you had about - er several times the amount of light to light the thing. And it also had ceilings on the sets, which was unheard of. And it made such an impact on us that people started copying. Oh of course the other thing which happened about the same time, which I think may have actually enabled Gregg Toland to stop down, was that the sensitivity of the film was very much improved and he didn't need to make as much light as previously to get the image on the film. And also black and white has a much greater tolerance in the shading between the very deep density and the very high highlights. And the photography was much more subtle then, much more subtle than colour film because I think the tolerance in black and white was about a hundred and twenty-five to one, and then when colour film came in the tolerance was only about three or four to one. I don't know what it's like in television, whether that tolerance is...

Also cameramen, I mean professional cameramen and photographers who do exhibitions much prefer black and white because of this, because of the subtle difference in the actual thing itself. Another thing that we used to do in the old days was that at the end of the roll of film we used to run off a test strip which went to the laboratories. And they - when they'd developed it they printed parts of it under different exposures to see which came - which was the most appropriate. And also we had sometimes, some cameramen had to do hand tests. At the end of the roll we tore off a - went to the dark room, tore off a bit of the hand-test and developed it over a certain length

of time at a certain temperature in a vacuum flask. And then we put it straight into a hypo-fixer and then er - for a certain amount until it developed. And then we had to do an enlargement, an eight by ten enlargement of the - and we used to do this within about twenty minutes. After the end of the test we came back and showed the cameraman the results in about twenty minutes so that he knew where if it was over-exposing, under-exposing or had the right sort of difference in the highlight and the low-light.

Oh actually I'd like to say a few words about the Rank Charm School at that time. Because the whole of the British film industry was like that - in fact they used to send all their young ladies like Susan Shaw and Patricia Roc to this charm school and they taught them how to speak exactly like the West End stage artists speak. They were so - er - precious - like [MY enunciates in a Charm School accent] "Any one for tennis?", "How are you to-day?"] And er - it was an accent like no one ever spoke! [Chuckles] And of course when the girls tried to talk Cockney when they were playing a maid or a servant, it was really atrocious! Talking about Cockney accents, there was an actor who specialised in Cockney at the time, Gordon Harker. I mean his usual sort of thing was, [MY imitates Harker] "You're a stripe old toff!", "Gov'ner!" All that sort of thing, which of course no Cockney ever spoke! But the only thing about Gordon Harker which struck me when I did a film with him, was that normally all the artists and the - however big a star they were, they were all friendly with the - and they joined in with the crew, all the various things. But not Gordon Harker! He had a special chair with his name on it, and when the tea-breaks came down, we all gathered round the trolley and had cheese rolls and cups of tea - but he didn't. He had his valet come down with some coffee in silver pots and cups on a tray and then he sat there and had it all on his own. And his main reading was the Financial Times. So [chuckles] it was quite surprising, that here's a man who specialises - made a fortune playing Cockney people and he's a very rich man.

Another thing I remembered, one of the films I made was one called When the Bough Breaks. It's so old that Bill Owen who plays 'Compo' [NB in Last of the Summer Wine] nowadays, he was a junior lead in that. And I always remember that film because Rosamund John was playing a woman who was unable to have children and she - I can't remember the exact story, she either borrowed or stole a baby, something like that. But the thing is, she was actually pregnant while we were making the film, and of course the film lasted about three months to make, and she was getting more and more obvious. And she always had to carry a tray or a towel or a newspaper in front of her so that we couldn't see that she was pregnant.

And er - other films we were on, there were a pair of brothers called Roger and Nigel Proudlock - I think it's Proudlock, or Proudfoot. But they were sort of cheap-jack producers. But they kept to the agreement, because they had to, that they - that once they made a little breakthrough, because at that time the normal length of making a film was two or three months, but they made three films altogether in six weeks, two weeks each. And we really worked hard on those - no sort of breaks just rush, rush, rush all the time. It seemed to work all right. And they had a very brand new director doing it. He was a little bit mad I thought at the time and he had ideas about cameras being tilted and shooting from under tables and things like that. His name was John Guillermin, he made his name later - he must have grown out of that! [Chuckles] But he was the only man I ever saw tearing, actually tearing his hair when he was frustrated. And he sort of bullied the poor old continuity girl, Gladys Goldsmith, terribly. In fact I was a shop steward at

the time, union steward, and I had to approach the Proudlocks to complain about him, because the camera crew were so angry with him. They must have calmed him down a bit because he eased up a bit later. And another film I was on was Norman Wisdom, I think it was called HMS Bulldog [NB Actually called The Bulldog Breed]. But apparently he was - he went off into space and they had to do all sorts of tricks with him. In fact we had a distorting mirror to - when he was supposed to be loosing - under G-Force. But the thing is [chuckling] he was wearing his sailor's uniform and had "HMS Bulldog" round his hat, but with the mirror it came out backwards! So we had to re-shoot it and re-do his mirror. And also we had a trick shot of him sort of falling onto the ceiling and I turned the camera upside down, a huge camera, and it seemed to work all right like that.

And I did several films with Brian Rix, you know, of the 'Whitehall Farce', and er - and in one of the films he was playing twin brothers. And we did a lot of trick stuff on that, with travelling mats. Because previously to travelling mattes we had to sort of cut off half the film - I'd cut off half the screen when we were filming and then re-do it and re-wind it and then cut off the other half. Of course it was a bit er - a bit limited that way. But with the travelling matte you were able to - in fact in one shot he tossed a coin from one of his parts to the other part and caught it, and that had never been done before with this split screen thing. In fact on one of the films he gave us all a parting present, I'm actually writing these notes with the pen he gave me then, all those years ago.

Another film I worked on was with - when Leslie Phillips was a psychologist for pets - I've forgotten what it was called [NB In The Doghouse]. Actually it was - we did some very nice shots on that. But one part I remember very vividly, there was a lion in a room and we wanted some shots of the lion just prowling around the room. But they told me - because I was operating the camera at the time - that, "It's all right because it's had all its teeth and claws pulled out and he won't harm a fly!" So on the set was a lion prowling about and me behind the camera [chuckles]. Luckily it was a big, rather large camera and I felt quite a barrier between us. But years later - the director was Darcy Conyers - I met Darcy Conyers and I reminded of him that scene, and he said, "Well we didn't actually tell you the truth about the lion - he did have his teeth. But the keeper was standing by watching." [Chuckles] It made me feel a bit better!

About this time I was active in the union and I became secretary of the camera section. Now the craft sections of the union - you'd have a sound section, a camera section, continuity sections - but they all seemed to have a sort of 'guild' outlook, and they were very craft orientated and very keen on keeping up the standards. But on the other hand the union wanted to recruit as many people as possible and we had the job of vetting people to come in. Because at that time anybody wanted to become a cameraman and we sort of had to check whether they were all right. Usually relatives of cameramen already in the business got in quite well and the others, if they gave a good enough case we let them in.

Oh I must tell you a little story [chuckling] of one applicant we had. He was a society photographer and he wanted to do some films. And we discussed it and said, "Well we don't think we'll let him have a ticket because he's a society photographer and we don't know what he's like as a film man." But a couple of months later he married Princess Margaret [laughs] and applied again, and we let him in that time! So actually we did quite - these sections were very,

very useful and we passed various resolutions and got things at the er - annual conference. In fact we were the - in fact I kept on drawing up plans for an apprenticeship scheme. This was thirty or forty years ago and I think they're still drawing up plans for it! They were of course passed at the conference but the employers wouldn't implement the plans. And we also got a rule passed that when crews went away on location they had to get clearance from head office because we had one or two very bad instances of crews being stranded abroad where the producers ran out of money and then there was trouble. So there's quite a lot of things going on there. Another thing I can remember is er - oh when I was on the Executive Committee there was - I've forgotten the name of the - another one of these sort of cheap-jack producers, and he didn't pay some of our members their wages. And of course it came up to us, and what we usually did was to ask the laboratory members not to work on his film, he was blacked. Of course you couldn't get away with that now, but it was very effective and we sort of got a lot of wrongs put right that way. I don't think the labs - I mean they were willing and able to do it but they kept saying, "We keep getting you out of trouble, why don't you look after yourselves a bit more!"

But the thing is one of these er - this particular film, I can't remember - he took the case up with the British Film Producers Association, and they sued us in the courts. This is every one of the Executive Committee individually and - I don't know what the exact you know - reason was, but I think it went back a long way. And we had to sign affidavits and one of the things, we sort of had to dress in our best suits and go into court to be there and hear some of the arguments. And of course at that time they were talking about the Truck Acts of 1903[?] I think and there was quite a lot of you know - really deep discussions about the meanings of trade union activities and things. But we won the case. Our lawyer was Gardiner, who became later Lord Gardiner and also became the Attorney General. And the one who was - you know the - and the other lawyer for the other side was a chap called Parker. And we were very, very impressed with him - in fact we were so impressed that we asked him to do cases for us in the future because he seemed to know his business.

One significant thing I ought to mention about the films during the war and just after the war, was the tremendous appetite for films. All the cinemas, they regularly ran two features in a programme and a shorter documentary, sometimes a stage show, and they changed the programme twice a week and often a different film on Sundays. Which meant that we were working hard out to produce the films so that, as I say, there was such a tremendous demand for it. I think that went right up to the time when television really became popular and there was a television set in every house and people didn't go to the cinema any more. So now all the production is for television material. And of course now the cinema, they say the cinema at the moment is er - although multiple cinemas, about ten cinemas to a site, they still need the films. But they seem to be satisfied with - the market is being satisfied by American products and not very many British films are being made, unfortunately. But another thing I meant to say about the agreements between the union and the BFPA [NB British Film Producers' Association] is that we couldn't get an agreement before the war or during the war. But George Elvin the secretary of the ACT, he actually formed the BFPA for them, he organised it, so that we could have someone to negotiate with. So the BFPA is really made by the ACT.

Another story I think ought to be told is the story of the first television series, Robin Hood. It came about at the time of the McCarthyite investigations in Hollywood, where everybody who

was a communist or supposed to be a communist or suspect communist, or even had left-wing views, lost their jobs. And a lot of them came over to this country and there was a woman called Hannah Weinstein. Sidney Cole knew her, he's on the history project and is still going strong at eighty-six. She produced this series Robin Hood especially to give work to the writers who were blacklisted in America. They all came over and they wrote under assumed names, which was one reason for the big success of Robin Hood, as it was written by the sort of top Hollywood writers.

[End of Interview]