HP 0672 Jenny Barraclough interview transcript

(Interviewee; Jenny Barraclough, Interviewer; Simon Rose, Camera; Dan Thurley)

00'03"

SR

Jenny thanks very much for agreeing to take part in the History Project.

JB

Well it's my pleasure.

SR

Can I first ask, when and where you were born?

JB

In Burgess Hill in Sussex and then Hitler was going to arrive in Sussex roughly and so my Parents evacuated themselves terribly quickly and we lived briefly in a caravan in a field in Wales with the bombs dropping all over Cardiff so it didn't help a lot to get to Wales but that's what we did.

SR

So your early years were spent during the war?

JB

Well I was very little but I do remember bombs, yes yes.

SR

Do you think that affected your future at all?

JB

No. Not at all I think I was too young and of course since then I've learnt a lot about the war but I don't think it affected me no

SR

And tell me about your family

JB

I had a brother who is determinedly Philistine in the nicest way; never been in a gallery in his life but is very bright and great fun. Terribly funny and I adore him. My parents were respectable but fairly humble. My father was a surveyor so nothing very smart but the reason I got anywhere in life was that I went to Millfield and was taught by Robert Bolt who wrote 'Man for all Seasons' and I had him all to myself in a Nissan hut because Millfield was just starting off and it had a weird collection of very rich kids, you know a sultan, some Maharajas' sons and failed Etonians. Ones who were expected to do quite well academically and brilliant games players. (There's no other reason anyone was there).And so the ratio of staff to pupils was minute and I had Robert Bolt just for me and we were reading Moore's Utopia and he was writing 'Man for all Seasons' and he used to bring it down in the mornings and try scenes out on me. So I think that was probably quite a big influence, you know without knowing exactly how - I think so.

02'26"

SR
Did your mother have a career?

JB
No she ought to have done but was before the days when women had careers.

SR
Before Millfield, I think you went to a Girls only school somewhere in Somerset?

JB
Right a clergy's daughters school; very proper and all I did was play the piano. Not much else.

SR
So Millfield, which was a co-educational boarding school must have been quite a change?

JB
Well there were only twenty girls; three hundred fifty boys and twenty girls so we had a lovely time and my best friend was Victoria Glendenning the biographer now and we both had, we had gorgeous South African boyfriends call Nick and she had a Nick called Nick Gove and they were caught kissing outside the hedge (there was a hedge round the girl's enclosure of the cottage) and so she was expelled but allowed back because they thought she was clever but Millfield I think started the whole thing off.

SR
It did have a bit of a reputation for bullying … did you ever?

JB
No I've never heard that.

SR
So you've spent a lot of your life in a fairly male environment haven't you?

JB
Oh, I never thought of that Simon! Yeah, well, I haven't felt it has been to be honest - not really. I mean I think it's because perhaps we get a bit spoilt probably without realizing it.

SR
Spoilt rather than having to surmount the obstacles of a male dominated society?

JB
I never felt any obstacles at all. It's funny isn't it. My theory is if you don't expect there to be obstacles you don't see them - they're not there. And certainly in television I never assumed there would be an obstacle and on the whole I don't think there were. I mean to start with there might have been the odd camera man who didn't want to be directed by a woman - but not really, not much.

04'40"

SR
So occasionally you did come across resentment?

JB
Possibly, but I wasn't made to feel it. I didn't feel odd at all. Maybe this is insensitivity on my part but I honestly didn't. It wasn't an issue at all.

SR
You said that Robert Bolt was a big influence…was this when you first started thinking about film or journalism?
What was your first idea for a career?

JB
Ah, what an interesting idea! What influence did he have? I think he loved noble characters who battled for rights and justice, like Thomas Moore and he loved words – good words. So I think he had a big influence probably for the better. But how can one know.

SR
When you say for the better, in what way?

JB
Well, certainly in television, I was drawn always to people who I think, who had a certain nobility of character you know who were aiming for something above themselves; who were good people. You know all those films I did about the civil rights leaders and freedom fighters and Gandhi. I was I think I was drawn to those sort of people, yes who were uplifting in their example.

SR
By the time you went to university did you already have an idea of what sort of job you wanted to do?

JB
I thought publishing or television and Television seemed more fun. And I only got into television. (It's amazing the luck of things in those days in fact).(And this will really I think chime with your feeling of how over privileged people were who went to Oxford or Cambridge) Things went your way. That's why I think getting into Oxford which was all Robert Bolt's doing really made my life. Because I wasn't born to a world where these things sort of happened anyway you know some people are in that kind of world aren't they where they know people. But I wasn't at all - brought up in Devon mainly with parents who hadn't been to university. So I think Oxford did it and there was a girl I knew who knew the editor of the I.T.N. news. And she said to him 'Well I think this Jenny Izard would be to be OK as a woman reporter'. And so he said 'well what's she like then? 'Well she went to Oxford' says this girl. So he thought well that's all right then and he just chatted to me for a bit and I got the job. Whereas now I presume they audition dozens of girls, I should think to be a woman reporter on the news and there was only one.

07'43"

SR
So the idea was generally to get into publishing or television. You weren't particularly keen to be a journalist? Were you interested in news and current affairs?

JB
Yes I was interested in current affairs and politics which I probably should have read instead of English, but not all that much. I mean I became interested later; I think all my real education about the world all happened from then on.

SR
Where you are interested in the factual side of television rather than drama?

JB
Yes definitely, definitely. I mean later on when I got a big opportunity to do a feature film I do think documentaries always appealed to me more. About real people rather than make up.

SR
So you joined ITN I think in nineteen sixty three. And there was lots of news that year. Could I just read out?

JB
Yeah

SR
It was the height of cold war and start of Vietnam War. Martin Luther King made "I have a dream "speech. Kennedy was assassinated. The Beetles had their 1st number one hit in the States. In Britain work started on Polaris Nuclear submarines. The Beeching report on the future of railways came out and The Great Train Robbery happened. Kim Philby defected to Russia and there was the scandal of Christine Keeler and John Profumo. The 1st James Bond film was produced. Kenya got independence and Valentina Tereshkova became the 1st woman in space.

JB
Wow!

SR
Great year, you would have thought, to be a news reporter. Did you cover any of those stories?

JB
No you see this is the problem. I was only ever given women's stories by I.T.N. I mean they probably thought it was nice enough of them to have a woman doing anything and I was given babies, schools, education, Cowes Week, Glyndebourne… nothing wrong with any of them but they weren't the stories I wanted to cover. Not really.

09'50"
SR
Did you protest against that?

JB
No, I don't think I did protest. I think I felt I was lucky to have the job. I tell you what happened. You remember Ian Trethowan. I shared an office with Tony Gray who was an anarchic Irish ex journalist who drank a lot at lunchtime and was very insubordinate and I think Ian didn't really- they didn't get on that well (Ian Trethowan was the deputy editor). And the more Tony drank at lunchtime the more appallingly funny he was and insubordinate he was and Ian used to hate coming into our office because he was made fun of and it was just me and Tony so I was tarred with the same brush and he recommended to the editor that really the two of us should be abolished because we were a bad influence.
I mean I think I was just sort of going along with Tony Gray who was wonderful, but a bad influence. So I found myself without a job. So I sat in my flat thinking I'd write a novel while trying to get a job but I didn't get far with a novel. Then, I knew somebody who knew Jeremy Isaacs that's how it went who was then at Granada and Jeremy said he'd introduce me to Tim Hewitt. And Tim Hewatt said, 'Well I don't know you from Adam or Eve and I don't know whether you're any good. You'll have to do a job for me so I can see if you're any good'. He said research charities. I think he said charities deserve exposing. (A typical Tim Hewatt attitude). He said they're all gathering money even when there's no need to. Well I didn't know they were a particularly, so I went out searching for charities that were doing just that and I found quite a lot. For example St Dunstan's; a charity for the War Blind, well there weren't many war blind anymore but they were going on actively gathering as much money as they could. 'Sunshine homes for blind babies' was another one. Again, nowadays babies aren't born blind so…. They were still collecting money they couldn't even use the interest as far as I know. So it was that sort of thing whereas aftercare for prisoners; nobody gave them anything because they were not very sexy and not very exciting; too worthy. So I did a report along these lines and Tim liked it very much. So I got the job. So that's how it started.

SR
You mentioned drinking and I would imagine (well I remember) in those days that world was pretty much a hard drinking and hard swearing; a pretty sort of macho 'hold the front page' kind of world. I mean from a comparatively sedate background did that shock you at all?

JB
No it didn't shock me but I didn't join in much, I suppose. Not like the famous Diana Edwards- Jones of I.T.N. Do you remember - have you heard of her? She was a studio director, the Queen Bee of I.T.N. and she was famous for joining the boys in the pub you know being one of them. That's how she got on so well in a man's world. I don't think I did that but they were great; I mean 'World in Action' had a great ethos; Yeah quite party loving. And Tim Hewatt was very badly behaved. I mean he was so rude and nobody minded. He'd call me, "you with the tits" every time he saw me 'Hey, come here, you with the tits'. And another girl, such a very good researcher, had a wooden leg and he used to call her 'Hopalong'. I mean who would dare do that today? I mean you couldn't. So he was outrageous he was Australian and he was allowed to get away with it and was a brilliant editor. But you don't get that sort of guy today; you know larger than life, crude, marvelous journalist.

14'18"

SR
And pretty tough, willing to stand up to his bosses.

JB
Absolutely absolutely. *(PHONE INTERUPTION).*Oh dear. What do we do? Yes sorry.

SR
You were talking about the characters on 'World in Action; larger than life, willing to stand up to authority.

JB
Oh yes, I mean it was fascinating World in Action which was I think the first journalistic documentary series wasn't it. They'd been quite soft up till then really; there'd been a lot of 'look at life' style documentaries and the idea of having a tough investigative, journalistic piece which was illustrated. I mean actually it wasn't that visually… we weren't encouraged to be adventurous visually. We almost measured the shot to the line you know. But they were very very tightly edited, very good arguments and were written about. We got a fantastic press I mean every week World in Action actually made the news so it was a good program to be on at that time.

SR
Yes because It was investigative very often. Making the news not just following the news.

JB
Exactly exactly and we did incredible things for example Tim said right we're going to cover typhoid in Zermatt. They're trying to cover it up. We're going to expose it so the entire team got on a train to go off to Zermatt, to cover the typhoid epidemic. I mean I remember seeing two secretaries sitting in the train with their typewriters clicking away; old fashioned typewriters on the table in front of them as we drove. Somebody else working out you know the running order, what we were going to shoot and how I mean everyone was working as we traveled and then people didn't want us in Zermatt at all and threw stones at us but it was a very… it was an interesting program. So Tim had all these crazy ideas which we just did. Oh I know a good one I must tell you about; "The spy in the trunk". That was when Alex Valentine took over from Tim. And Alex and I (I was a researching for him).We went off to Rome where a spy had been found put in a trunk to be smuggled out by the Egyptians. No the Israeli's! Anyway he went out on an Egyptian flight. Word got out and that was when the word came out that there was probably a spy in the trunk and it was opened and he was indeed in there. So we reconstructed this… that was it and the police were furious at the idea of a television crew coming from Britain to reconstruct it so they came to the hotel at three o'clock in the morning, banged on the doors, got up to Alex's room banged on his door and he rang me up and said - and I'd got all the empty cans in my room. In my hotel bedroom.*(JB means unexposed film cans)* He said Jenny,' you know those cans' he said in a very sort of phony voice, "marked Spy in the trunk. The police want us to hand those over so would you please bring them to my room". So I quickly marked all these empty cans of unused film with "spy in the trunk" as fast as I could and took them along and they were given to them. As it was then film you know we knew they couldn't be developed in time before we left so we got away with it.

18'18"

But I remember the Egyptian pilot saw this reconstructed scene of a trunk with us with the so-called spy in it. And he was terrified he thought he was hallucinating he was seeing this horrifying sight that he'd seen a few days earlier when he was apprehended with indeed the spy in the trunk and turned his full blast of his jets onto us and nearly knocked us over I was knocked against a pillar. And Brad, our very large sound recordist had his Nagra knocked against his chest and it wounded him and he fell to the ground. So that was quite a little drama. Actually, it was real violence sort of visited upon us.

SR
Did most of the ideas come from Tim or was anybody allowed to suggest ideas?

JB
Oh anybody. Yeah anybody. I mean they'd come from journalists, from us. Anybody you know how it is. Yes.

SR
There weren't really reporters as I remember

JB
We did that we did all the interviewing and...
Shall I tell you how I became a producer?

SR
Well yes do.

JB
Because it was a very… it happened reasonably quickly and I was so lucky; I don't think there were apparently at that time many women director/ producers
Well we were doing a film about the nineteen sixties, I think that was the subject, the essence of the sixty's and Jean Shrimpton and Dick Fontaine was producing it. And he went and filmed a good a lot of Jean Shrimpton footage and David Bailey in New York and lovely stuff brought it back with the Maysles brothers and they shot everything that moved you remember they were the first handheld observational cameramen and so they shot an awful lot of footage. Cans came back to the World in Action cutting room, piles of them. It was just too much you know I can imagine if you're the one who shot it all and you know you're responsible for it. He couldn't really cope with it, it was just too much for him and I remember him sitting with his head in his hands and Alex said 'would you just take over please Jenny' So I mean Dick went on to great things later I don't suggest he didn't, but that particular film… I don't blame him faced with the Maysles brothers' footage. So I took over and finished the film. And for that I was made a producer I think.

SR
At that time there was lots happening technically; there was light weight camera and Nagras as you mentioned, lots of great cameramen emerging, who knew how to use those cameras very well. Are there any other characters you remember working with?

21'31"

JB
Mike Hodges, who went on to make feature films. We did "Seven Up" then, Paul Almond and the other Mike *(JB means Michael Apted)*. Brian Winston. Oh yeah Chris Menges, absolutely. Later Adrian Cowell who did those wonderful films in South America. It was quite a forging ground for good people. Yeah.

SR
And were you sort of learning off each other? I mean cameramen were learning how to handle light cameras for the first time and you're thinking of ways to make use of that rather than being stuck on a tripod?

JB
Absolutely no wonderful I mean you were very very free suddenly to move around, yes yes. But I remember by the way because you mentioned Christine Keeler. I was asked to do a film or did a film about Mandy Rice Davis and it's never been shown. It must be still sitting there in the Granada archives.

SR
Why not?

JB
It was too close to the bone and too… I don't know if it was sub-judice but…. She was quite rude about Lord Denning and you remember she had a reputation for being quite pert. And one of the most emotional things they would say they would…

SR
She said, "They would say that".

JB
Yeah. I'll never forget this because to me it's all about the effect of the camera in producing honesty which you know it does as you know well. And Mandy had never really had to be honest, she just sailed through life and she was pretty and said what she wanted to say. And everything went fine. We were filming her at home with her mother and father and her mother was like she was being social and charming and saying yes of course you can film us having our high tea and we were in Solihull in their home and the father just sat silent. He minded terribly about what had happened to Mandy. He hated it and he'd never ever been able to say so because it was too awful. And he couldn't stand up to Mandy anyway. And suddenly the lights, the camera produced this moment; I'll always remember it with that man suddenly saying what he had to say. And the two women were chatting away nicely and he said, "I just want to say, Mandy, that you have no idea what it's like for one's beloved daughter to be all over the press as if she's just a harlot. Have you any idea how hurtful it is to go out and see the neighbors looking at you and snickering behind your back." I'll never forget that. Mandy didn't know how to take it; she said, "Don't be silly dad, don't be silly". But she couldn't stop him. I'm sure you found out that the camera does this doesn't it. Sometimes there's moments of searing honesty where you almost feel you shouldn't be there.

24'46"

SR
Why do you think that happens?

JB
I think it's the lights; the confessional aspect of television don't you? And you do make a tremendous connection with the person that you're interviewing. It becomes very personal and I think that plus the effect of lights with often darkness all around you.

SR
Maybe because they're really being listened to…

JB
For the first time sometimes. No one would ever listen to him before.

SR
I think Granada was based in Manchester and World in Action was based in Golden Square, Soho. Where did you spend your time?

JB
We worked in Golden Square, but we would fly up in the little Beechcraft aeroplane every Friday night or on the Friday nights we had a film going out. In order for the final editing and dubbing, it was all done up there in Manchester. I think it was paying lip service to the Manchester base. But it would have been hard to do it out of Manchester with all the politicians coming in and out.

SR
Granada was also quite a left wing organization.

JB
Very.

SR
It was unionized. Did you join the union?

JB
Yes I was caught by that trap which we all now remember which was you couldn't direct unless you had a ticket and you couldn't get a ticket unless you're directing so there was this seemingly impossible to get it. So I had already been directing but I knew I couldn't go on - somebody was going to ask me sooner or later. An electrician would have probably asked me. So I walked in to the A.C.T.T. one day with my heart thumping knowing this was the moment of truth; Would I get a ticket or not? I'd have to pretend I had one. So I walked in and there said to this girl sitting behind a desk." Would you mind I've just lost my ticket would you mind just printing me a new one a replacement?" dead casual as if it was an everyday thing. And luckily this sweet girl didn't blink and she just typed me out a new ticket and that's how I got my director's ticket.

27'04"

SR
Surprising because you should have had a union number!

JB
Yes she didn't ask.

SR
She was very nice!

JB
She was so nice that yes yes.

SR
Were you the first woman director on World in Action?

JB
Well I'm sure I couldn't be. Well yes, I'd have to think about it but probably yes probably, I can think about that but yeah.

SR
You say they weren't very visually imaginative, but they certainly were able to have lots of different approaches to subjects; you mentioned a reconstruction of something. They weren't particularly hidebound to current affairs because after all they did 'Seven Up' didn't they?

JB
That's true.

SR
Were you involved with 'Seven Up'?

JB
Oh very much so yes yes. We all helped on it. I don't think I mean I I occasionally people would object an editor might say you know he said you need to do this I began to do a shot this long a plane taking off to cover a line of commentary this long and so I felt we were illustrating words rather than the other way round, most of the time.

SR
I actually remember the commentary used to say "World in Action flew too" over a shot of a plane with World in Action painted on the side.

JB
Exactly exactly yes it was a bit like that. It wasn't Tim's priority, the visual at all.

SR
How how did you learn to direct?

28'43"

JB
Oh Simon, I'm afraid it's like I think you feel which is that people who didn't deserve it were given a chance. And had to learn on the job I'm afraid. And you pick up you pick it up pretty quickly without knowing the mechanics I mean I think you've said some directors are quite proud not to know one lens from another and I would have fallen into that camp. But I mean I pretty soon knew the effects you could get if you asked for those effects but I wouldn't know how to do it myself.

SR
So you hadn't any sort of formal training in journalism, you hadn't learnt about short hand?

JB
Nothing at all.

SR
And you hadn't been to film school so who did you learn off?

JB
Oh I wasn't aware of learning I think you so pick it up as you go. Yeah I must have learnt it from other people I worked with. I'm not aware that Simon to be honest. It so goes into your system doesn't it when you're just doing the job. I do. I mean I just I love imagery. I love…It was wonderful, eventually to get on to 'Man Alive' where I could do more with pictures than we could go on World in Action and on 'This Week' this week was more visual I think.

SR
I remember you told me once that you used to think that continuity was a rather soppy thing to worry about

JB
Did I say that?

SR
And an editor rather forcibly told you that it spoilt the audience's enjoyment if you didn't worry about it.

JB
God, how tedious for you if I was like that. Yes. I probably I could have said that. You see how we rely on cameramen, an awful lot. I'm sure I did. You know when I worked with such wonderful cameramen always often the same ones over and over.

31'02"
SR
So you mentioned 'This Week', how was that different?

JB
'This Week' was also journalistic. It was it was,' I.T.V.'s Panorama'. Actually at the time run by Jeremy Isaacs very well. And. At the same time I was, I don't know why, doing an interview series late at night as the interviewer presenter on. 'Believing in God' or not and I

would have two opposing views I'd have the professor of Religion from an Oxford college versus John Mortimer say you know they're all well known and it was a religious discussion I mean the nerve one has when one is young! I don't know how why I was asked to do that but it was fascinating and I loved it. I mean I'm always tremendously interested in other people's views much more than my own. It's odd for me to do the talking today. So interviewing I've always loved.

SR
Being a sort of presenter; was that a role you enjoyed?

JB
No, because having to think if you looked all right I thought was very very boring.
If you don't mind me moving on to 'Man Alive' because it's relevant; when Desmond asked me to join Man Alive I went to see him. And he said I'd like you to be a woman reporter. And I said I don't want to be a reporter I want to be the director / producer because he had had a format where you had to have a reporter whether you liked it or not and he assumed that's what he wanted me to be. And he'd seen some of my 'This Weeks' and he liked them, where we did our own interviewing. I said "Sorry I just don't want to be the reporter because I know the power lies in the directing and producing. It's quite clear to me ". So he said 'you're making a big decision and I think you could be making the wrong decision because you know your more glamorous in front of camera, people know you better. Yeah I think you could be making a silly decision Jenny. I said, 'No in no way do I want to be the reporter' and so very rather crossly he agreed. I remember sitting on his black leather sofa in Kensington House, knowing I'd made a decision for life at that moment. And I'm so glad I made that decision.

SR
So you'd moved on fairly rapidly from World in Action, This Week, Man Alive. What prompted those moves?

JB
I was asked to join 'This Week', so I did. And then I left 'This Week' to have a baby. And I'd met Desmond Wilcox when he worked for Redifussion. And he'd watch things I did apparently so after taking about six months off or more he asked me to go. So I then went back into television. That was the only time I've taken more than three months off

SR
So it wasn't you were particularly unhappy. I mean did you see them as a career moves? Somebody asked you to do another job and you'd like to try something different?

JB
Yeah absolutely. Yes yes definitely. You know 'Man Alive' was the program of the time as you probably know. It was the first time the ordinary person had been given a voice I think. Before that we tended to go for experts we talked to the head of the housing the housing department and the council about a housing problem we hadn't talked to the woman in the house who had the housing problem. And Desmond was tremendous like that;' man of the people' you know come from the Mirror I think. Yes, he was a big influence on television, Desmond Wilcox.

35'30"

SR
Reporters, he thought were the most important people; he had been a reporter.

JB
Yeah exactly.

SR
You say they have less power. But did they? How did making a program happen?

JB
It was almost entirely the produces. I never know whether to say director or producer. I'll say producer. And I always felt it was completely my program. Some of the reporters were extremely good, like Harold Williamson was famous for his lovely interviewing technique and his talking to children was famous and I did 'Gale is Dead' and. 'Women in Prison' with him which won awards. He is wonderful at talking to people. But, very often to be absolutely frank I thought I would have been better at doing the interviewing than the reporter because they'd come in after all the research had been done and I felt it was very much my story and my film. And although they were often very good and I liked them I slightly resented them because they were - I didn't see why they were necessary at all. And I think often a film without a reporter frankly is you know it sort of sings. It's all the subject's; it's them there's no intermediary. So why have an intermediary? So unless they're exceptionally good like Harry was I just didn't need them. I don't mean I didn't respect them; they were they were fine you know what I mean. I don't want to offend my reporter friends but having always made my own films… And then later on I went back to doing it but that was Desmond's preoccupation was to have a reporter what ever happened.

SR
I'm surprised I always imagined you worked as a team from the start. But it mostly came from Producers did it?

JB
That's my recollection unless I'm just being vain in retrospect. Probably sometimes it came from the reporter you know. But my recollection is that mainly I'd be asked to do something or I would want to do something.

37'46"

SR
You've said Harold was one of your favourite reporters to work with. Did you ever work with any of the women reporters?

JB
Jeanne La Chard, and most extraordinarily because Jan was a very ladylike sort of person. Very very nice. We did two films on international terrorism because she had wonderful contacts in the sort of espionage undercover world in Israel, which led us to get to know the Palestinians like the Palestinian Liberation Front; Leila Kahled; extraordinary people who no one else could get to. We even, when we did those films, got to the Red Brigade who were

the ones that nobody wanted to mess with. They were very scary at the time a bit like Isal is today. And they had just kidnapped a whole trainload of Israelis - of Jews coming from Russia to Israel. They kidnapped them off the train near Vienna and everyone was scared of them and no one knew who they were. And we were taken blindfolded under a blanket in the back of a car to meet the head of the Red Brigade in Beirut. We continued being blindfolded all the way up some stairs and then we interviewed the head of the Red Brigade with blankets over all the windows so you wouldn't know the layout of the room. So Jeanne led me into that. So I should be grateful, very grateful to a reporter on that occasion because of her contact there.

SR
Have you ever worked with Esther Rantzen?

JB
Yes we did; 'Excuse me Your class is showing' about girls marrying out of their class, or below their class as they would have said. And that was great fun.

SR
You worked on Man Alive for about nine years I think, and probably made three or four films a year. Which ones stick in your memory most?

JB
Oh goodness. Well 'Gale is Dead'; I made a film about children's homes and met a wonderful woman called Nancy David, who worked in a children's home and cared for the really difficult damaged children. And among them was Gail and she said, 'Jenny if you want an example of how a children's home can damage a child it's this girl. And I got to know Gale, got to know Nancy very well. She became the godmother of my twins. And when Gayle died at twenty one, Nancy rang me up and said you know it's just so unnecessary. And I said, 'Nancy I think we should do a film about her life don't you'. And so that's how it happened. That was a lovely one to make I mean a sad one - memorable one. And I remember 'Women in Prison' very well…Oh so many of them I wouldn't ….

SR
'Black American Dream'?

JB
'Black American Dream' particularly. Ah there the reporter was important! That was Jonathan Power who worked for the International Herald Tribune and he had been a civil rights worker with Martin Luther King in Chicago. And he was a friend of mine. He'd walked into my office at ITN actually and said, "Jenny, Martin Luther King has just died. I think we should do something about him on the news" And then later he said I think we should do a whole film, or I said that and he had all the contacts. He knew all of them; Andy Young, Jesse Jackson, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, all the great civil rights leaders. So that was an example of the reporter being absolutely key to us making the film and he looked a bit young and soppy. He didn't look like a reporter would normally. But he was very good and they knew him and liked him. I think they thought he was rather sweet because they were all so tough. But he definitely got me into that whole world which led on to so many other films later.

42'42"

SR
You also probably made your first film about India on Man Alive?

JB
Yes yes. Do you want me to tell you how that happened? Well, Louis Malle, the great film director had made a film that got the B.B.C. banned from India. It was about the poverty of the slums of India. And the Indian government was outraged that it was so biased against. India, they felt. You know concentrating on the underbelly of the sores rather than showing what they were achieving and they were so angry they banned the B.B.C. for three years. I think even Mark Tully was sent home. So after three years there were negotiations between top brass of both sides and it was decided they would allow a crew in for the first time. And they asked me if I would make a documentary. We'd thought about what subject and we thought the Indian film industry. No one could object to that and it would be good fun to do and I had done quite a few funny films you know like 'Hyde Park' or 'Big smile Please' about a holiday camp. I'd done lots that were lighthearted so I thought well 'Bombay Superstar' would be the name and I'd build it around Rajesh Khanna, who was the biggest star of his day; massive, five hundred million or so fans. And I went off to make this film that would be, we hoped, a lovely tribute to the successful side of India with charm and colour and beauty. But Rajesh was a pain in the neck and never turned up to be interviewed ever. Jack Pizzey was my very good reporter. I'd sit in there in the sunset in a lovely shot waiting for the wretched Rajesh to turn up. Rajesh never turned up. He was so big he didn't have to bother. He was in seventeen films at the same time and people just waited around for him to turn up. So we'd go to his house, we'd be shown into an ante room, into another ante room with statues of him and awards and another ante room we'd never get to Rajesh .
(*PHONE RINGS)*
Finally Oh excuse me please. Yes.

SR
You were saying

JB
Yes we never never got to Rajesh and it costs a lot of money keeping a film crew in India never filming your central character of your film. So I met him in a party given by the British ambassador. Don't know why we were invited but we were and he was there so I went up to him and said Rajesh. "Do you or don't you want to be in this documentary. It's a B.B.C. documentary it will be shown" (I said optimistically) "to film producers in Hollywood who would see you but if you don't want to be in it never mind. I'll have Shashi Kapoor instead". Shashi Kapoor was very popular and a big rival. So., he looked at me and he said, "Jenny. How can I make it up to you? You are angry with me". I said yes I am angry with you. He said, 'what can I do to show you I am sorry' he was a big flanneler. So I said, thinking quickly, you could fly me and my crew at your expense to Srinigar where he was filming with a big star called Mumtaz; beautiful scenes in Kashmir which I wanted to film. So I said you can fly us to Kashmir and I will forgive you Rajesh and you'll be in the film. He said, 'right come round to my house tomorrow'. So I went to his house, went up to the bedroom. The curtains parted. He said come with me into the bathroom. He pushed aside a panel underneath the bath and in there was a huge envelope, big brown envelope, packet of rupees massive one because you know the rupee was worth nothing. And he gave it to me and with that (it's quite hard to get it changed. because you had to use dollars). With that I paid for the

whole crew and me to go to Kashmir and a beautiful houseboat with servants on it, while we were there because you see you live mainly on house boats on the lake in Srinigar. So that film turned out to be good fun and I made a big sequence about waiting for Rajesh; the fact that he was never there. In the end I had to make a sequence of this, shooting us in all these ante rooms and so on. So the film was fun in the end but it was quite hard to give it any substance. You know.

47'56"

SR
That seems to show to me a couple of things about you; One, your ability to think on your feet on location. And also how you use charm to get your way.

JB
Well I think I just got cross in the end you know I thought there's nothing to lose and so I did yes I did I did get my way in the end.

SR
You generally do don't you Jenny?

JB
I don't know. I think filmmaking is more to do with getting people to do things than it is to do with thinking of the beautiful shot actually. On documentary, don't you?

SR
Yes. You've got to make something happen and get it.

JB
Yeah exactly.

SR
But you are very good at it.

JB
Not always, but sometimes like then it worked all right but then I did a really stupid thing that got me into terrible trouble. Our hotel called the 'Sun and Sand' looked out at the beach. On the beach was a little family. Each day they'd come and do acrobatics, the father leading the way. Desperately poor and they would do some rather sort of modest acrobatics on the beach. Mother, father, two children. I thought I'd love to make a film about them and see where they live. They lived on a sort of dump next to a waste you know pile of waste paper and a tip and a little set of belongings were under a blanket held down by a saucepan. And that was their life. Everything they possess. So I made a ten minute film about their lives. Which was lovely and I got back and I showed it to the B.B.C. and the British High Commission who came to see the main film. They were appalled... It nearly broke off relations again with India, they were furious. The B.B.C. was furious with me and they used to have annual reports - have you heard about that? We were given annual reports. That stayed on my annual report for my entire life at the B.B.C. as a big black mark. And I was told you nearly caused a total breakdown of relations again Jenny between India and the B.B.C. I mean that was awful. But it was a sweet film, never shown.

50'41"

SR
Another film we haven't talked about is 'Hyde Park', another style; a 'Day in the life' film.

JB
Yes again you had to make things happen. I mean I think probably today people are appalled by what I'm saying Simon you know. Because, first of all today people are so free and easy and they allow themselves to be filmed much more easily doing it you know. Fat people aren't afraid of showing their fat all these there's much more that the participants are much freer and much more willing to cooperate I think. Anyway I was asked to make a film about a day in Hyde Park. Nothing happens when you're there. You see it happening when you're not filming, but how to film? So I had to make things happen to be honest and my assistant editor's wife brought (because I'd seen what happens when the birds descend on the table in the cafe in Hyde Park and eat up the cakes. Particularly of a child because it's so mean and the child is so upset. You know this socking great pigeon comes and its éclairs or something). So I thought how I can make this happen because this happened but never when you're filming. So the assistant editor's wife brings her child who is about six, five. He orders his favorite cake which I think was an éclair or something and then she said would you like to come off to you know let's go to the loo; all planned, and they went off to the loo. And of course while they'd gone the two pigeons came down and started eating. So you had a lovely scene; the little boy coming back to his horror at his bird eating his éclair. So that was typical - I did that all the way through I'm afraid. I mean on the one hand it genuinely happened in front of the camera. But you had to set it in train.

SR
It's a sort of gray area

JB
It's a gray area exactly.

SR
Everything in documentaries is set up; you have arrange to meet someone at a certain time and the idea that documentaries are totally verite, it just can't happen that way can it?

JB
No no I mean I don't nowadays people would make things happen like I did in Hyde Park frankly but I honestly didn't have much choice. I'm sure you understand that you'd have to film for months to get funny things happening in Hyde Park. I mean I saw a little boy, they build houses over themselves when they're fishing, the children in the lake in the Serpentine. They sit there with their rods and if it's drizzling they'll build a house with deck chairs. But the deck chairs keep falling down. But of course they're not going to fall down when we're filming but they did all the time so I thought it was fair enough to make them fall down. So I attached a little bit of string, invisible to the side of a deck chair this little boy is set up with a little tug so it fell down while we were filming and he was so fed up and he put it up again, fell down again and then a lovely scene emerged out of that with a sweet little bossy girl coming and fixing it up for him. And she was better at it than he was you know - so I think it's justified in the end - it was harmless anyway.

54'27"

SR
You say it wouldn't be allowed now. I don't know if that's a good thing or not. So you made many films for Man Alive, different styles. Is there any theme do you think, running through those?

JB
No I think they go into categories; there were quite a few funny ones like we've been talking about. There were a lot, maybe almost a majority perhaps a majority, of I don't know how to put it; People just fighting for something they believed in. That was why I made… I was led into making a film about Andrew Young the black ambassador to the United, American ambassador to the United Nations who was black and was tipped as being possibly the first black President if they ever had one. With him I made a film about him and when I was at a conference with him in the Rhodesian conference in Malta he said Jenny you've got to meet Robert Mugabe. He's the coming man; Very clever man, I think you'll be impressed by him. So I was introduced to him. I got to know him and his people a bit … said I'd like to make a film about you I said to him. It took a year to set it up because he was very very suspicious. And eventually he agreed. And we went out there and made the film. He was very difficult. But again at that time he was typical of the sort of person I felt very drawn to. He was battling against Ian Smith. He was the outsider. He didn't have any one big backing him. He was very impressive; He got five degrees, two of them in prison; Clever man. Now we're all horrified by what he's become. By what power has done to him. But then we were, most people were very impressed by him so. Again that was again somebody I was very interested to explore. So there are a lot of films of that sort

SR
Another film about people struggling to do it themselves was 'Alright We'll do it Ourselves'.

JB
Yes yes exactly. I really loved that. This was a film about an East End festival. They'd been told they couldn't have a festival; there was no money and anyway the place they could have it was all barbed wire and cut off and so they decided to take the law into their own hands and have their own festival and they raised the money in pubs, sort of 10p at a time. They had nothing, Trevor Huddleston the wonderful bishop of Stepney backed them and it was so touching the incredible community spirit in the East End. I've seen that film recently and how the world has changed. The East End was, life was lived in the pubs. Now there are very few pubs left. And everyone knew everyone. And they pulled together a festival which was great; they had a pram race between the pubs. Men dressed up in drag. And that was a lovely film and then another one called 'Our School', which you know, about these children who were considered unteachable and just a few of them were gathered in a… it was in a crypt in Bethnal Green. All of them were actually bright lovely kids who had had the most ghastly lives like this little boy who whose mother was a drunk whose father was in prison and he ran the family, ran the house and did the shopping looked after his drunken mum. So he was late for school every day ended up not reading like the rest of the class, thrown out of school. Or played truant and ended up in this place and of course there he was nurtured as a beautiful boy. So I always find these to these stories so moving.

SR
Yes it was it was a small school with not many pupils and several teachers.

58'53"

JB
Exactly, two wonderful teachers and about what ten pupils.

SR
And although it was great, was probably deemed uneconomic

JB
Yes very privileged in a way. But what what proof that everyone's got something in them you know you should never write anybody off.

SR
By this time you'd got married and were having a family and moved to the East End yourself

JB
Yeah up to here on the river. Oh no not here further up at that point.

SR
Upstream, so you were near those things you made films about.

JB
Yes absolutely yes and I always love people doing things for themselves. My husband's involved with charities that are all to do with encouraging people to build their own houses or run their own own things.

SR
'Man Alive' came to an end and you carried on at the B.B.C. making all sorts of films. And I think at some stage, becoming Head of Documentaries.

JB
Yes it's the only time in my whole life I don't think I enjoyed my job much you know. I have a theory which you probably think is completely wrong. I think women are much less interested in being powerful and big bosses than men. I think. I'm sure this isn't true of you two but men quite like to be able to put their feet up on a big desk and be important. I don't think women are as attracted to that. This is an appalling generalization but how can you compare being what I was, which is the Head of B.B.C.1 Documentaries which means sending other people off to make a film in outer Siberia or an East End or Mugabe or wherever it is, with the person making that film. Their lives are so enriched by what they're doing. The boss sits there at his desk earning more money. No comparison! So I sat there commissioning films for a year or so, about eighteen months, quite jealous of the people going off and doing it. And not really enjoying it that much. And I was told, 'Women must be moved to higher places in the B.B.C. you know the women should be the controllers and Jenny this is what you should be doing; moving up. I didn't want it in the slightest. I don't know whether most women would agree with me; I think a lot would. I think we're better at choosing the reality of your life, you know the values of the life you're leading against the kind of status. I like to think anyway.

1.01'562

SR
I think there are lots of schools of Women's Lib and some would disagree with you.

JB
Yeah some would say well we should be the boss you know bosses at the B.B.C. a lot. Yes. Yes I think I remember going on a panel on B.B.C. and saying that and my feminist friends being furious of course. You know women should be running everything. Well if they want to of course absolutely. I'm just saying that I don't think the jobs compare.

SR
I've missed out a very important film, 'Go Tell it to the Judge'.

JB
Oh yes yes. You see I mean about how most films are self-motivated you know I think they're the ones probably that come up best that are your idea. And why you don't really need a reporter because you're the one who really knows the subject. That was because I had met or heard about this case where the Barnabas who had this wretched island that had been mined away because it was full of phosphates had come to London to seek justice years later because they'd been abandoned and pushed off to another island in the Pacific and had been really very badly treated by Britain; Very little royalty money. And they've seen other people do very well in the same circumstances. So they came to Britain in the shape of their Chief's son, who was a minister, to seek justice, but he didn't know anybody. He just knew about Lord Soper a Methodist who didn't know anybody either really who could help. So Elwyn Jones eventually was dragged into this who I knew a bit and I ended up making a film about them and their case, which was a lovely film to make.

SR
And it did actually change things.

JB
It did, it was like 'Gale is Dead'. They're the only two I can think of where they had an effect that was discernible and visible. After the film went out people were so outraged. And as you said more people watched documentaries or one documentary then because there wasn't such a choice. The letters came in their hundreds you know to me, to the Queen, to the Prime Minister, to David Owen the foreign secretary who I happen to know so I talked to him about it. And it just made a difference that film and there was a lot in the press, questions asked in the House. So the initial offer which was round about a million was upped to eleven million or something you know after the film. So I was pleased about that.

SR
You actually lived next door to David Owen didn't you?

JB
Yes yes so that probably helped a bit with that one

1.05'06"

SR
A couple of things struck me about that film; a lot of it was dramatised; it was historic so you had to dramatise it to make it visually interesting.

JB
Yes it was very humble dramatisation my goodness I mean that's very…l and I think it's one of the first little bits of reconstruction that we did. You know we didn't do it that often then and I needed someone to play Arthur Grimble who was a main character in the film. He'd written very popular books, travel books about the lovely Barnabans of Ocean Island. He was much loved. But as a district commissioner he had been ruthless and he had been on Ocean Island with the Barnabans and had written them a terrible letter threatening them on behalf of the king if they didn't hand over more of their island to be mined. So I needed to have him negotiating with the Barnabans and the islanders. And I sat next to a chap on a little plane going to Fiji as an engineer who looked a sort of Grimble type, a nice looking young man. And by the end of the trip I said, "could you play Arthur Grimble in my film? It's on another island; you'll have to go to that island". And he said yes! So he was Arthur Grimble. And the assistant cameraman played another character. And it all was OK and the women, who clung on to their coconut trees to stop them being uprooted to make way for mining. They played themselves or they played their mothers or grandmothers with great verve. So I think it worked in a modest sort of way and I put it into sepia and I got into trouble. How people could have thought this wasn't a reconstruction I don't know … the sepia; was I was trying to fool people it was real. Considering there were no movie cameras around in 1919 it was a bit …but still people did accuse me of that.

SR
I worked on a 'Formation of the Universe' sequence once and the Commissioning Editor said 'Shouldn't we put 'Reconstruction' on it!'

JB
I know I was furious I had to put 'reconstruction' on my Barnabans

SR
And so did that give you a taste for drama, did you want to do more or move into features even?

JB
To be honest Simon, the one time I very nearly made a feature film was after 'Gale is Dead'. Joe Janni, who had made 'Darling' with Julie Christie, approached me and said, "I've seen your film 'Gale is Dead', I'd like you to direct my next movie". Jolly big of him wasn't it! And I said wow, goodness yes thank you very much. And it got as far as being about to sign the contract but before that I said I wanted to see the script obviously. And it was a script written by Nell Dunn based on her sister who had married Jacob Rothschild, based on the problems of a rich mother with a difficult child or something I can't remember. But there was a scene in it where this mother allowed the child to go on tearing up five pound notes rather than cause the child to cry again. And I thought I'm not going to waste my efforts and I'll be jolly scared doing it anyway because I don't know how to make a feature film on something that I really don't care about the problems of the rich young mother. So I turned it down and Joe Janni was astounded. He said, "Are you turning down an offer to make a feature film;

you a humble documentary maker?" So I said, 'well. I don't like it much. I don't feel drawn to it'. So that was the end of that. But I never regretted that at all; much more fun making documentaries.

1.09'34"

SR
Why? How?

JB
Well you make three documentaries a year and a feature film would take three years to set up is one reason.

SR
Couldn't that story of been done ironically or is that not your style? I mean I can imagine Bunuel doing that you know 'The discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie' kind of treatment to it.

JB
Yes it probably could Simon but I wasn't drawn to the whole script. This not really you know I thought if you're new to something and insecure, which I'm sure I would be doing my first feature, you don't want to try yourself out on something your heart isn't in do you. Because what makes something good is if your heart really is in it isn't it I mean.

SR
Yes, back to the Banabans; the other thing that struck me about it was the really good commentary. I mean I think commentary writing is pretty underestimated. But tell me how you do it and what are the tricks?

JB
You are so nice to say that. Maybe I can't remember if I told you what happened. Yes I wrote every word of it because I knew the story backwards and I think the trick in writing commentary isn't to me a trick is just keeping it simple. And just making sure the story moves on from A to B and that it connects with the pictures. Don't go off in a bit of theorising; it's got to connect well and also keep it to the minimum. Let the pictures talk, speak for themselves and so on. Anyway I thought I need to have somebody reading my commentary. Then I had a brainwave to get James Cameron who is such a respected journalist of his time and who did strong stories and wonderful investigative stories. So James agreed to do it. And I wrote the script I said 'here's the script - do please you know make it your own. Change it whatever you like'. To my amazement he said, 'Jenny I don't need to change a word. It tells a story, it's fine I like it'. So he read it. And to my slight chagrin, some of the press said they loved James Cameron's film and James Cameron's commentary so that was an example of a misplaced kind of feeling I ought to do the right thing and regretting it. But on the whole, like yes, I would always write my own commentaries.

SR
Yes it is not just keeping it short and simple it is knowing how to compliment the pictures, kind of work with them but not tell people what they are seeing; a subtle art.

1.12'34"

JB
Precisely, but I think if you made the film it's absolutely obvious to you you don't tell them what they're seeing really. You probably can see why I never really wanted a reporter and how annoying it was to have to have reporters. And I hope you understand I'm not saying this in any antagonistic way to reporters but it was, a doubling up and letting somebody else take over your story in a sense. I was much happier doing my own.

SR
And you did several 'Man Alives'; "Alright We'll do it ourselves" had minimal commentary. "Our School" had no commentary.

JB
That's true and then if I did I would perhaps get an actor sometimes to read the minimal commentary. Yeah.
Can we stop for a second year just because I feel yes. It's….

SR
At the end of the 80s you left the BBC, having been there a long time, and set up your own production company. Can you tell me why you did that?

JB
Well. I remember it was very much against Will Wyatt's advice you know. He said look there's a great move now to put women, more women into higher places and why on earth leave now? Silly time! George also (George Carey my business partner) was doing very well. He'd always done very well you know he'd invented Newsnight, edited Panorama. He was always going to do well - so why leave. The B.B.C. was our home and everything and I love the B.B.C. But I think the turning point came when Mrs. Thatcher had said there must be a quarter of the B.B.C.'s output must come from independents. And George and I, two senior producers in the department, were invited by Will to go to BAFTA, sit on the stage and answer questions about what sort of things we felt we wanted from independents (we the B.B.C.) wanted from independents and I was then the B.B.C 1 'Head of B.B.C. One documentaries'. And we both had the same idea. We looked down at the audience of independents and we thought we shouldn't be up here we should be down there. That's where they're having the fun and there weren't that many of them then and it was after that meeting we both thought we ought to join that side of things. And I went off to see a bank manager to start a company. It was great. But I knew Mrs. Thatcher was going to do it, by the way, because I'd done a film about number ten in which she was the main player obviously and I used to go in every day and she would be furious. Fuming every day about the Today programme and I think it was that that made her really dislike the B.B.C. John Humphreys had just done whatever it was he'd just done and she thought there was awful over manning, which there was in ITV.

SR
Yes I'd forgotten, before you left the BBC you had a period… Your career seemed to change; you had a period making what could be called anti-establishment films and then you made a film about The Queen and Mrs. Thatcher in Downing Street. So could it be seen that you were becoming part of the establishment?

1.16’28”

JB

No, what happened was, I was I was asked to make those. They weren’t my idea at all and actually I was asked to make one to mark the Queen's succession to the throne and… But I did shoot one along the side which was the things that go on during a royal tour which you don't know, on the whole you don't know about it and that was good fun to do. So I made a separate film without being asked about that sort of thing. So I quite enjoyed one on the Queen. Then I was asked to do another one on the Queen for her birthday. That's all right. Then they asked me to do one on Fergie getting married to Andrew and I thought this is enough, I don't want to do that; I don't to be thought of as somebody who makes royal films so I turned that down. Then there were the two on Number Ten. But you're right that did feel a bit of an establishment period but Number Ten was interesting and I talked to all the prime ministers up to Mrs. Thatcher for one of them, telling me wonderful stories about being in number ten and one of them entirely built around Mrs. Thatcher in Number Ten and I saw her at such close quarters and I really felt for her as a fellow woman, Trying to cope with a son who was lost in Africa, a daughter trying to make her way in a job, a secretary whose daughter was taking exams and needed to have a card sent to her - whatever it was you know she was very nice like that; the Sultan coming to dinner that night in number ten - Where was his silver salver? She must put it there because he'd be pleased…. all these things as well as; disarmament, relations with Reagan. And through the whole thing by the way I spotted she was quite taken with Helmut Schmidt and every time he phoned she go sort of pink, and a bit of a flutter. That was so sweet. So I think there was a little sort of feeling between them. So I was seeing her very much as another woman and so I quite enjoyed that; I didn't feel that was establishment. She was totally, by the way, intellectually uninterested in the arts. There weren't any books around much; you know she was just essentially focused on what she was doing and on the practicalities of life. You know she didn't waste much time going to the theatre or anything.

SR

Yes, that's interesting because I think lots of people hoped that the woman prime minister would somehow bring a different slant to politics and you say you could see the feminine side of her, but I think generally people think of her as actually quite male..

JB

Yes exactly I think that's because she was so focused, yeah absolutely. No what I meant was; talk about multi-tasking, my God she was actually quite frantic. You know her manner was slightly hyper-hyper, trying to think of all these things at once.

SR

And then you were running your own your own company which I think expanded and got taken over; Got bigger and bigger. You were working not just with the BBC you know getting commissions from different Channels. How was that?

JB

Well that was very interesting and the first commission took a long time to get. I mean it's quite a dicey thing; you leave a lovely secure job with a pension with everything and to set up a series (and you can't start a company actually without a series, not a proper company. You can do one offs as an individual) because for the series you've got a production manager, you've got P.A.s, you know you've got a team working on the series who can then do other

things as well. So we knew we had to get a major series off the ground so we thought of the Caribbean because it was the anniversary of Christopher Columbus discovering America. So this was for 1992 and how to get it commissioned? So Alan Yentob was fairly interested but said he couldn't afford it, you know we had to get a co-producer, which one always did with these big series, every single time, which is why I always work with the Americans as well as the British broadcaster. So we thought of Turner; The Turner Corporation and they liked it; Happy to talk about it but it's a bit vague. And they were in Atlanta, so we had to pretend we were passing through Atlanta; you know you had to be cool about it, you couldn't be too eager. And we weren't at all passing through, anyway we didn't have any money and we couldn't stay in a very cheapo place either. So starting off took a little bit of chutzpah, as it were. Anyway so we got them in the bag; they said OK. They definitely wanted to do it and so we then went to Alan Yentob and said, 'we've definitely got Turner' and then he signed up and that was the beginning of the company. Without that… you know that was everything.

1.22'02

SR
Were you able to produce the same version for the BBC and Turners?

JB
Yes yes we did we did, absolutely.

SR
Or did you have to compromise?

JB No, not at all. You see we so… British documentaries so rule the roost. It is so kind of the Americans to come in as the partners who produce the money and don't see it till it's fine cut. And on the whole, (you know given the odd legal issue; maybe they're a little bit more fussy than we are legally and they're more fussy about labeling reconstruction and they're more fussy about fact checking. My God they fact check until you're blue in the face. Two people fact check). But those things don't essentially alter the film at all.And I found them very very nice to work with and we work with all of them; WGBH, WNET, WK… all of the P.B.S. channels and Discovery a lot. And they were great. I mean they weren't problematic at all; they were over… There were too many people at the top. You always have, (like I think you feel we are now in Britain) you know with executives and lawyers and they always did that. But on the whole they just went along with what we did.

SR
You got involved with the Grierson Trust, which runs competitions, and presumably you've watched a lot of documentaries over the years as well as making them. So looking back, how do you think TV documentaries have changed over the last 40 or 50 years?

JB
Well I think there's a lot of factual output at the moment, I mean the choice is wonderful; whether we're looking at things about the Tudors or beautiful buildings or travelling with yet another reporter across yet another continent . I think they're very very well done. I don't think you get the personal thought provoking film done by an authored, you know the director stroke author in quite the same way now. And I think there is often a false element of; 'Will they, won't they?' deliberately introduced which we find a bit tedious don't we? I mean the "Will he get his building finished by May or not?" ... I think that is phony. And

there's too much of that sort of formatting that is a bit phony. But there's a lot of good stuff and I think occasionally (as I think you've commented yourself) that some better known directors are given their head because they'll probably produce something that will win an award for the B.B.C. or whoever it is. So I found at Grierson there were always tremendous films to judge; the shortlists were always good. So from that point I think the standard has stayed up. But I think it's much, much harder to get things commissioned these days; oh, dreadful! And the way we were left alone. They're not left alone now. Nobody would see our films until we'd practically fine cut them and then they'd almost ask, you know, permission to come to the cutting room. That side of it is so different. And there was nobody between us and it being broadcast, apart from probably one person who'd probably be a friend. It would be a Will Wyatt figure, that's it.

SR
Thanks Jenny, you've enjoyed your life by the sound of it?

JB.
Oh yes I mean I don't think there's a better job than being a documentary producer. My god, what a privilege; you see the world, you meet some of the most amazing people who are living today. You get into the lives of people that are so different from yours; very very humble ordinary lives in the middle of nowhere which you never see as an ordinary traveller. I think it's an amazing job. I mean unless you've got an incredible natural creative talent as a musician or an artist or whatever it is I can't think of anything better than making documentaries really.

SR
Thanks very much, that's a good note to finish on.

JB
Well it was so nice of you to ask me about it all because it's been very nice talking about it.

1.26'50" ENDS

N.B. the master tape continues with cutaways of boats on the Thames at Greenwich and JB leafing through her personal scrapbook of photos etc from her career.