

LARRY ALLEN

Interviewed by Rodney Giesler on 11.4.96

Born 1917 in Pen-y-Darren, Merthyr Tydfil. Father a coalminer. 6 brothers and sisters went on stage. Grandfather a travelling showman (Ally Taylor). Brought up by him until he was 10. Never went to school but had a huge library. Performed on the stage with him. Returned to live with parents, known as Winnie and Danny. Strangeness of life with brothers and sisters. Poverty during the depression. Father opened up an old mine and sold coal from a horse and cart to the big houses. Grandfather retired to Coventry, and went there to live with him after winter of despair. Helped uncle sell fruit and vegetables. Grandfather taught him to read and write. Drew on old film leader and ran it through a projector. Made flip books. Drew in halfpenny notebooks and sold them for a penny. Sent to school finally at 13. Caught up quickly. Made cardboard "computer": rotating cards and slots.

*End of Side 1.*

Had a friend with mutual interest in films. Served apprenticeship with Hillman Car Company. Then with Humber. Memories of Irishmen on the line. Using engineering skills, built his own multi plane rostrum. Set up film company, Challenge Film Productions, with Hughie Orr, making publicity films for local businesses. Worked as photographer for Swallow Sidecars, forerunner of Jaguar Cars. Supported himself also as freelance toolmaker. Talks about his work with GEC. Of cameras he has built. Working for the BBC. Work for the Fleur de Lys pie company. Big stills business in family pictures at the end of the war. More on William Lyons and Jaguars.

*End of Side 2.*

Start of the war. Evening working as relief projectionist in cinemas in Coventry. Produced advert slides. Working with local industrial clients. Made training films for the Home Guard. Summoned to meet Arthur Elton to train animators for the Ministry of Information. Met Frank Rodker. Called up in 1941. Given Reserved Occupation helping to assemble aircraft at Coventry aerodrome. Lost aunt and cousin in early hit and run raid.

*End of Side 3.*

Memories of bombing of Coventry. Postwar jobs. Boom in family photography with returning servicemen. Difficulty in getting film stock. Sands Hunter dealt in Army surplus in Bedford Street. Dupont film. Had offer from Rank's animation set up with David Hand at Cookham. Encounter with John Halas. Goes into caravan business.

*End of Side 4.*

Designing rostrums. Developing video discs with GEC. Other projects including confrontation with Ken Dodd over the Diddymen.

*End of Side 5.*