BEHP0073 T ROBERT (BOB) DUNBAR
ROBERT DUNBAR

Tape 1 of 7

Interviewed by Roy Fowler, 1989

RF: When and where were you born?

RD: I was born in 1914 just before the First World War. I can remember that, in the middle of the night bombing with Zeppelin and parents drinking tea. That was in Golder's Green where I got infected with the bug of film. Like everyone else in those days we had a tiny semi detached house in Golder's Green ~~and~~ we had a maid called Alice. And Alice had to take me for a walk every afternoon and we'd walk to the Ionic Cinema Golder's Green where we watched cinema every afternoon. I eventually messed everything up by peeing my pants into a pea green ~~knitted~~ suit knitted by my aunt - a suit which I loathed. This led to my parents finding out that I hadn't been going on healthy walks but spending my afternoon in the Ionic Cinema. Alice I believe was fired but meantimes I had the bug.

RF: Your ancestry is Scotch.

RD: Yes I was born within the sound of Bow Bells at Greys Inn Chambers but I was taken to Scotland to be baptised. I don't think there any weird kind of chauvinism but my mother ~~used to take~~ me back to Scotland to get help from relatives and to show off the young child. I've always thought although I was born in England somewhere, somehow in ~~there~~ she I'm a Scotsman.

RF: Your father was in newspaer publishing?

RD: Yes. But at the time we're in Golders Green I think he'd switched from editing the Variety Artists Magazine to Kine Weekly. ~~I suppose I was brought up with him~~. He then went on from editing Kine Weekly to running the whole of Odham's Press with the Daily Herald and hundreds of mags. At first he was editor of the Kine.

RF: How old were you when he was editing the Kine.

RD: I can't remember what time he changed over from editing the Kine to being in charge of the Kine and all the other magazines.

RF: I wonder whether he ever brought home people from the film business.

RD: To a certain amount but mostly they were from his previous editorship. They were mostly variety artists, particularly Scots comics like Sir Harry Lauder.

RF: Any memories of Harry Lauder.

RD: Yes. I was taken behind the scenes - again I was about three or four - and he was sitting there in these enormously thick natural colour long johns which which actors always used to wear to save their costumes. I was fascinated. Finally I picked up the courage to ask whether he rolled his drawers up under the kilt or took them off which caused enormous hilarity; ~~because~~ I didn't realise all the old jokes about what people wore under their kilts. My father who was fanatically against being a professional Scotsman, people cultivating their Scots accent ~~and~~ ~~them getting~~ thicker and thicker. One ~~has~~ terrible aberation especially for a man who never went into a shop if he could get his wife to go instead. He insisted on buying me kilts. So I had my little kilt which

was why I was ianterested in Harry Lauder's. I had nice little knickers underneath which matched the Dunbar tartan of the kilt.

RF: Harry Lauder was very much the professional Scotsman.

RD: The most successful recording artist in the world ever, even now.

RF: Do you remember the film which precipitated the calamitous event at the Ionic.

RD: No

RF: I wondered what your first film recollection is.

RD: I remember rushing towards the screen and being grabbed by Alice ~~and~~ as I was rushing up to comfort this lady who was weeping in the arms of her lover.

RF: Any points you want to bring out about your childhood and schooling.

RD: I went to a very progressive school at the time. It's slightly less progressive now called Bryanston. I went to / because I won a scholarship to another newish school called Stowe. I found it easy to win scholarship because I had a facility for writing. I was as lazy as anything but I could always turn out an essay. So I won this scholarship and my father went to see the headmaster, I think ~~it was~~ Roxborough. I wasn't taken along. During the conversation when this chap was expounding the philosophy of this school he said "Stowe is a second Eton." At which my father got up and said "If I'd wanted to send my son to Eton, I would have sent him to the first Eton. So I went to Bryanston and he had to pay the fees because I hadn't won a scholarship to that one. But I enjoyed it very much. It was new, there ~~was~~ no tradition, there was beautiful countryside, there was total freedom, none of that bullying.

RD: Your father sounds a forthright man.

RD: Yes he was deaf and very very shy but he was very forthright.

RF: Was there any artistic strain in your ancestry.

RD: No except my father was a good writer. My mother was never professional but played the piano well and sang. They were mostly farmers and sailors in Scotland.

RF: How old were you when you were shipped off

RD: 13 or 14.

RF: Before that you'd gone to local prep schools.

RD: Yes in Pinner, where we'd moved to by then.

RF: How did your talents develop at school.

RD: I got very hooked on Elizabethan drama and because it was much a free place where you didn't have class rooms. I believe it's now quite common. You had ~~a~~ history rooms and English rooms. It was rather like a more controlled university atmostphere. i concentrated far too much on Elizabethan literature, largely plays.

RF: This was the late twenties

RD: yes I went to this school in 28 and finished in 32.

RF: Were you acting or directing.

RD: I used to be stage manager. In those days the English master always produced the thing.

RF: No acting at all.

RD: I hated acting. I was too shy. I didn't mind acting in Spanish plays or French plays that was all right somehow.

RF: How did things then develop.

RD: My father was rather against me going to Oxford or Cambridge. He used to come on strong about having had humble origins, slightly implied he left school at 14 till I found a photograph of him in immaculate clothes with his own pony and trap in which he went to school and he went to a private school in England, Berwick and certainly didn't leave till he was well over 16. But then he caved in and said you can go to Oxford. meanwhile through him, I'd always been mad about films and imagined I was going to be the Shakespeare or Marlowe of the cinema because that was going to be in England. We were going to have this great flowering of filmmakers like we had a flowering of dramatists in the time of Shakespeare.

RF: All starring Frank Benson.

RB: Oh no. We thought people like Frank Benson were the absolute pits. We wanted a much more modern interpretation.

RF: Where did that age group look to for filmic inspiration. Was it Germany.

RD: France a lot. A certain amount Germany. But it didn't mean you didn't appreciate American films as well.

RF: Was there a film society at the school.

RD: Yes, but not very well developed. They showed films but there was no film-making, unfortunately. I acquired a 16mm camera. It was an ~~I Record or~~ Enfield! ~~It was not Kodak~~ it was British. It had one fixed lens. I used to use that quite a bit. There was nothing at school.

I got again through my father to become an apprentice at the UFA Studios with a shriek of delight. I found it very disappointing at the time.

RF: How long had you gone up to Oxford for.

RD: About three weeks. I suppose I had already spent two or three years concentrating on Elizabethan literature and I thought what has this place got to offer. Also it was a bit simplistic. It was a bad time there when they were divided between the hearties and the arties. So you were either a homosexual with a flowing tie or a hearty who through the other lot in ponds. There didn't seem to be much inbetween. I went under advice to the biggest college, Christchurch. Which was probably good

advise because you can be more anonymous in a big college than a small one. But I was very disappointed in it and I got this chance to go to UFa. This was 1932 and I was 18. Off I go on the train via the Hook of Holland to Berlin where I joined the English unit.

RD: Did you have any German as a language.

RF: I'd studied some at school. I had a little. But it was my third language. French, Spanish and then German.

RF: So you were going in at the deep end.

RD: Very, but I could order a meal or find my way round. Anyway I arrived there. I was met at the station who drove me out to Neubabelsberg, near Potsdam, where the UFA Studios were. And digs had been fixed up for me in a large solid German villa near the studio which was ~~earned~~ by a fellow who was an accountant at the studio but had been a big shot but had been demoted. The son was a cameraboy and I had a large room which was the Wintergarten. My boss was a chap called John Haygate who was a youngish fellow, very pleasant old Etonian; his claim to fame was that he was one of the first of many to write a novel about his Eton days called 'Decent Fellows' where he blew the lid off about going down to the whore houses of Eton and so on. Very nice chap. There was only one other member of the English unit, a man called Mr. ~~Hargar~~s who was the Crown Prince of Sweden- Prince ~~Siegber~~g. We had to look after the English version.

RF: You were on UFA's payroll.

RD: I was on no-one's payroll. I was an unpaid apprentice.

RF: This had no connection with a British company.

RD: Yes it did. It had some kind of connection with Gaumont British and Micky Balcon. The main unit was the German unit. There was also an English unit and a French unit. There was hardly anyone on the French unit. But we had three people including me because they were making films then in three languages. ~~In a~~ way this was done was not by dubbing. They simply shot the set-up in German and then the French came on and ~~set~~ the same scene in French and then the English came on and that was shot so my job was with these other two chaps to look after everything. Publicity and teaching the German actresses to speak English which was lovely.

RF: You were on the set

RD: Yes, but of course we didn't do any of the directing. This particular film I was on was called Ich und die Kaiserin which should have been called the Empress and Me but was called something like the Happiest ~~Life~~ Girl which was a stupid title in the English title. It starred a world wide German star called Lilian Harvey who's mother was English and came from North London, Muswell Hill. One job I was given was rewriting all her lines so she would not be required to use any words such as out and about because she had a Muswell Hill accent. It was totally ludicrous because the part she was playing was a Empress's maid and her slight Cockney accent was what made her, they loved her in French, her slightly Cockney accent. But such was the idiocy of the British film industry. I must say she was rather a stupid girl. She'd vaguely complain but I was able to convince her the dialogue was much improved.

RF: Where did they get the rest of the cast from.

RD: They were mostly German but several English specially imported. Connie Veidt had the main part. But our male star was Charles Boyer who was the star of the French version. He was terribly nice to me. A charming man. I learnt a lot from him about life. Because the French didn't seem to have quite so much strength because they didn't have a famous Etonian novelist or a Swedish Crown prince when we were arguing with the Germans which we often had to about the business of humour, Charles was the one who came into bat for the French. It was very complicated. The Germans didn't have jokes. They had things called Witze They were affairs where the audience sitting in the cinema were telegraphed about this witz coming along in time to undo their waistcoats in time to have a good laugh. The Germans found it very difficult to understand a witz might not be the same thing what might be a joke in England or France. They couldn't understand it couldn't be funny because the essence of humour in England and even more so in France is surprise. You surprise people by the joke. You do not telegraph it ahead.

RF: So your director was directing in the German fashion?

RF: Yes. So we used to argue, but it was the only arguments we had, about the jokes. And Charles was marvellous at destroying their arguments. French people are very good at arguing. He was a great help because he managed to be sarcastic and charming and tied the Germans up in knots so we usually won the arguments.

RF: I know you had no point of reference but how did operations at UFA strike you.

RD: They were extremely efficient I think. Looking back on it I think it was more efficient than British studios I went into after. It was an enormous studio. It was the German way of life one had to get used to. One arrived at the studio in the morning and shook hands with everyone from the electrician's teaboy to chairman of the company if you happened to meet him, everybody. When it came to lunchtime you again shook hands with everybody and said Mahlzeit, mealtime. You proudly did the same at the end of lunch hour and in the evening and the same damn people if you met them in the corridor. One part I picked up which I liked a lot was to kiss the ladies' hands with a slightly bowing technique. I was only 18, remember.

RF: I suppose we cannot talk about that period without talking about Weimar. WEre you political at all.

RD: I became more and more politically aware because although Hitler hadn't come into power yet these Nazi thugs and gangs were already operating in Berlin, sticking up horribly anti-semitic notices on Jewish shop windows, beating them up and they seemed to be allowed to get away with it. I once almost went to the rescue of - there were some Nazi agents being nasty to some chap so I bravely when they all went off and the chap had slightly bleeding forehead and I went to offer my assistance. His wife came out and she was bloody dismissive and quite right too. Mind your own business. But it was a pretty traumatic experience all the same.

RF: Were these incidents perceived as isolated.

RD: They were indications of an oncoming thing. But in Berlin at the time there was an island of Pan Europeanism. I think swinging Berlin. The swinging London of the 60s compared with the swinging Berlin of the 30s

was like a Sunday school picnic. It was an extraordinary capital of vice of every sort. Quite strange. Cut off the the rest of Germany They were all kidding themselves. Most of my German friends were all Jewish or Polish or Hungarian or both. Unlike the British film industry which was largely owned by Jews, the German film industry was owned by the Prussian junkers who were the very people who financed Hitler, thinking they had a tool in their hand. They made a great error there. That's why I suppose later I got chucked out as soon as Hitler came in because these Junkers who owned the film industry wanted to show where their sentiments ~~laid.~~ lay And indeed by the time I was leaving the film on the floor was called Morgenrot which was about a U Boat in the First World War with a theme song Wir fahren gegen ~~ingelat.~~ England It was obvious to me at the time Hitler was going to take over and there was going to be a war which didn't make me very popular when I got home and I was called a stupid young warmonger. I got very fanatical anti-racist because what I saw there. Emotionally rather than intellectually.

RF: Did your path ~~cost~~ cross with any of the famous British colony they had.

RD: Isherwood and Spender had just gone home when I arrived. No I had our own unit and we worked pretty long hours. I didn't meet many other English people.

RF: It was a pretty efficient studio. Exploitative of the workers.

RD: I don't think so. It would be by modern standards. it was all very controlled. We did not tend as i found later in England at 7.30, on the whole people got down to work and started shooting. In England directors were much more amateur. They couldn't think what to shot till 2 o'clock in the afternoon and we went on all night. There was much less of that.

RF: I wonder if a lot of that was that they were theatrical, they came out of the stage and were night people.

RD: Sometimes that was the case. Other times they'd been sound directors so that was the excuse.

RF: Were these trilingual films afforded a proper schedule or were they rushed through.

RD: No. It was all very German. Everything was properly organised. The men who in England were often just crowd artists. In Germany you had to serve an apprenticeship of seven years to become a make-up artist. You seldom did excessive overtime.

RF: Were these guilds or unions.

RD: I don't remember.

RF: You couldn't have belonged to a union as you weren't getting paid.

RD: There were unions. Obviously the sparks belonged to a union, probably the communists. The union didn't seem to bother anyone at the studio. It wasn't badly organised. The lunchtime came and it was the lunchtime. You usually went home at a reasonable time. You always started on time in the morning.

RF: Looking back what was the quality of the film being made at UFA.

RD: It wasn't bad. This particular one was a bit disappointing. It was being directed by a very nice man called Hollander who had previous written the music for a very famous film staring Lilian Harvey called Congress Dances. This one was allegedly a story about the Empress Eugenie of France and it was a silly frothy story in the tradition of the comic opera.

RF: Was the Congress Dances also a trilingual film.

RD: I think it was. But in a sense even getting down. I think we had some play back for the musical numbers and I think the Germans got on to the use of sound rather more smartly than the Americans in Hollywood. I think they were better at first. I think they were more sophisticated.

RF: They had very basic patents easily as early as the American films.

RD: There was Tobisklangfilm. They had the monopoly. They did seem to be better at making musicals at first and I suppose that is why they were so successful with films such as Congress Dances. Hollywood very soon caught up by far surpassed the germans who had meantime suffered the calamity of being taken over by Hitler.

RD: Did you meet any famous cameramen.

RF: I met several of them whom I remet subsequently in England. The one on our film didn't. I can't remember his name. Perhaps he wasn't Jewish.

RF: How many films did you work on.

RD: Only that one. I didn't work on Morgenrot. There wasn't going to be an English version of Morgenrot. It was anti-British. That was an illustration of how quickly things were cracking up. My apprenticeship was pretty short. It was only six months because everyone got chucked out. The film industry was the very first to be cleared out. It enriched Hollywood and London with all the people being thrown out.

RF: It was Goebels special interest in the industry.

RD: You can say they were all damn lucky being chucked out then rather than later and suffering in between.

RF: Six months in 1932/33, a very interesting period. Were you there when the Nazis came to power.

RD: I think so but it was gradual but it wasn't overnight.

RD: He was elected Chancellor about which time or soon after I went home. Meanwhile I should expand a little on my job which apart from anything else was looking after the English actors and they were a funny bunch. There was a chap who was a well known English stage actor from a well known family called Ernest Thesiger and he was in his day a notorious queen and very regal with it. He was alleged to do a lot of touting with Queen Mary. At that time such was the reputation of Englishman that it was alleged that taxi drivers at the station in Berlin automatically took English arrivals to two cabarets called The Silhouette or The Eldorado. Being charged looking after the English actors by John Hagar I said what do you mean, and he vaguely said look after them, keep them happy and make sure they turn up on the set. So I thought I'll take old Ernest to one of these cabarets.

RF: You weren't naive about this aspect of life.

RD: I'd been to an English public school for god sake. And Oxford for a short time. Not a bit naive. Nobody was in those days. This new guy things at least among the upper classes is not new at all. It was accepted by everybody. It was almost exageratedly accepted that all parsons and all schoolmasters were homosexuals in my day.

So I took Ernest round to this place and it seemed that there were all these smashing girls it seemed all dressed up, of course, they weren't girls at all they were boys. One of them came up to our table and Ernest was very dismissive and ~~road~~ and said pissed off. I said what's a matter Ernest. He had been entertaining me with the most amusing stories because I or the company was paying for the meal and that's what his class of people did in those days, they always had to pay for their supper by being amusing. They'd even think out the scenario in advance.

RF: The theatricals?

RD: No, not only the theatricals. The aristocrats. So he turned rather nasty. He said I just can't stand boys dressed up as girls. Couldn't you show me something more masculine. So I sussed out from the headwaiter and we went down the fishmarket, the East End of Berlin and we went into this place with scrubbed tables. An a couple of minutes after we sat down these large blond brutes sat down with us and Ernest was very happy about this and the talk got round to the Tyrol were Ernest said he had had a very happy time. I was doing the translating and suddenly these two great brutes disappeared and Ernest got very waspish and said you must have mistranslated. I didn't say anything insulting. Low and behold three minutes later they both reappeared dressed in lederhosen at which point I went to see my girlfriend an actress I was teaching English to and left them to it. Then another one was called Huntley Wright who was a well known comedian. He was no trouble except one day he didn't turn up. I was in bad trouble. he just didn't turn up on the set. He didn't turn up for three days. I had the Polizei after him. I was in disgrace because my job was to make sure he turned up. Three days later he turned up on the set. He was a terrible good actor. I think he had just been off on a terrible blind or bummel as they call it in Berlin. He just acted as if he didn't know the last three days had existed. In the end I was told not to press it because from the point of view of insurance it was far better he'd been ill and lost his memory than if he'd got pissed. The other was a chap called Maurice Evans who became the British star on Broadway. His problems was that he fell in love with a Cabaret singer who always worked till 3 o'clock in the morning. He insisted on watching her act every night. It was a good job the make-up man had had seven years apprenticeship, he needed them to get rid of the bags under his eyes because he didn't start his activities till 3 in in the morning and we started at seven. Otherwise I didn't have any trouble. There weren't that many British artists.

RF: No dubbing in those days, post synching.

RD: Not on the whole.

I should say the producer was Erich Pommer who subsequently arrived at Gaumont British. He used to sit in the rushes leaning back with, and it was very typical of the time, a Homburg hat over his eyes, and we were all hushed waiting for his reaction. He had an important role as a producer

which he took very actively and was typical of the producers of those days.

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SIDE 2, TAPE 1

RF: Was he the executive producer.

RD: He was an executive producer but not necessarily of every production. This was one of his productions. He had more than one production but not all the production.

RF: Did the system differ there.

RD: I don't remember anything about the associate producer. And the hierarchy on our side was rather complicated and I still haven't worked it out. There was a fellow called der Aufnahmerlighter who was something like a production manager but where he was between a production manager and an assistant manager I'm not really sure. There was an assistant director but he was more an assistant to the director whereas the Aufnahmerleiter was more a production manager/second assistant combined in one. There wasn't a line producer as they now call them. They were rather rare creatures in those days. Previously Pommer had had his own studios but he had his own organisation. He had then joined UFA under some kind of deal. Between Micky Balcon and Haggett we had another person who was Bob Stevenson who was a well-known director but at that time he was conspicuous by his absence. He would descend on us occasionally and see how we were doing. I got to know him quite well later.

RF: Where did he rank.

RD: Above Hagett. But he wasn't out there. There was only one film with an English version being made at that time. There had been one just before then which was still going on being directed by Ludwig Berger who was alleged to be what you could twist that name to be. One illustration of this was one day the most famous director Lubitsch came down the set and Ludwig panicked and went to change his underwear. To give you a little more of the atmosphere we spent a lot of time in the canteen drinking tea or brandy. And one of the reasons we had to do this was that we started our office in an enormously crowded dressing room and next door one of the dressing rooms had been allocated to a French actor, Pierre Brasseur, and the partition was made of scenic canvas and you could hear everything going on. Monsieur Brasseur upheld the reputation of the french by consuming at least three or four crowd artists a day. And it wasn't we were prissy about this but he was so noisy, all the slap and tickle and giggling going on made it almost impossible to concentrate. We asked the studio to move our office to no avail. So more and more we found ourself in the canteen which helped our German and more and more we found ourselves talking to the French. On the set one was always playing terrible tricks. There was this blond electrician who wanted to learn English and he wanted to impress the director. We told him to say at the end of every take bloody boring. We fell about thinking this was funny which just shows how idiotically one behaves under these circumstances.

RF: Other to say there were quite so many people precisely at that moment at UFA in Berlin who went on to great careers, Lang was there, Siodmak, Pressburger.

RD: Funnily enough I don't remember. We were in our unit and I don't think any of the directors were working at UFA at that time. Also I think you'll find some of these people predated Hitler.

RF: Back on the train to England. With the film

RD: No the war didn't break out for another 8 years. The film went back in the normal channels. I got back to England and in a sense had to look for a job but not really because this so called apprentice ship was part of Micky Balcon's apprenticeship scheme. So I went back onto this. The scheme was to bring the rather posher people into the business, or the more educated people. So he had this for the chaps and chapesses. For the chapesses he had this thing for baby stars. I remember him telling us apprentices one that that the baby stars had not been gathered together for our benefit. The so-called apprenticeship scheme was you got paid five shillings a week for the first three months, ten shillings a week for the next three months and a £1 a week for the final six months. It was a year's apprenticshipe. The idea was you moved round the different departments at the beginning. By the time three months or six months had gone by you'd probably settled down in one department or another. Somehow I did very little moving about. I did a spell in the sound department where I learnt something invaluable when you start talking about impedence it nearly always means I forgot to put the plug in. That was a very useful thing to know but i don't know if I learnt anything more than that. So I settled down as third assistant director, runner.

RF: How did Balcon recruit his apprentices?

RD: A certain amount of nepotism. Introductions and people applying.

RF: Just luck.

RD: And if they were suitable kinds to be apprentices they might have been taken on.

RF: You were based at the Bush.

RD: Most of them were based at the Bush but I went straight to Islington which was a delightful place to work. Right in the middle of a slum, a real slum. It had been a power station. It was converted by a chap called Major Bill who was a pal of my dad. I remember because he had twins. As you drove up and parked your cars there was a gang of little kids who looked to be 9 or 10. They were probably 11 or 12 because they were all undernourished. They were dressed in cast off rags. it was difficult to believe this was still the case. The leader had a marvellous racket. 6d to look after your car which was a lot of money in those days. And if you didn't pay, your tyres could be flat or some other disaster to your car. It was a protection racket run by these kids who were bright and sharp. Little cockney sparrows. One of the most marvellous shows from the canteen in the summer was when these kids would be bathing naked in the canal which was more like treacle than water which was of course illegal. Inevitably the cops came along and to see the cops pounding along in their uniform after these naked little boys was a marvellous sight, really very funny. In the end they let them win because what does a cop do with a screaming naked boy, take him back to the cop station and charge him. It was a game really. But the cops were prompted by the canal people to make sure they were chased. Virtually nobody in that studio who didn't have a working class or middle class cockney accent. If something was to be recording for the BBC, I was called onto the floor to record it. Mind you I had acquired, because I had that kind of ear, the accent myself.

Rf: Was that because they were locally recruited.

RD: No film directors weren't locally recruited but Victor Saville had a

Cockney accent. The technicians had a cockney accent.

I may be slightly snobbish but I think that people who went to that famous school Dulwich also had a Cockney accent not like Bryanston. They all did. it far from worried me. I felt very much at home with these people and they were delightful to work with except Victor Saville who I hated his guts. The electricians were all great people. Saville was one of the directors. The studio manager, the god to us was a chap called Ted Black who came from a well known theatrical family and later became a producer himself. His brother was Alfred and his father was Alfred. Ted Black seemed to have very little sense of humour.

RF: This is Gainsborough you were working for rather than Gaumont British.

RD: Yes. But it was already the same company and one was switched between the studios. It was a public company. Micky Balcon was the production head but the Ostrers were above him. Ted Black he was the boss. the accountant was Miss Monroe, very strict she was with a bird head. There wasn't a great deal of administration. There were days when we would start work. I always had to be in being third assistant to look after the grumpy actors at seven o'clock. We would often work till after midnight and I lived at Pinner. And although I was being paid 5 sh or 10sh I could cost the firm £19 or £20 in taxi ~~fair~~. fare

RF: They would pay that.

RD: Yes. Mind you Miss Monroe had to believe you. I never got questioned Usually I did have a taxi. Sometime I did stay with some mate but not very often. Not many of them had the extra room. Many lived at home. Sometimes we worked all night. People played the most ridiculous tricks on each other. There was the hot foot. You put a match inbetween the upper and sole of the feet. Dear Fred Carter the stillsman always had a cork hanging off his fly buttons. People would snatch your ties and cut the end off. In the days before zips had come in a tiny flick of the fingers undid fly buttons. One of the most unpopular directors ever was Albert De Courville who produced musical plays on the stage. A fellow who would claim that he was the only man in the business with a certificate of sanity which presumably he'd been inside first to get it. At that time we had some Czech cameras and they didn't have proper blimps they were swathed in multicoloured eiderdowns which went down the legs. De Courville would find that all the front of his trousers was soaking wet because the clapper boy would be hidden underneath the eiderdown with a bucked and syringe pumping out water. The sparks were the worse of all and any actress who played up or assistant director who got above himself would find a red hot carton whistling within a quarter inch of his ear. But they were perfect aim, they never hurt anyone as far as I knew. The chief sound man Dougie was able behind a flap and fix thumb tacks so it held on people's head. Ted Black got worried about the ceiling coming down and had some scaffolding put up at which point Dougie was fired. It was the best thing which ever happened to him. I met him two years later driving around in a Rolls-Royce, he started his own music business recording.

RF: Was that kind of adolescent childish prankish behaviour typical or just at Islington.

RD: No it was typical. You just had to behave like that because of these long boring hours waiting around.

RF: That would have gone down like a lead balloon at UFA. How did they relieve their tension?

RD: As I said we were playing these tricks on these technicians.

RF: You said Victor Saville was a director there. Was he assigned to Islington.

RD: He was a very senior director of the time and mostly worked at the Bush.

RF: What was the first film you remember?

RD: I can't remember. A lot of them were directed by an actor called Jack Hulbert who was very popular at the time, a Gaumont British star usually staring often his wife Cicely Courtneidge, again a very popular comedienne. Jack would arrive in the morning. He had a very large face it was I suppose part of his equipment as a comedian. He had these very large hands and when you put these large hands to his large face and he'd generally think to 4 or 4.30 and that was the first shot of the day. And we'd been there since 7.30. Victor at least was more efficient. but Victor was extraordinary nasty. Really nasty. I remember one film which was a good film written by Launder or Gilliat and it was called Friday the Thirteenth and it was one of these compendium films where there was a bus crash and you traced back the life of all these people. It contained a lot of the big stars of the day including Jessie Matthews who was the big star. It was an interesting film to work on because of all these different characters. One day Victor was screaming at me he was so nasty, I was a bit of a young wimp I suppose but occasionally I almost had to retire to the lavatory because I was ashamed of showing I was weeping. He was vicious. He was doing that because Jessie hadn't appeared on the set when she'd been sent for. She appeared in a minute and I must say I've never forgotten she went up to Saville if you talk like that to Bob any more I am going to leave the set and cease working on your bloody film. I thought how nice.

RF: Did he do that only with subordinates?

RD: Mostly. I think they mostly learnt - many directors were like this - with great difficulty that they can't shout at actors any more. Actors could have been stooges as far as they were concerned. They could have been waitresses the day before. In the presound days you could use non actresses quite effectively. So they learnt the horse whip was all very well but you had to be a bit more careful with the actors but they continued to shriek at the assistant directors, they needed whipping boys.

RF: Why do you think that was.

RD: Tension and insecurity.It was a tense job to direct films. Many directors were nice fellows when they were not directing films.

RF: Who else was there when you arrived.

RD: I didn't know Gilliat, Orton, or Marriott. The first assistant, I don't remember any production manager, later at the bush I remember but at Islington I don't remember a production manager, Fred Gunn was first assistant on the film I was working on but there was only one, there was only room for one film at a time at Islington. He was a very nice fellow but already middle aged with children. Again a good Cockney. His brother

George Gunn was quite a famous cameraman at one time but then he became a big shot at Technicolor. I couldn't have wished for a nicer fellow. He was strict. I'd get ticked off about handing around and not getting on with the job. The second assistant was a woman called Dora Nervo who in fact was an Armenian. She was very nice, a very middle class, educated type and very rare in those days to have a woman second assistant. But of course very sensible because the second assistant did all the jobs subsequently being done by production managers. They did all the administration.

RF: The perception looking back is that the studios were very inefficient.

RD: The studios weren't inefficient, the directors were inefficient. The studios were extremely efficient on the whole. The electricians knew their job. The sound men knew their job, the cameramen certainly knew their jobs. A chap like Hulbert was a total amateur at direction but he had the clout, he was famous.

RF: He also brought them into the cinema astonishingly enough.

RD: Yes he did. And so did Cicely.

RF: And presumably for that reason he was allowed to direct. In films now are on Channel 4 quite often and they're bizarre.

RD: There was an American director, Tim Whelan, who did some of them. But there was one which was shown the other day and OK it creaks and it was oldfashioned which Jack did not direct but Cic starred in and she played two parts, a char lady who became a star and that was made a little later, it's a bit too good for Jack to have directed, and it had some good numbers in it and I remember the musician who was a one handed pianist and I remember sitting at the piano and Mick Balcon came in and he said why can't we have something lively like shuffle off ~~the~~ Buffalo, which was a popular American number at the time. So this chap sat down and composed Sing Brothers, Sing Sisters and we're all go riding on a Rainbow which is played at least once a week up until this day on Radio 2. He did it just like that. That wasn't bad in a way. Cic I think was more talented than Jack. They hated each other it was alleged. They lived the opposite end of an enormous house in Mayfair, Clarges St I think.

RF: They didn't hate each other when I knew them they went their separate ways.

RD: Yes they went their separate ways. I exagerated. Because one usually saw him when he was a duff director.

RF: I did a show with him in the theatre and he was directing up to the 50s.

RD: I had him once more on a disaster of a film for Herbert Wilcox which I think was called 'Out of the Blue' or 'Into the Blue'. By this time he'd become a gentle old fellow, very amenable, very far from his bossy period of being a big star and big shot director.

RF: I worked with him in the late forties and he still had that drive. You hardly ever saw the daylight or got much sleep. He was constantly rehearsing, rewriting, changing. But the sad thing was that there was nothing there, the talent was absent.

RD: His brother Claude was delightful but he died quite young.

RF: Other people at Poole St. We haven't talked about the camera people.

I'm trying to remember who they were because of course I get mixed up because one went between the two.

RF: That goes for all the personnel.

RD: Yes except Ted Black. And Fred Gunn for a while seemed to be stuck there. Probably the sparks normally stayed there. But if the studio was empty they'd find work at the other end. They'd be transferred immediately. The cameraman Bernie Knowles was a very good cameraman. He became a director but was never a very good director. The focus puller - it's gone. The second assistant was a chap called Lionel Bains who later concentrated on trick photography. Arthur Crabtree was the operator.

RF: They all went on to careers.

RD: Yes and they were all working with the eiderdowns. Later they used Mitchell. In the sound department my mentor was a chap called Charlie Wheeler who was a boom swinger. Charlie was a man who knew it all. At that
time he was a member of the ETU. There came a time because we were working all day and all night we got fed up and we started to mutter together, not about having overtimes, that was beyond our dream but we thought we ought to have supper money. We had these meeting in the sub sub basement in case Micky Balcon and Ted Black would find out and fire us before it got any further. Charlie was the fellow who knew how we did such things. We did get together and we did go up to Ted and say we wanted half a crown supper money and he was in a tearing panic and Micky Balcon arrived and was very generous and said we could have our super money. That was pre ACTT.

RF: Was there a formal anti union policy operating.

RD: It was too soon. We were all idiotic enough to work as apprentices at 5 bob a week when technically within a short time we were simply doing a job. We weren't being taught anything. We were just doing a job on the cheap. We were all madly keen. I'd left Oxford to get into the film industry. The others were from middle class or Bohemian background were they could get a bit of support from their parents. They could put up with it. Even when you came onto salary it was £2.10sh a week or £3.00 a week if you were lucky.

RF: The fact is that kids coming in had to be subsidised by someone.

RD: Some of them did, some of them just managed somehow. Some of them got paid more if they weren't apprentices. The camera boys got £3.00 a week.

RF: I get the impression once one's work was recognised one's recompence wasn't bad.

RD: But then workers had to support families on £3 a week.

RF: On £5 you could run a car. Your own career, how was that developing.

RD: I just went on being an assistant at Islington and the Bush. I worked on various films.

RF: The Bush was a little more parochial at this stage. Islington seems to have been an enterprise by itself under Ted Black.

RD: It still had a hangover of having been a separate entity, having been Gainsborough, but it rapidly was absorbed in to the thing.

RF: HOw visible was Micky Balcon at the Bush.

RD: Fairly visible. He was very charming, an easy manner to get on with even apprentices. He put you at your ease.

RF: But tough

RD: I suppose so but he wasn't nasty. He was tough in the background.

RF: What are your early memories of Lime Grove.

RD: It was a like a factory compared to Islington. We had our offices in what was known as the polish corridor on the top floor. Because of the foreign producers there.

RF: The influx had already started. They must have been on the train behind you.

RD: Very much so. The head of the art department who seemed to be the art department, Alfred Junge, He told you where you put the damn cameras for the long shots. He was a real German. That was on the set plan and that was where the camera went. There were a couple of makeup men. Then there were the cameramen. Mutzi Grunbaum who was a great friend of mine who became Max Greene. Years later he was our cameraman at Herbert Wilcox productions. Connie Veidt turned up. I was working with a character called At one point Victor was making a tremendous effort

I was working with working with Arthur Oliver whose real name was Arthur Onions. I'd usually worked at Islington with Teddy Baird as first assistant.

SIDE 3, TAPE 2

RF: You were saying Connie Veidt and Jew Suss.

RD: Connie Veidt was working on Jew Suss directed by Victor Saville, a big, for those days, a big production, expensive. Meanwhile I was working on this film called Car of Dreams with Jack Cutts, officially called Graham Cutts, and Arthur and I shared being first assistant at £2 10sh each, so they were glad to accept us. This film starred another German refugee actress called Greta Morsheim who really wasn't very suited to a comedy like this and Car of Dreams was pinched from an Hungarian films, presumably called Car of Dreams in Hungarian and we used to sit in the theatre and watch the relevant scenes and then go off and shoot them, it was a riot. And we had the Crazy Gang on it. We had riotous locations in the Streatham Ice Ring and various other locations. Arthur and I vied with each other in doing ludicrous things with crowds and others. I can remember there was a scene in a factory of brass instruments, we made the crowd artists do ludicrous things like stuff papers down them and pull them out and all sorts of ludicrous things which we found when we went on location weren't nearly as funny as what actually happened. The object was to make Jack Cutts giggle in the middle of the take, we did ludicrous background actions. We had a load of fun on that totally forgettable film. I think Johnnie Mills was on it, Johnnie became a great pal. He was a very unpompous chap in those days, perhaps he's a bit more pompous now, I've lost touch with him now he's a knight and all but we used to have a lot of fun. There was an American actor and we used to play dreadful tricks on the Americans. We would always bring the conversation round to the statement it is impossible to get tight on beer in which case we'd take them to a pub in Notting Hill Gate which dispensed something called Imperial Russian Stout which was tremendously strong and they all got pissed and fell on the floor. This we thought was tremendously funny. It was cruel really. It lead to a problem once. We had this young American actor, I can't remember his name, he was a song and dance actor who was always type cast as being a bit of an idiot, anyway I've forgotten his name fortunately. He the next morning, he spent the night in our flat in Moscow Rd, Bayswater, he was absolutely ghastly, he was a pale green colour with bags under his eyes. So we took him up to the studio and he kept being sick. I remember the studio doctor said it must have been food poisoning musn't it. I was just about to open my stupid mouth and say no he got pissed when Arthur kicked me of course and said yes, we had this canned lobster didn't we. The doctor was being very nice, he knew jolly well the bloke had a hangover but he diagnosed lobster poisoning because of the insurance. Meanwhile Peter Lorre was around and he was in for his jab. He couldn't go on without his jab. Now what was in that jab, whether he was taking cocaine introvenously or whatever the drug was in those days.

RF: I believe he was a heroin addict.
RD: I've been told they didn't have heroin, all these 60s people didn't have heroin.

RF: I'm not an expert but I know he was a heroin addict later in America.

RD: He was already shooting something, maybe morphine. He couldn't go on without it. The doctor was luckily around. He had a doctor to do it, presumably that made it all legal. You can see we had rather a mixed bunch on this film which was going on at the same time and was

rather overshaddowed by Jew Suss which I think fell flat on its face.

RF: Yes lost it all. That apparently was one of Balcon's pet projects.

RD: Another thing I remember which was perfectly typical, I was in the dressing room in the morning talking to Bud Flanagan, the Crazy Gang guy and the crowd artists from Jew Suss kept coming in, in costume, looking lost and asking questions. Obviously their assistant director, being on a posh film, was much less consciencious than us, despite our jokes. We were always there early in the morning, to keep these buggers happy, Bud Flanagan and the actresses. We were there chatting with them and these crowd artists would come floating in and they must have been idiotic, there would be Bud Flanagan, the most famous comedian of the day telling them to put on their jackets the wrong way round and do ludicrous things and muck up their appearance. And they did all this and of course we were all falling about thinking this was very funny. Always very childish kind of jokes.

RF: Also irresponsible to more elderly ears.

RD: The more irresponsible the better.

RF: There is a great foreign presence in British Studios already, isn't there, German on the one hand and American on the other.

RD: I can remember going back to the Polish corridor on the top floor. I think it was the first time the gag was pulled. There was a very tallish, teetering type of character, I don't know what he did, he was a famous German producer called Fellner. It's the first time I've ever heard it, Victor certainly played it. We all, production staff and directors all had our offices in the polish corridor on the top floor. The first place with flush doors I'd ever been in because all doors used to have panels. Anyway Fellner had been talking on the phone and he came out the same time Victor came out from his office and Victor said i wish he wouldn't talk so loudly and Fellner said I was talking to Paris, and Victor said I wish you'd use the bloody phone. I actually heard it, he may not have invented it but it's been a famous gag every since.

Also up there, takes me back to a more serious film I did at Gaumont, I think it may have been the first I was called back to do from Islington. This was for a director called Berthold Viertel. Really cultivated Viennese chaps I became extremely friendly with. I took to Isherwood. It was called 'Little Friend' about divorcing parents and a little girl bringing them together and a dream sequence, very Freudian. We had trouble finding the little girl. She was the daughter of the manger of the Lyric, one of the two theatres in Hammersmith. She was Nova Pilbeam. She became quite a famous filmstar later. I sweated away with Berthold on the script of that and other scipts. We worked a long time together in Portland Place. He had a delightful secretary called Kate and we were working on a film about Byron called the Chained and the Eagle. We got very inspired and we thought it was going to be the greatest thing ever. The only thing was as we paced around in the heat of inspiration B would shut the window and I would open it. Other wise we got on extremely well until I had the most gastly toothache and I said I've got to go to a dentist. he hit the roof. He screamed his head off. He'd been such a nice fellow, he was absolutely furious. I said to my friend Kate what have I done. She said you're crazy. i said what can I do now. She said I'll fix it for you . You just say

you're sorry you've lied to him, you had a date. He came back and I said this. He said you silly boy why didn't tell me, a boy or a girl. I got off to the dentist. That was the only time I ever rowed.

RF: Did you overlap with Isherwood.

RD: I only met him once there.

RF: He wrote a novel about his film with Viertel caller Prater Violet.

RD: My main thing was writing this script about Byron. It was meant to be a serious script, it was not bothered with his misdemeanours with women. It was about him as a symbol of freedom. It was an anti Nazi film really. Not too obvious I hope. One day Berthold came back looking like thunder. Micky says we can't go on with it. I say what do you mean. Because it's too anti Nazi. The foreign office doesn't want any anti'Nazi films. I'm only half Jewish. Micky's full Jewish. It came out about 8 years later but had nothing to do with our script. But it was still the same property hanging around. Then he got put on to make The Passing of the Third Floor Back. And we worked on that script a long time. But that was the time I quarrelled with the management of Gaumont British and I buzzed off like a silly idiot because they only paid me £2.10 a week to London Films where they paid me £10 a week. I deserted Berthold which was probably very foolish of me. As Harold Boxall said to me. You don't need the money. You're quite well off. Whereas a chap like Fred Gunn would never have dared. He was stuck in his job. If you had them you didn't dare lose them, you hung onto your job. I didn't hang on, I left and deserted Berthold and Kate who had become my girlfriend by then.

RF: Although Viertel never had much of a career.

RD: I think that was an awful film. I never saw it. It was one of those sentimental West End plays about the stranger in the back room who is probably Jesus Christ. I think I couldn't bear to see it. I did my best working on the script but I never really had my heart in it.

RF: It's interest is that it's a play of the 30s performed in the 30s and one can see what was going on in the West End.

RD: The main character, the tweenie its such a patronising character. I think even when we talked Cockney as we tended to among ourselves, the younger chaps there. We weren't being patronising but he would say we talk Viennese but that's different. What he was saying is that the snobbery of language is much worse in England than everywhere else.

RF: If you remember the script at all the tweeny has a plant which is symbolic of her below stairs reaching out for the sun. It's well meant in it's way.

RD: I tried with a certain amount of succes to make a good film of it but I think if it had been Bryon I would have never taken the job at London Films.

RF: Before we leave Shepherd's Bush are there any more characters we should deal with annecdotally.

RD: There's one thing in the Polish corridor with Berthold, I told you

it was all frightfully posh and modern. One day one of the secretaries says your bloody old Viertel is a dirty bugger. He always goes to the ladies lavatory. I said he's not a dirty old man at all. I'll have a word with him. I said to him I've got this complaint. He said oh my god, really, its got an L on the door and I thought that meant lavatory. Typical. He was a dear chap. He presented with me with his books of poems, because he was a poet and I translated some of them into his English.

RF: What about the rest of his family.

RD: His wife, Salka, I never met her. I only met Katy and I got off with her. It was one of these platonic relationships. We were tremendous friends. We were platonic friends. But Salka Viertel was alleged to be Greta Garbo's lover.

RF: They had a later salon in Santa Monica.

RD: Whether it was true or not I don't know.

RF: She wrote a great many of Garbo's films. We touched on Alfred Junge.

RD: I got on alright with him but the directors used to complain a bit because, wouldn't you if you were a director and the bloody art director tells you where to put the camera.

RF: Yes but his sets were probably better than their direction.

RD: That was no doubt often true.

RF: How about the cameramen that you remember.

RD: I remember Bernie and co and Mutzi. I think there was another German one but I can't remember

RF: There were several Americans around.

RD: I remember Bill Beaudine. he was quite genial character. I don't think he was a great director. He was a has been, they tended to be. Tim Whelan I met at Islington. He was alright he was the run of mill director. He was competent and that was the most important as far as we're concerned. When we're complaining about these directors it wasn't personal it was that we felt that when we grew up and were film directors ourselves we would try to keep within reasonable hours. The director couldn't work very well after 48 hours at a stretch and what about the poor actors and the makeup and how they looked. This was patently not the way to make film. I'm sure all the camera people and every body else would agree. We weren't inefficient, it was the directing and the fact after all once you get the bit between your teeth you have that tendency to go on, you don't want to break, you want to go on, you've got this scene going on and you want to continue doing it. It wasn't an abnormal way for a director to feel.

RF: If the adrenalin is working. Did you feel that foreign presence was beneficial, did you learn from it.

RD: Obviously we learnt from people like Alfred Junge in the techniques of set designing. He probably served seven years

apprenticeship. The English tend to - going back to previous centuries when people from noble families invented things you didn't have to learn how to do things you just did it. The average technician did not want to go to film school, they just wanted to learn on the job. They were beneficial. I think sometimes that the cameraman were resented by less successful British cameramen. I don't remember much of that sort of thing. They were accepted if they made their contribution and did a successful job.

RF: Was there a family atmosphere at Lime Grove.

RD: Less so. But there's always a family atmosphere unless you've got a nasty set up and horrible producer. You've got the family of the film you're working on.

RF: Did the Germans stick together

RD: I don't remember that. I suppose Pommer may have brought in a German cameraman and Connie Veidt.

RF: Connie Veidt was a world star

RD: And such a nice man. I learnt such a lot from him. I remember in UFA in the canteen talking about all these German silent films - and he was so modest - he'd appeared in that I'd been a fan of.

RF: Before we leave the Bush some of the individual films you remember. Did you work with Jessie Matthews

RD: Yes I did but I'm not clear in my kind how much. Like a lot of other careers in the film business when you were working at that time for Gaumont British when you could be sent to Islington or Shepherd's Bush you had a job. You often worked a week or two on a film and then you got transferred. So I can't remember I worked all the way through a Jessie Matthews or only part of one. I don't think I worked all the way through 'The Man Who Knew Too Much' or 'The Thirty Nine Steps'. I do remember he was the worse of all joke players I ever remember. We did have a production manager called Dickie Bevill. He got £25 a week which at Gaumont British was the tops He was a millionaire. Dickie was going on about this new flat which was entirely electric. Hitch bribed a coal merchant to deliver a ton of coal to the new all electric flat. He went home and left Bob Donat and Madeleine Carroll handcuffed together. He bribed the prop man to say he couldn't find the key. He justified that. The trouble with Madeleine Carroll is ice cold and I want to make her more human. I want to stir her up, make her angry. So he said. I think he was right about her. There was no warmth at all.

RF: He did have his wife working with.

RD: I worked with Walter Forde but the most amusing was Jack Cutt.

RF: We're up to 35/36.

RD: I had a row with Harold Boxall. I'd usually worked with Teddy Baird who later became a producer. He was a friend of Tony Asquith. I got to be friends with Tony Asquith while I was at Islington. He used to hang out at the pub at the end of the road. He was a terrible alcoholic.

RF: Already

RD: Oh yes. He liked to drink. But a nice fellow and helpful. One of the early directors who did try to make films with some more meaning. I remember him 20 or 30 years later standing in my office saying it's 20 years since I've made a film I wanted to make. That's the tragedy of so may British directors.

I went to see Harold Boxall who was the chief acountant and I've mentioned he thought I should be able to carry on with my low salary because my parents were well off. So I got into my car - it a which had belonged to George Formby - I was paying it off over two years at five shillings a week. A marvellous filter radio. I remember Jackie Clayton saying to me he remembers when he was third assistant and I was second assistant and this open car came along out of the fog with the music playing out of it and he was most impressed. He was a couple of years my junior. I had this row with Harold Boxall, went down to Worton Hall where Korda was operating and got a job. I had not previously made any feelers There was a job going and I took it. Harold was very angry because several people had left to go to London Films. Not surprisingly when you went from £2 to £10. He was making mutterings about suing Korda. After the war I couldn't get a job because I was in Moscow and I couldn't get out until the Moscow Conference which was 47 and everybody had come back earlier and they all came back earlier. So I swallowed my pride and went back to Korda who I had been working for before the War and got a job on 'The Third Man'. But I had to go and fix up my salary with the company secretary who turned out to be Harold Boxall and he diddled me. Whatever I should I have as a production manager, I think it should have been £35 a week, he gave me £25. We went to Vienna on location with a day unit and night unit. So I made £1,000 . He was a cheapscate.

Korda needed someone like him. Had I been paid £35 I would not have qualified for the overtime.

Korda was building Denham but I started work at Worton Hall. It was on a film where a lot of extra help was needed because there was a lot of crowd. I was able to stay on, largely through the good offices of Teddy Baird, and we worked for a longtime on the film of Cyrano de Bergerac. The script was being assembled by Lajos Biro. Korda had commissioned all the well known poets of the day to make translations. It was written in verse so all these translations were written in verse. I saw this chap Biro at work.He had a great big table an scissors and paste and he was pasting together the script from all these versions. Meanwhile we were doing a test. Charles Laughton was going to be Cyrano. A ludicrous idea when you think he must have been the snub nosed actor who ever existed and Cyrano had an enormous nose. Charlie I must say took the whole think extremely seriously. He went to France for a month studying the real Cyrano, he wasn't a fictitious character. He did all that. He was invited and acted to play the part in French at the Comedie Francaise which gives you an idea what a serious actor this figure of fun he was. He wasn't just a buffoon. Meanwhile the director was going to be a chap I got tremendously friendly with a chap called Lee Garmes, a very well-known Hollywood cameraman. In the meantime while we were pissing around and doing tests, a girl who was going to play Roxanne was Vivien Leigh and for some reason she felt a little strange and I'd used her on a Cicely Courtneidge film in which she played a beautiful schoolgirl - second

directors did their own casting in those days - you had files with pictures. She got very friendly with me and we had lunch in the restaurant every day. She was so smittten. It was like having lunch with the Virgin Mary and I never thought of propositioning her. She was so miraculously beautiful. She was married to a solicitor at that time. We were testing her. Elsa was hanging around- she was going to have a part on it. We made a story by a well know writer of the day called Stacy Maunier called Miss Brace Girdle Does her Duty about a British spinster in France. I've never been able to find out what happened to it. We all directed it Lee and Teddy and I. Elsa was most amusing. I think Charles was off in France at that time. But the main problem cropped up both Alex Korda and Charlie Laughton were getting cold feet and neither of them wanted to admit it. So Korda got this brilliant idea and I was used as the bearer of sad tidings. He got hold of this plastic surgeon and you have to remember in those days plastic surgery was a primitive art - it was only during the war and all the RAF being cut up and their faces being burnt. Previously it was nose jobs for film actors. Korda got this brilliant idea - we could never get the nose right in the tests - so Korda got this pet plastic surgeon who promised he would fix Laughton's nose before the film and put it back afterwards. So course Korda never expected Laughton to agree. So I had to tell Laughton this. He said he would think about it. So he had to cave in and back out and the film was never made. which is very sad. It was made later with Jose Ferrer. The fact that Roxanne should have been terrible beautiful and it would have been the first break for Vivien. She had been a crowd artiste and a minor West End player. She would have been smashing as ~~Vivien~~. I think Laughton would have been very good if we found the nose. If was a sort of a rehearsal for what happened with I Claudius except it never even got started.

RF: Before we move on you say all this was at Worton Hall and Worton Hall is one of the lost studios. I was going to ask you to recall your memories of the studio.

RD: I found it very pleasant. There was a very nice bar and restaurant . Quite separate from the canteen. Very good food. That was a characteristic of Korda. I very sensibly they didn't open the bar at lunch time. You could have some wine with you lunch but they didn't open the bar. They probably didn't have drinks in the workers canteen.

RF: Was Korda just shooting there or was he occupying the studio.

RD: I've racked my brains I can't remember which it was. It was a small studio, very pleasant atmosphere.

RF: This would be about 1936

RD: 35-36.

SIDE 4, TAPE 2

RF: Who else had he gathered around him? This was the beginning of the great brave effort to create a British film industry which rivalled Hollywood.

RD: He's already made Henry VIII. One of the first things I worked on down there was a 1,000 crowd which had been called out by mistake. If at Gaumont British I'd called down two crowd artists which hadn't been

used Harold Boxall would have fired me right away without any argument. I walked into a totally different atmosphere. Not only did you get a much better salary but if you called 1,000 crowd artists by mistake too bad, utterly different world from Gaumont British. That was tightly run with the Ostrer Brothers looking over their shoulder and Micky being quite strict. Everything was meant to be run like a factory. The studio manager at Gaumont was Phil Samuels. When we weren't on films we weren't fired. We were up in the Polish corridor and people went from card game to card game with your briefcase stuffed with newspapers and you never strolled, you practically ran and looked frightfully business-like. But you worked very late hours. Phil Samuels said we ought to clock in on one of these clocking machines. Always being bolshy I said, I'm not going to do it. I'm going to tell him. I did go and tell him. I said we work early in the morning to late at night. We would be delighted to clock in if we get paid for it. Or we come in at eleven o'clock and leave at four because you've got nothing for us to do. We're not going to come and tell you that. Either we get paid overtime or we're not going to clock in. And I won the argument. So he probably wasn't such a bad old stick.

Let's get back to Worton Hall. Very soon after the disaster of Cyrano Teddy Baird and I were made the location managers which meant we moved out to Denham to a hut which which was at something called the City Square which was about a mile down the road to Rickmansworth from the studio, over the hill. Something called the North Orbital Rd which apparently is now deserted because it was an aborted M25 which never got finished. It already had the tower built. It was built of wood, and a 100ft tower. I think it had originally been built for Zolly's Conquest of the Air which never got finished in its original form. Somebody jumped off it in one of those primitive flying machines, killed himself - I don't know precisely it was before we got there. 'The Shape of Things to Come' was already on because the goats were already bleating. It became Things to Come. I worked on that also for a while, not as location manager but on the floor. There was a studio already opened by that time but the film had gone on for ages and ages. The director of that was William Cameron Menzies who was an art director and very good on tricks. it has been alleged in books since that Korda directed. Korda was certainly around quite a lot which he wasn't later on. I do remember that when I had been a good boy he would present me with one of his 18sh cigars, it would probably cost £18 now. An enormous great thing. The first inch was nectar to what the gods might smoke, the second inch was alright but once I got down to a few more inches it would begin to make me feel sick and I would have to retire and hide it. I can remember those tremendous rewards. I was given the job of H.G. Wells through the grounds which were called the Fisheries, taking him for walks along the trout stream and engaging the old chap, I suppose he wasn't that old but to me he was an old chap, in conversation and he would go on and on and on and I can't remember really what he talked about. Partly what he was talking about was very much the content of the film. He was very sadened - I'd always loved all his books, not just the scientific ones but Mr Polly, etc - I was an admirer, I felt quite sulky about being sent off because I thought they didn't appreciate my great contribution to the film. I'm sending myself up, it wasn't that bad. But I did take him round for these walks because presumably he was getting in the way. But how much he was getting in the way of Bill Cameron Menzies and how much in the way of Alex I really don't know. Alex didn't actually come and seize the megaphone as far as I remember.

RF: Didn't he had the way of some of the Hollywood moguls, they didn't shoot so much as reshoot.

RD: He might have done some reshooting and of course he controlled all the editing, all the scripting and all the everything. Alex was a very cultivated man and he would probably have been able to discuss it with Bill Menzies. I can remember a lot of the actors. I remember Ralph Richardson, he was supposed to be a boss of some time when civilisation had been broken down. We were doing these shots with him on the lot of him being pulled along in a Rolls-Royce by a horse. He was a nice fellow, most amusing. There was Teddy Chapman who became a permanent prop of the Savage Club bar. He could be very bad tempered. And that very pompous character Raymond Massey, I believe his brother was the Governor General of Canada. Most of the interesting stars were the special effects people and there were simple things. I mentioned there was this tower. What we used was a very simple technique of a foreground model of 160 story skyscraper. There was a little hole in the model. The camera position was as it were glued to the ground. stuck to the ground with a little wooden to where you screwed the camera in so there was only one place you could put the camera. There was a hole in the foreground model and on top of the 100ft tower was a bit of set. So for the long shot there was Teddy Chapman and Raymond Massey and the rocket was going off to the moon and they were on a balcony on this 100ft building talking of going to the stars and you got your shot.

Another film going on around that time was The Glourie Ghost which got called The Ghost Goes West. That was Rene Clair so we got to know Rene quite a bit. In fact Teddy and I went with Rene to the premiere where again it was the formidable Queen Mary who was the royal person present. And Queen Mary apart from being a great tatter and collector of other things was a tremendous expert on castles so she asked Rene where this castle was. His English was absolutely awful, he could hardly speak any English and he completely dried because the castle was a foreground model and a set on this City Square lot, so I told her that because I thought she would be interested, which she was, because it was very well done. Again it illustrates how effective the simple technique of foreground model can be.

RF: Ned Mann was the special effects man. What do you have to tell us about him. We ought to take up him William Cameron Menzies.

RD: I remember Bill was a kind of director type. He was rather grand. he wasn't like some directors who are rather pally with the boys. I remember he had an exquisite girlfriend dressed in men's suits from Saville Row who was Contesse or Baronesse, some Italian girl friend he had. He tended to be cafe society or Hollywood society and didn't mix with the lads as much as Berthold and I who were tremendous friends. I never got to know him that well. He was perfectly pleasant. He was never nasty or anything.

RF: Now about Ned Mann.

RD: He was alright. You had a drink with him in the canteen. He was rather a gloomy character. I don't want to exaggerate. He had that cast of features.

RF: Did he train people up.

RD: Yes, he trained people up and it started a tradition of special effects work in this country. The model makers were British. They mostly if not exclusively started up as plasterers. That was their trade.

RF: Do you remember who shot it. Who was the cameraman. It wasn't Lee Garmes.

RD: No, he had gone home by then. I forgot to mention about Lee, it was really tragic. He did go and make a film but it was patently obvious he was a brilliant cameraman, he was marvellous on scripting, he had a wonderful personalities, actors would love him but he just couldn't direct. It was one of those things about having to make decisions every minute. He returned to Hollywood and reverted to being a bloody good cameraman. He was very innovative. For instance he made some film in New York, for instance, 'That Scoundrel' with Noel Coward, and he started - it's a revolution which comes round every few years, probably the stock was getting faster, but he reverted to three ~~in-key~~ lamps "inky" instead of 95,000 arc lamps. He was great at getting into low key. No he wasn't around. Perry, George Perinal, was around but I don't think he was on that.

RF: Do you know where Korda found Perinal.

RD: He knew him. Korda had made some films in Paris before making The Private Life of Henry VIII. Or whether alternatively Rene insisted in having him I don't know . Perry was one of those cameramen who was famous for making women beautiful which most famous cameramen were. The stars used to specify in their contract certain cameramen. It was alleged by certain detractors that he forgot to light the set. If you got to light the set the chief spark would do it for him and say is this alright mate. It's a way of saying he concentrated on the close work. He had this marvellous mahogany case full of all these different filters and diffusion disks to make the focus soft and so on.

RF: What were your first memories of Denham. This marvellous new studio.

RD The studio offices were in the old house, The Fisheries, which I can remember but I can't recall whether it was really old or whether it was Victorian. It was red brick.

RF: Victorian/Edwardian.

RD: Korda had his offices there. The chap who was supposed to be running it was David Cunnynghame, Sir David Cunnynghame. He was a baronet but he was hopeless. He was known as twinkle toes. The whole place was run by his secretary called Jean and she ran the whole thing on £6 a week. The cutting room was run by another wonderful chap, an American, Bill Hornbeck. I think he taught - Charlie Crichton for instance was in the cutting room - he taught all these lads all he knew. He was the most generous chap and a great companion and he knew all about editing. There was not only Continental, there was also an American input there.

RF: Korda brought over a lot of Americans. He brought over the best.

RD: He must have offered them a damn good salary. I thought he was a great bloke and he did a lot for the British film industry. He went

back to Hollywood and continued to be a famous supervising editor. Then later we were a bit cut off. When the studios were built it was hell for an assistant director because there was this great wide corridor made of solid concrete which seemed to be 100 yards long.

RF: That was pretty hellish.

RD: 'Things to Come' and 'The Ghost Goes West' were the main ones we got involved with at that time.

RF: 'Knight Without Armour'.

RD: 'Knight Without Armour'. Teddy Baird was on that. It may have been a bit later.

RF: What was the first picture into Denham

RD: I don't remember. Another character I came across more socially than otherwise, first at GB, because he was making at that time Man of Aran. I'm damned sure called himself Flaherty at the time but changed it later on. As directors got posher their actors got posher. But by now he had also transferred to Korda and I went to lot of his parties and he served this most wonderful punch which I suppose he'd made in the South Seas. He'd left Frances. Escaped from her but he got recaptured and he was with her till he died.

RF: How was he perceived at that time.

RD: I'm not a hero worshiper but he was almost a hero. He almost always wore - I'd admired very much Rene Clair, I liked all the French directors - but as a character I was pretty carried away by Bob, he was such a tremendous personality. He then pissed off to India and disappeared completely to do 'Elephant Boy'. All that happened was urgent requests for more and more stock to be sent out. And then Zoly - Zoli was sent out eventually. He almost disappeared too.

RF: What more can we say about the studio.

RD: I think I've already told you how it murdered your feet and shoe leather. Korda had borrowed about £5 million from the Prudential insurance Company. Suddenly a character started moving among us who was a director of the new company who was a character called Marks, nearer the Marks of Marks and Spencers than the one who wrote Das Kapital. He was a director of the Prudential as well I think. He actually came round and virtually blackmailed us all to take out insurance policies with the Pru. Probably because Korda got through the £5 million we had a bit of a recession and I was made redundant. I did not, as I was an unmarried young fellow, take out one of these fantastic insurance policies, and I was out of work.

RF: Korda had no loyalties presumably.

RD: I'm sure he had loyalties but I was too unimportant probably and I never appealed. I had been very lucky at GB and so far I hadn't been fired. And I suppose I wasn't fired, a film came to an end and it never occurred to me that I had anything to beef about. I'm only mentioning about the co-incidence of this chap who seemed to be

threatening if you want to continue with this company you better take out an insurance policy which seemed to be very low level stuff to me. Though it may have been coincidental. Anyway I was out for a while. I went on with my garden, I was a great gardener, my father's garden with shrubs and things and making it beautiful for a few months. Then i got a job back at Denham but not with Korda. I got a job with what was really 20th Century Fox but called itself new World Productions to work on a film as assistant production manager called 'Wings of the Morning'. This was the first Technicolor film to be shot in Britain. The crew was very much a Technicolor crew. I think Ray Rennahan was the cameraman. I think Jack Cardiff was the focus puller. He was tied up with Technicolor at that time. We had Henry Fonda and a well known French actress of the time, Annabella who spurned having a surname. There were various other characters one of whom was Count McCormack and funnily he was a bit difficult. He received the title from the Pope. Although I was associate producer I was still involved in trying to persuade people to go on sets on time. This young actor came along and he said he was Irish. He said it was quite easy to deal with McCormack who was a tremendously famous tenor, he recorded millions of records, well-known all over the world, he said it's quite simple Bob, always remember to call him Count McCormack. Don't just call him John and you'll have him eating out of your hands and he seemed to be right. After that I didn't have any trouble with him. I being a junior character, in those days it happened a lot, I didn't get the privilege of going to the beautiful Irish locations, Wings of the Morning was the name of some prize racehorse which came from Ireland. I missed out on all that. It was alleged that Technicolor did not send the rushes back for a long time because they had a slight technical problem, eventually it came back and they said it was OK. They had turned the post box red and in Ireland they were green.

RF: That's a well known story it there any validity to it.

RD: I honestly don't know but it's a good illustrative story about the flexibility in a sense of the Technicolor process. It isn't like photography. It's possible to interfere with each of the original colours which were shot in black and white.

RF: Its also and indication of the way Technicolor imposed their strictures and their requirements on the producers.

RD: I think it's still the best colour process ever invented. Being the first one in England we had Dr Kalmus along himself and his wife Natalie who got credit on every Technicolor film for many years as colour consultant. She didn't turn up everywhere but she did turn up on this important occasion. And she kept giving us the most awful advice, fushia colour scarfs and so on, which luckily everyone had the sense not to pay much attention to. But I got quite pally with Dr. Kalmus who'd invented the damn thing who was a very interesting character and I remember him telling me that Technicolor was quite good but that he'd also invented something called Kodachrome, the thing of the future is going to be Kodachrome. There's just one small thing we've got to iron out and that's reversal. And once I've got that worked out there's no question everything will be shot in Kodachrome. As we all know that apparently was never ironed out. Whether that was because Dr. Kalmus didn't find the answer or whether Kodak didn't want it to be ironed out because they had Eastmancolor by then and the last thing they wanted was something to supercede that, you never know with inventions. I swear that is what Dr. Kalmus told me. And indeed

Kodacolor was a good film. I met all these technical chaps. It was a very clumsy camera, very large camera with the three negatives going through it, always painted bright blue blimp. I think Jack Cardiff was the focus puller not the operator.

RF: What do you remember of Ray Rennahan

RD: He was a good working cameraman. He always did his job. Perfectly decent bloke. I don't remember much about him.

RF: What were the requirements of that early 3 strip process.

RD: In our case they were really peculiar because there was not anywhere yet no lab, a British Technicolor, everything was sent to Hollywood so we saw all the rushes in black and white, off the blue, cyan, of the three original black and white films.

RF: So what did they do, process the three negatives here and ship them back.

RD: I think we did that. I'm not sure whether we sent the negatives back but I think they were processed here in black and white. I honestly can't remember. The whole camera department was rather separate and kept close to its chest because it belonged to Technicolor completely. But we saw colour strips hand done. All through these years, and carried on after the war some time, the camera boys produced tests of every role they unload, the bit off the end they did tests on. That's not to do with Technicolor. We saw the rushes here in black and white so i suppose they must have been processed here otherwise we wouldn't have seen them. We saw the rushes the next day. They

When it came out it got rave reviews for its colour and that was caused by the difference between the pre smog atmosphere of California compared with the soft rather misty atmosphere of England. And I think it was that rather than Ray Rannahan's photography, because he shot plenty of things in the States, caused the raving surprise at the beauty of the colour. I think it was the atmosphere. It was very successful in that way.

RF: What about Henry Fonda

RD: He was very nice, Annabella I got on well with. Not particularly pally. Again they were on the international Cafe society level. Rather contrasting because I can remember back in Denham in earlier years, the lady who used to be called Queenie Thompson, the half Indian lady who became Merle Oberon, she got quite fond of me and she was the first person I remember in England who had one of these portable dressing rooms and she kept inviting me in. Again I never took any advantage. I thought she was pretty old. I was very young at the time. She wanted someone to tipple some gin with. She was terribly fond of gin. But I never remember being invited into Annabella's room.

RF: Was she a favourite of Alexander by that time.

RD: I presume so. The story is that she decided she wouldn't be called Queenie Thompson, that she had told Alex she would like to be called O'Brien and he got it all wrong and called her Oberon. Considering how well educated and intellectual Alex was compared with other tycoons

from Central Europe I doubt this. But the story is he misunderstood. But it was a stroke of genius whether he misunderstood or not.

RF: Her father was Irish I believe. The other thing was that Alex had an accent and he might not have misheard but misrelayed.

RD: I have little more to tell you about my career before the war. The Pru money had run out. The National Film Finance hadn't started and I think Alex was running out of money. The studio had been rented to Twentieth Century Fox for that one film. But I was out of work for quite a long time.

RF: How did you fill in.

RD: I lived at home and got on with my gardening. I remember doing a film with Alfred Drayton and Bunny Hare but not one of the classic Aldwych farces, the Tom Wall and Ralph Lynn films.

This one and I can't remember what it was called but it was made at Pinewood and it was the only time I worked at Pinewood. I think I was the assistant production manager. They had made one just before this called 'Banana Ridge' It was another attempt to make an equally cheap successful farce. I do remember meanwhile on another stage at Pinewood my pal Teddy Baird was working with Leslie Howard and Tony Asquith called Pygmalion. And I remember we had a little red haired boy in our farce, I think it was Gordon Jackson. I always remember Teddy working on the other, he could visit Leslie Howard on the set, we took him along and he practically burst into tears because he thought he was going to meet the break popular comedian Sidney Howard. He was quite disappointed. After that I was very much out of work. I got very depressed. I got sunk into gardening. Munich came along and I didn't believe it at all having been in Nazi Germany. I thought it was starting. I suddenly got this idea I must see a bit of the War before I get killed. Before a war or you're not in the army you think you;re going to get killed. Once you're in the army you think everybody else is going to get killed. So I thought I always wanted to see a bit of the world and perhaps I'll go to Mexico and make a film there. Off I went. And that was the end of my film career before the War and there's an eight year gap coming.

SIDE 5, TAPE 3

RF: Before we leave the Thirties you say you were out of work in 1938 which was one of the great collapses of the British film industry and most of the studios closed.

RD: I just fell back. I'd been through some personal tragedies. My young brother had committed suicide. He was only 21. I am a bit of a manic depressive. I just sank myself into gardening. It was the combined depression of everything that I'd forecast since I was a kid about what was going to happen was about to happen, the War was coming on and everyone had laughed at me and I couldn't join the communist party. I couldn't accept what Stalin was doing. What I finally told my Communist recruiters, I don't believe in my country right or wrong but I certainly don't believe in some other country right or wrong. Which is partly why I never got to Spain. I wanted to. I'm not sure whether I got out of it because I was too cowardly or their came a point, it started off very democratic but later on practically all the foreign side was organised by the Communist Party and they didn;t want to send you if you didn;t belong.

RF: What was the political awareness in the studios at the time.

RD: Extraordinary little. It's like journalism. You live your own enclosed life with other people. Ok scratch some of them they might - and I'd lost touch with the union thing - we were so well paid not much happened in these early days whereas back of the Bush it was going on because they were so badly paid.

RF: Korda I believe was determined there would be no union.

RD: Maybe he was but I never remember any conscious thing about it. One was very busy and got paid a lot of money.

RF: I take it from previous interviews.

RD: I don't think he was terribly pro union but later on - I don't think he was basically an anti union person. But I don't remember any anti union any more than I remember much union activity. There was probably some going on the labs.

RF: I suppose it's possible that it's an accepted outlook like in our day a great many people will accept what's going on without accepting all the implications. A superficial acceptance of a way of behaviour,, a way of life, of attitudinising, they weren't perceived as being a necessary thing.

RD: They were perceived to be necessary and I was in in this early thing at Islington. And later on at the Bush I got very upperty and very left wing. I did mention much earlier about this move to get supper money at Islington with Charlie. Later on Charlie, another apprentice, had stayed with the sound department, Tom Lindon Haynes, when I was at the Bush they were getting the ACTT going and I got terribly uptight about this because I'm not going to join this damn thing, it was called an association of gentleman, I typical of someone who had been to public school wasn't going to be a gentleman. I did lose my posh accent for a while. We ought to join up with the sparks and the stagehands and have a proper left wing union and none of this association of gentlemen. And there were a lot of clever people working on this - perhaps it was about the time of

Captain Cope who didn't make a go of the thing and before the time of Thorold and Tony Asquith. I refused to join because I thought it was too right wing. But they were quite right all these fellows. They knew what they were doing. They thought they should base the ACT on the BMA which to this day is by far the most successful union in this country

RF: Or the Law Society

RD: But I was too young and foolish to see this. I had cards which I tore up. I didn't get a proper official card till after the War many years later. Once you got to Korda it wasn't that anyone was actively against it, I think it was simply there weren't many activists. I wasn't an activist because I despised it for the wrong reason, I thought it was too right wing, and I suppose at Denham people were so well paid relatively no on thought of joining. No one told you actively you musn't join. I never remember it being discussed. It probably was just after I lost my job and just before the War it most likely sprang up there but when I was there there didn't seem to be any union activity at all. it just didn't exist.

RF: People accepted the hours.

RD: The hours weren't so bad as they were in earlier days but the pay was so much better and you don't mind working long hours if you get paid something.

RF: Do you remember what you got paid.

RD: I think about £15 quid which for a bachelor was very nice in those days.

RF: Come 1938 and you're no longer working for Korda, how did one set about finding work.

RD: I didn't. I'm hopeless at things like that. People used to go round writing letters, doing things like that. I got too discouraged and didn't do it. I could have used influence a lot and I did occasionally to get the odd introduction but I hadn't got my heart in it. Also I had serious ambitions so picking up the odd job as assistant production manager on some lousy film didn't hold out all that interest for me. So when I was fed up with the political situation and thought there will be a war in a year which there was I thought if I go to Mexico I'll try and make a film in Mexico but it never happened because the war broke out.

RF: You left for Mexico by ship.

RD: At the end of 1938. I took my mum and two sisters to Madeira and then I took a Dutch boat to Barbados and then I spent some time in the West Indies. I shared an island, St Lucia with a pal. Tried a bit of being a beachcomber which is very much the life of a millionaire. We had a very lovely house on the beech converted from some house for Rodney the famous admiral because by some trick of the trade winds you didn't have any mosquitoes. But after a time I got worried about the people across the bay in the called Gross Islet and when I got steamed up by had they got malaria and venerial disease and why were they only paid a shilling a day I woke up one morning and realised I had a marvellous holiday but wasn't a real beachcomber so I better get back into the real world and start worrying about that and not this little island.

RF: I went to the States next. I visited an American Virgin Island. I got off the ship and finally I went to Puerto Rico and stayed there a little while and got a ship which was meant to stop off and Cuba and then go on to the STates. But it didn't stop at Cuba. We went steaming past. There were only two other passengers on the boat and they were both out of work members of the seaman's union. It was pretty miserable. We had tea at five o'clock with condensed milk. On that voyage I became an honourary member of the American Seaman's Union. I looked forward all my life to going to that great modern country from old fashioned England and we steamed up this long estuary between mudbanks and arrived in Alabama which was all of 50 years behind everything I'd dreamt of. We arrived there and it turns out I can't go assure. Because in those days your American visa was one entry. Well this black boat in a rowing boat who had stamped my passport in the Virgin Islands had stamped my passport as having arrived in the United States. So there I was in quandary. I had a few drinks with the Captain who was a Norwegian and the immigration bloke. We then decided the bar was running out to go ashore. Finally after we had a lot of drinks, the immigration man said right captain just walk out of here an nobody will ever know. In a sense I entered the United States totally illegally. Then I toured round the States, going to Mexico, getting married, joining the Allied Propaganda Service.

RF: When did you finally return to Europe.

RD: I returned D Day plus two. Having become the second in command, a big shot in the propaganda racket. At the beginning of the war there wasn't any ambassador. The Shell oil company affected this in both ways because they made the British government break off relations just before the war because the Mexican government appropriated the oil company from Shell. So we didn't have an ambassador, there was a Consul. So rather than a propaganda office we started this inter-allied Information Service representing all

RF: Who was the driving force behind that?

RD: I started trying to set it up but then they sent out a chap from the Ministry of Information. We got this set up. We got a lot of money from the French. They owned the huge department ~~stalls~~ stores in Mexico City. Then we would write to the Ministry of Information send some more money or we will be outvoted by all these blokes and then we'd say to these blokes here's poor Britain fighting so we managed to get quite a lot of money together to really do our job which was really necessary because Mexico must have been 90% pro German. And all the information sent out by the Ministry of Information was only for throwing into the waste paper basket. About the poor Poles and so on. The word machismo comes from Mexico. The were on the side of the guys who were winning. So all that propaganda was useless and we had to make our own.

RF: This is before America enters the War?

RD: Long before. What really was the turning point was Churchill, when one went to the newsreel and he did this about fighting in the last ditch that the Mexicans started thinking this is great but we'd prepared them for it a bit with out propaganda. Here's the little guy fighting the big guy, fighting back which is even more machismo than steam rolling everyone and we began to swing them round. We invented agents all over the country, unpaid, pro allied people, sometimes British but usually Mexican and I did a tour and I had to get to California and the only way to get there was to fly to Mexicale and then I had to get a bus. I got

this bus and Pearl Harbour had just happened. There were all these Americans were on the bus and the wretched bus driving. He was telling everybody to put out the lights and put up the black out. I got fed up with this and said shall I go and do it. We went across Southern California turning out all the lights because non of the local citizens gave a damn. They just sat there. By letting the chap sit in his seat I saved a lot of time. They had all the black outs because they immediately imagined their would be hundreds of Japanese subs popping up all over. I kept in touch with film people in Mexico and I think that's the nearest I've ever been to Hollywood, San Diego.

RF: Your employers were the British Government?

RD: Yes. It started off the Ministry of Information and then was transferred to the Foreign Office by the time I went to Moscow and I'd got a big job by then. I became a diplomat as well. I feel this period is so separate it's hardly worthy covering. The only bit which covers the film business is I flew back on a flying clipper in 1944 with two or three admirals, two or three vice marshals and a couple of generals, all in civilian clothes. It was top priority I was flown back although I never officially found out why. Because it was just after D day they had priorities. There was this magnificent airplane like a private yacht, dining and sitting room and bedroom. It took 11 hours across the Atlantic. We flew more Baltimore because the Americans had such a monopoly that they wouldn't let the British Imperial Airways fly from New York so we had to get a train and go down to Baltimore and fly from Baltimore to Shannon in Ireland and that's the only time I've been to Southern Ireland. We touched down at Shannon in the water airport. After someone gave us and enormous breakfast they put us in a bus and took us all the way round to Limerick to the other airport on the other side of the river. We could have got a boat across. Perhaps it was too show us the beauties of Ireland. I don't know. We then got on a land airplane and suddenly we had to land in Bristol because the flying bombs had just started. Finally I was given the job of taken charge of the whole public relations of the invasion. But my boss in London said don't do this, it's going to be hell working with these damn Americans. It's going to be very difficult. They've got more clout. You're going to have a bad time trying to do this. Would you rather go to Moscow. I said you bet. I'd love to go to Moscow. I had a Russian wife. That's not the real reason, it was obviously a lot more fascinating than working with a lot of bloody generals and trying to do propaganda for them. There we got a marvellous building for the press department in which we were able to install a cinema and the chap we had to run it was George Elvin's brother Harold who had, I believe cycled to Moscow just before the outbreak of war and got a job at the Embassy and had got a job as nightwatchman of some such sort which Stafford Cripps when he was the British Ambassador to Moscow. We took on Harold to run the cinema for us which was free to any Russians who cared to come. Very few dared. But what was interesting was that the film officer was Roger Burford. After the war he was in that well known agency near Marble Arch for actors. He had been in films and had written detective stories. He'd been back because his wife had died. He had two adopted children and they all went out to Moscow with us. We did have that film activity. We lent out the films to the Russians who would have shown them publically. We had those tremendously important newspaper because they were allowed to produce Soviet Weekly here which wasn't running. It was never closed down by Stalin. It was closed down by the foreign office because they said it wasn't making money any more. Absolutely stupid. John Davis was too stupid to make a reciprocal deal with films. He would have done very

well. In Russia the few English films they had did very well. Lady Hamilton was immensely popular. But perhaps the most popular British film was called George and the Dinky Jazz. The original title was Let George Do It which was George Formby. it was the kind of film the London audiences rather despised but the Russian audiences absolutely adored it. I'm sure we could have done more. We did persuade John Davis to let us have for the price of a print. We not only showed them in own own cinema which was so lovingly looked after by Harold Elvin who was so loving that he used to get these round 50 tins that we used to get our fags in and convert them into ashtrays to hand on the seats. We rented them out to the Russians. For instance most middleclass posh Russians wouldn't have been seen dead more in public brothal than in a public cinema. They all had their own cinemas.

RF: You say middleclass - were they party elite.

RD: Some of them were party elite, others weren't. Eisenstein never joined the Party. They were Party members mostly of course but they were the architects, I'm not saying they were bourgeois or anti communist. I'm just describing their status in society. We would lend all these films out. And even in the darkest Stalinist years after that colleagues in Moscow used to see nearly all the Western films at the Domkino, the Bafta, but more than a BAFTA on the grounds that they should see them for technical and other innovations. The film directors got to see these films.

RF: What was the agony here, ideological.

RD: Not ideological. Just stupid. It was the same stupid people who were buggering up our film industry, it's hardly a business it was never a industry. It was short sighted nonsense. I really feel we the government side should have leant more heavily.

Surely it was a better idea to let the films get out to Russia and not have any fear that the British were going to be totally suborn by Soviet films they couldn't understand anyway. We weren't ideological enough. The chap who was in charge of distributing London films here in all due respect was a party member who had studied at the film school under Eisenstein, Herbert Marshall, he was supposed to have been in charge of distributing Russian films here but I don't think that was his skill and perhaps it was a mistake having a party member. Again that's ideological. But perhaps it would h ave been better with somebody else to push the films here. These were worries at the time. not speaking with hindsight but trying to remember our worries at the time. It was a pity we didn't get to show more British films particularly in view of the popularity of the weekly I put out in Russian, incidentally I had 80 Russians employees working for me. The Russians were absolutely avid for news about Britain and the Allies in general. When the European War ended on VE day, the most touching, it makes me cry to remember, going down to red square, fireworks were going on, if they found out you were Russian you were chucked up into the air. They were all going round singing. They were all going round singing Tipperary, they thought it was marvellous. We'd all got together and beaten the fascists and we were all going to be pals.

RF: In this country at that time the Russians were our dearly beloved allies. The Albert Hall had rallies.

RD: Yes it was all thrown away. It was awful.

RF: It was thrown away but quite deliberately on both sides. You mentioned your acquaintanceship with Eisenstein.

RD: I've written about it quite extensively but to summarise I became friendly with him leaving out the film reasons, also I'd spent five years in Mexico and Eisenstein was very interested in Mexico because he shot but never finished a film there. We got friendly. He was the sort of chap who was big enough, not physically, up to a point he ignored the secret police and was braver about having foreign friends than some. Most who were not worried about having foreign friends rightly suspected of working for the secret police which was often true but who may have been in any case genuinely pro British, perhaps for that very reason they'd been caught out not being too patriotic and were working under threat. it was a difficult time. Sergei was genuinely interested in England and everything and Mexico and we became firm friends. The main point with him was his experience of Stalin. As he said at one point, he'd suffered in Hollywood, he'd never got to make a film, he knew people suffered from their producers all over the world, think of me the dictator of Russia, the great leader of the great patriotic war, he's turned himself into my producer. It's hell, absolutely hell. Originally Eisenstein was genuinely interested in the idea of Ivan the Terrible being reconsidered as not being quite so terrible, terrible really means fearless than terrible in any other sense. I think
Rather the

RF: Richard III

RD: That was fine. But he got out the first part of the film and won a prize and got notched on the second part. And things got stickier and stickier. For in a sense he was expected more and more to modify the portrayal of Ivan the Terrible. Eisenstein swore that Stalin totally absolutely identified himself with Ivan the Terrible to a pathological extent. And it got more and more difficult. Whether this pressure brought on Sergei's heart attack we'll never know.

He went to a party to celebrate the prize he won and he was dancing with a famous ballerina of the day when he had this terrible heart attack and fell on the floor and put in the hospital.

RF: Was he ever in any of danger of being purged.

RD: His film was stopped half way through or never started. He had a bad time. He was famous internationally and treated like some less known director and accused of being homosexual.

RF: Was he in physical danger. You said he was internationally too famous but that doesn't seems to have applied to a lot of people in Russia in the late 30s.

RD: Eisenstein was extremely famous abroad. Stalin was often ill-advised and a cruel and nasty man but he wasn't a total idiot. He would interfere with Eisenstein. He think he wanted Eisenstein at one time to make the awful films about Stalin himself. He appreciated Eisenstein being a genius.

RF: When you spoke to Eisenstein did he ever indicate he was worried about this or was it just a burdon.

RD: He was worrried about it. Incidentally, he never joined the communist party he was never a communist.

RF: He was a Marxist.

RD: He was a sincere socialist and Marxist of sorts, more pure sort than Stalin I suppose. He studied Marx, he studied dialetic materialism, he studied every damn thing. One day I told you how I misued my schooldays by studying nothing but Elizabethan drama. One time I went to his flat and I found there the same little book of all those plays I used to have. Apparently before Ivan Sergei had the idea of making a film of Tamberlain from Marlowe's plays which had influenced his ideas about Ivan the Terrible which was a sort of contemporary to Marlowe, had influenced his context. He had gone a long way towards this scripting. All the locations belonged to the Soviet Union because that's where he came from. We started in on making a script to make this Marlowe script one of these days. I never really believed it would happen but and I don't suppose he did but it was a distraction for him at least.

SIDE 6, TAPE 3

RF: What about some of the other filmmakers you met there

RD: It was very, very difficult to meet people in the studios because they didn't let you go round them on the whole. I think because they were unheated, which they were probably in England, not that they needed so much heating here. But I once go to the studios. Eisenstein fixed it up for me. It was all very elaborate. I had to leave my car round the corner. I always drove about in a small car, I hated using the limousines from the embassy with Russian drivers. My hat was OK but my overcoat wasn't long enough so he insisted on lending me an old overcoat down to the ankles, a sort of Russian overcoat. I went there and he pretended I was somebody from Estonia where he was born. He went on doing this. He was sending me up sky high I'm sure because he didn't care that much about - you weren't allowed to ask foreigners to the studios but he wasn't the sort of chap who was going to worry about that. He was playing a game. He was a bit of a hedgehod, he was a bit of a practical joker too. He set me up I think, pretending to be an Estonian, everyone was falling about, they all knew who I was anyway, I don't think the studios were as civilised as the studios in Britain. I didn't meet anyone I particularly remembered. I did meet and liked very much the chap who had been but no longer quite was any more, the chap who had been Eisenstein's cameraman, Tisse who was originally Norwegian. Some people have said he was a cold fish and wanted to desert Eisenstein. He didn't desert Eisenstein it was just an accident of availability as happens in any other country.

RF: He went off with Alexandrov.

RD: Something like that. He got allocated to some unit as cameramen do. I thought he was a splendid chap. I liked him very much. He was a most cultivated man and a brilliant photographer. And Donskoi, is it Donskoi.

RF: There is Donskoi but I don't know much about him.

RD: He made and they were revived year after year after year these three films for instance Gorky's Childhood, My University. He went on to make all sorts of other films. And he managed to get away with something, it was the sort of thing which happened in Russia. He didn't work with Mosfilm, he worked in Gorky for the Childrens Films Studio and in a backwater like that in one of the republics it was easier to get a little bit more freedom in what you were doing than if you were under the eye of the Kremlin in Moscow.

RF: The same thing in China lately.

RD: Indeed. He made quite a lot of good films and that trilogy was pretty classical. They were shown over here year after year after year in places like the Hampstead Everyman.

RF: And the Academy.

RD: He was a nice fellow. I met him here and he got a bit uptight. Years later he came here for some festival at the NFT or something because for no reason one can imagine he was hauled up to Siberia for six years. But he got out and made a film about Lenin's mother which was really popular and after that he was very cautious about renewing the acquaintanceship having been shoved off to Siberia for some years.

Another was Pudovkin but being a great friend of Eisenstein I was on the Eisenstein rather than Pudovkin side.

RF: It was that factionalised.

RD: Eisenstein always maintained it was only a joke but I think it was at times a bit more than a joke. Anyway poor old Pudovkin he was in a bad way too. He hadn't made a film for years either. Then at that time he made a film called Admiral which was historical about the Crimean War, I liked it very much, I suppose we saw it at the Domkino, which was like BAFTA, and Stalin didn't like it. He said this is terrible, it's full of love interest. This was getting towards the end of the War and it's not too historically correct, by which he meant the new party line was to turn anti-British. So a lot of the love interest and other stuff was cut out and it was made anti'British. He then got the Stalin prize for it. Everyone was very happy for him because he was going round looking very seedy and needed a new suit. Russian film directors do get some form of residuals and he hadn't got much and if Stalin said your film was good it went round all the cinemas and you got a packet in no time. So he turned up in new suits and he did give in at that point and he did join the party which Eisenstein never did do. But he was a nice fellow in his way but i never did really get to know him terribly well. Roger Burford the film's officer knew him much better. It was his job really to look after the film directors. I was looking after everything.

RF: How fluent had you become in Russian.

RD: Pretty fluent.

RF: So you could meet them on a one to one basis.

RD: And talking to Eisenstein didn't matter. I did talk to him in Russian some times. But he would like to speak in Spanish some times or English.

RF: You said you would have things to say about Que Viva Mexico!

RD: I said would you like me to get it all together for you because he'd never seen it. He said great. So I started about it with all the clout I had of a pretty senior job for the British government, I got things going in Los Angeles, New York and all over the place, stirring up people probably like Marie Seton, who had bits of this film hanging around.

RF: Had Sinclair Lewis relinquished the title to it.

RD: I can't remember.

RF: I meant Upton Sinclair.

RD: I know. a) I hadn't realised he'd asked other such as Ivor Montagu and uncle Tom Cobley, about three or four other people to do the same thing. And he came round to see me one day and he said you must call it all off. I said what do you mean. He said I've got all these problems with Ivan the Terrible and Stuff and I can't face it, going through reels of this stuff buggered about by everybody else. Call it all off. Which I can understand. He died anyway. He realised he didn't have the energy, he was too shoved into a corner by Stalin and adversity of all kinds. He couldn't face this terribly boring task of reconstituting something which had been shreaded to bits by other people.

RF: Trying to remember his state of mind years before.

RD: Absolutely.

RF: The whole thing of your stay in Russia is a very interesting one and I'm not sure we've done anything but scrapped the surface.

RD: I don't think most of this has got to do with film. I think that's most I remember for film.

RF: It's for your autobiography or a separate tape perhaps.

RD: It isn't of particular relevance to a film archive.

RF: How did you come to leave Moscow.

RD: I had to hang on, it was a bit complicated. I lost the editor of the newspaper, I was in charge of everything, cultural relations and all that jazz and I had to more or less edit it myself. First of all we had to get a substitute editor, my wife found one called Archie Johnson who had worked for us in Mexico when I was doing propaganda for the British government out there. He was in London at a loose end and he was a really professional journalist, so he was taken on. Then when he got there, long after I left. I warned the ambassador that he was unreliable politically by which I meant he was unreliable politically. I didn't mean he was a founder member of the communist party which was a different thing all together, you could then rely on what he was going to do in fact. Anyway the poor chap had a very charming Anglo Irish wife. What he didn't know but what everyone else knew was that she was carrying on with at least two Mexicans in Mexico and when he found out it was a terrible shock for him so the Russians set a girl on him and he defected as they say.

RF: And stayed.

RD: And stayed. Poor Archie, I think he has probably died now. A sad story.

RD: I had to wait for the main chap to come and take over. He was to take over a large empire which very soon was to diminish to practically nothing. It went back to being a press attache.

RF: Were you an adjunct of the embassy.

RD: No it wasn't in the embassy. We had a separate building.

RF: But you weren't controlled by them.

RD: Theoretically yes but I was very independent because I came at least half under the Ministry of information.

RF: Who was your superior there.

RD: The immediate superior was a chap called Peter Smollett who was rather like the chap who wons the Daily Mirror and whatnotpress.

RF: Mr Bloch.

RD: Robert Maxwell.

RF: His name was Bloch.

RD: Peter was a Czech who spoke with the inflections of a lifelong Oxford don. You couldn't fault his English. he had been a Czech journalist. He was pretty bright in a way. The other chap and really big boss way back was Grub, I think who had been with the Camel Corps, a religious chap, and he was the one I think who snatched me away from running the invasion.

RF: What was the organisation called that invaded Europe.

RD: ~~Chaff~~ SHAEF. Yes I think I was supposed to be in charge of public relations for ~~Chaff~~ SHAEF. He snatched me out of that either because he thought I was competent to do it or he thought it was a dead loss for me. I think he genuinely thought it was a dead loss for me. I think it probably was. He sent me to Moscow. We had very good people in our office in London. We made so much money. I forgot to tell you we made so much money that we kept the embassy as well. Never spent a rouble of the British taxpayer's money. We were selling propaganda. It's the right way to do it.

They finally found another fellow to come and take over. They said stay until the Moscow Conference. I stayed till the Moscow Conference which was April 1947 and that was when I got out. I came back to England. Tried to get a job and all the jobs were sewn up by the people who had managed to stay on here or the people who had managed to get into the various Army, Navy Film Units and I got through going to see Harold Boxall taken on by Korda to work on The Third Man.

RF: In what capacity.

RD: I'm not quite sure. A sort of production assistant. I think I was sort of foistered onto Carol by Korda. I'm not sure because I was a sort of production manager but I wasn't an assistant to the production manager who was Linford Haines, the same chap I quarrelled with and wouldn't join the ACT before the WAr. In a way I was superior to him. The real production manager was the associate producer who was called Hugh Percival who was an odd character. I think he was really very far right. He carried a sword stick and he alleged, come the revolution he'd slay them in the gutters before they'd slay him. He was a sort of Anglo Irish character and I think he got rather jealous of me and came to hate me. I never hated him. I thought he was rather amusing. I got on much better with the assistant director who was Guy Hamilton who became a director. And Guy and Hugh were sort of Carol's men. Guy said he was deliberately learning all he could from Carol and taking advantage of it. I was just shoved on the film by Korda. I wasn't trying to worm my way into the magic circle. I did quite a lot in my way. I found Anton Karas. I made creative suggestions and was very much with Carol and Orson at meetings and going and getting drunk together or whatever happened.

RF: Was Alex doing you a favour and if so for what reason.

RD: I think he was doing a favour. In a sense I didn't make it be recrewed but I had worked for him before the War and there was a general understanding the employer should take you on again and although you may say I wasn't in the Army or the Navy, it wasn't my fault, I was in the foreign service, also I was a commissioned officer. More exclusive but

still serving your country. In a sense I had a right to contact previous employers and say what about that. I didn't come down to being quite so crude, I just said you remember I used to work for you Alex and he gave me this job straight away, finally. i should have swallowed my pride which was far too ludicrous, a weird mixture of overmodesty with pride, which is the same coin. I did go to him and I was taken on by Harold Boxall who did cheat me as I said earlier and cost Korda a lot of money in Vienna, so there it is. I've written all this up in the ACTT journal how I had to go and get Orson Welles and so on. Should I mention this again.

RF: Yes.

RD: We worked for a while at 143 Piccadilly, two houses anyway with a passage joining them together, there was this gap where there is another house had been bombed. I worked there for a while.

RF: One of the houses had been where the Duke of York lived.

RD: Eventually I was sent out to Vienna. I had to take out the electricians. Jacky Sullivan was the gaffer. People weren't too happy about flying in those days in those kind of aeroplanes at time of year, October/November, to Vienna. The weather was not very nice and aeroplanes did not fly above the weather quite in those days. They had propellers and were quite turbulent. I'd been out there and come back. One commuted quite a bit. I fixed up for them in a splendid restaurant which wasn't too posh or too grand, remember people were more consciously working class in those days, they didn't go much to restaurants. It was an absolutely wonderful restaurant, marvellous food but in the Austrian-German style. it had beautifully clean scrubbed tables rather than a table cloth. I had ordered for them Wiener Schnitzle, calf, veal which hung over the edge of enormous plates, and all the wine and beer they wanted. That damn Wiener Schnitzle was more than a damn ration for a whole family in England at the time. I always remember afterwards saying what did the boys think of it Jacky and he said they appreciated it but they don't hold with this meat done up like fish. That's the thanks I got for that. They then found because Vienna was occupied by the four powers of the time, the British sergeant's mess, where they had revolting marmy canned puddings which was fine by them, very different from the modern worker who is extremely sophisticated and would probably demand lobster.

RF: Well yes, the members of a modern crew ~~weave~~ read from right to left but always when eating on location order the most expensive item. In those days in Vienna I would have thought far greater deprivation existed there than here.

RD: For some people but you could get an enormous Wiener Schnitzle. I should imagine it would cost a lot of money. Perhaps they weren't quite so badly off, I don't know. There was a shortage of eggs in the hotel. People were moaning so i went out and got eggs on the black market. It wasn't really my job, just to shut people up. They didn't need their damn eggs, there was plenty of food. But you know what English people are like. They have to have their eggs for breakfast as well as everything else. I noticed that in France where they eat this huge French lunch and French dinner and moan if they don't get eggs and bacon for breakfast as well and then say it must be the water that is bad that they've got an upset stomach.

RF: It's an interesting topic of conversation. It relates to how British film crews behave and they can be I find appalling on foreign locations because they're greedy, zenophobic,

RD: On the whole I found them mostly alright. But as we're talking about this I remember another film which we'll come to later we were on location in Tonbridge Wells and the production manager, I was the maain production manager, I was a sort of associate producer production manager, Lindford Haines again. He had been sent round by Twentieth Century Fox to go round and book hotels. Anyway there were we in Tonbridge Wells which is in Kent and is a spa town with early Victorian, possibly regency hotels. Well the electricians had been put in one of these which otherwise was full of old ladies. Whereas I was put in one with the cameraboys and assistant directors who were always causing trouble and raising riot and getting pissed in the middle of the night. Afterwards I had to clear everybody off and I can always remember going to the hotel where the sparks had been and there they all clustered round the old ladies and management saying oh did so enjoy Mr Sullivan and his friends. They played cards with us and they were so nice. They had been. They were far better than the middle class sods so it's not always that way at all. I wasn't thinking of in quotes "working class." I was thinking of crews in general, not only film people, I think it was to do with the insecurities of being in a foreign country,

RF: Well there was reliefs else in being in a foreign country in that you can do what you like.

RD: I am sure we could drag football hooliganism into this. But I do believe insecurity has a lot to do with it.

RF: The Third Man is quite rightly perceived as being one of the great British films. Let's go into that.

RD: I personally thought the script wasn't all that good. Although it was by a writer I greatly admired, Graham Greene. Graham Greene and Carol had been out to Vienna on reckies and writing the script together. So far as I know and I could be wrong, I think whatever book there is and it's not all that terrific was written after that.

RF: It was.

RD: Some additional source that the book was written after the film.

RF: It was. Some criticism I saw said it was taken from the book.

RD: No it was written as a script.

It really wasn't all that good a script. I think it was one - usually it was the other way round, the script gets messed up - I think the film was a considerable improvement on the script despite the fact it was Graham Greene who was an admirable and very good writer. What happened is that Graham Greene tends to get rather theatrically into, because of his convertion to Catholocism, in Sin with a capital S but when that's translated to film a sleezy cabaret with 30 year old women doing striptease and some poor benighted GIs sitting round does not add up to sin with a capital S, it doesn't even up to sin with a small s. And somehow overemphasis on that kind of thing was a kind of weakness in the script. What happened it got left out and didn't get shot or got left out afterwards. More and more all that got left out. It didn't have anything

to do with the story.

RF: There was a certain amount of that in the nightclub.

RD: There was much more in the nightclub which really didn't work, it was just comical.

RF: There ~~was~~ are characters in the film which are there but don't seem developed such as Mr Papisco and Dr and another baron. You mean they had more to do with the way it was shot.

RD: I don't know. I really can't remember in detail. I'm giving my impression of what I thought at the time.

RF: Wherein lies the magic of the film?

RD: I think the performances and Carol was a tremendously good actors' director. He had been an actor, not a very successful one, he'd been an actor himself. He was the illegitimate son of one of these

RF: Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree.

RD: He was a sort of actor type. He knew all about how actors ticked. I remember him coming up behind a flat looking at some fascinated small part actor who probably had two lines, looking like a rabbit being looked at a snake, looking at Carol intensely and I overheared I know it's only two lines dear boy but it's most important lines in the whole film. Carol didn't mean it, it wasn't true and the chap didn't believe him but it worked. That's part of it and it was a good idea. it was original. Bobby Krasker's photography was very nice. We had at one time at least 11 if not 16 generators. it nearly all took place at night. It was a night unit but a day unit. That was something where I did contribute something. The problems was that it was pretty dingy in any case Vienna after the war and at night frankly it could have been Chicago. I'm exagerating but it could have almost been anywhere. So I got this idea, or maybe Bobby got it, but I think I got it, we worked in the Severine Studios, not the biggest studios and I got all the stuff out of the prop department, all the old baroque cupids and lamps, things and objects and I had a open lorry and before every shot I had Carol or Bobby, mainly Bobby towards the end, pick something to stick up in the foreground to make it look like Vienna. These long shadows and it all being shot at night, that all helped.

The tilted camera. I think Welles had a lot to do with it. I won't go into the whole story of persuading him. He'd been persuaded by Zolly and several other people but he was still backing down. I was sent finally to persuade him and he played this trick on me. I got to know him very well while I was doing the persuading. He blew up on me one day - he was all dressed up as the Prince of Foxes as Cesare Borgia in the Casa San Angelo how could I, a sensitive guy like me hound him like this, all this stuff was going on. Eventually he agreed to come. Then I had him booked on the train and he wouldn't come. He bribed the telephone girl to say he wasn't there so I bribed the telephone girl to put me through. He said who's that and I said Bob and he said I don't know any Bob and put the phone down. When I finally arrived in Vienna having stopped off in Venice, there he was on the platform with Carol to meet me. It was a great gag, I know secretly he was dithering, he'd blown up but till the last moment he was dithering. He pulled it off as a joke on Bob. He was worried because it was such a small part. Carol gave me a marvellous

script which apart from the money, had an effect. Carol being an actor himself reckoned as Joe Cotten had worked in the Mercury Theatre for years, there's always this rivalry among actors, my scenario was to persuade Orson although this was a small part, just imagine the audience has been sitting there for 11 reels, their pants had been bored off by Joe, you come in in the 11th reel and steal the film, which in a way was what he damn well did. Typically Carol knew the right psychology and he did indeed steal the film.

RF: One can see why Welles would hesitate.

RD: It was another director. Now Welles did a lot of work for other directors and I met him on other films where he behaved disgustingly badly. He sent the parts up and so on which is very naughty of him. He did it to make the money to make his own films. I could go all along with that but I do think he had no right to piss about. He should have just tried to give a really good performance. With Carol it was a different thing. He wasn't just working on some crap, it was working on a serious film with a serious director so of course it was worrying for him. Would he stand up to it. He was insecure about it in one way. Was it too small a part. You can understand why he was worried.

RF: But he walked away with the movie.

RD: Which he did. What a gift for an actor to come in at the end and steal the film. A great part for him. And Trevor was on the film, Trevor Howard, who I remember was orginally going to have the part if Orson wasn't going to do it. He was the British major.

RF: It's marvellous to have an Orson Welles but it doesn't need necessarily an actor of that stature and that presence to be Harry Lime.

RD: Quite. Trevor would have done it differently. But Trevor was a marvellous actor and I can see the way he would have done it and it would have been marvellous too in a completely different way.

RF: Better actor than Welles. Welles was an amateur, a great presence.

RD: But he was very well cast. He was just right for it.

RF: What was the chemistry like on the film, how did it go.

RD: Pretty well. On the whole Orson took the direction. I told you Carol was very good with actors and on the whole he knew how to deal with Orson. There was an occasion I remember it well because I'd shot the background, the plate which was where he went up on the big wheel, the two of them, and we went to I think to take 37, I can't quite remember but I have a feeling it was take 37.

RF: This was where

RD: Back in the studio at shepperton with the back projection plate. Why they needed someone to direct them while they shot it I don't know. There we went on and he always had some better idea. I don't know whether he was deliberately being naughty and testing out Carol or he genuinely thought he was going to be better, I can't believe he was that stupid. Of course we printed take 3 in the end not take 37. He kept saying that's not quite right I can do it better. Perhaps he was waiting for Carol to say that's enough, he didn't he just went on. OK be

patient, knowing that by the time he got to take 7 it would be take 3, because patently there was no way it was going to go except get worse after that. There was this other famous occasion when for that scene too, were wasn't there something someone said about the swiss. I think the original line was milk chocolate and the cuckoo clock and I think we cut out the milk chocolate. I said yes I remember it well so that was the sort of job I was always given, go and research it which was ludicrous, they wanted to shoot it that afternoon. I said look nobody's copyrighted it as far as I know, let's just use it. Would you stick you neck out. I said certainly, I'd guarantee it, if it were a quote from something one of us would remember it.

RF: Who claimed that line.

RD: Nobody claimed it.

RF: Welles afterwards did.

RD: I'm not sure he claimed it for himself.

RF: I think so.

RD: He did not write the line. it wasn't an original line because we both remembered it and we couldn't remember where it came from and there was the bit about the chocolate in it originally as well.

RF: Was Greene on the location.

RD: Not that I remember once. He may have come.

RF: Selznick.

RD: No. He hated the film when he first saw it. He thought it was going to be a disaster.

He supplied the money of course, not Korda. Certainly most of the money came from Selznick. That was an interesting film to work on and where I was absolutely invaluable. it was just after the war and we needed all these Krauts, they were Austrian but they were all part of the Nazi thing, and they had to be got back to England and I had my contacts in the foreign office and I got them all back. I don't think anyone else would, it was totally illegal. they were all enemy aliens still. As it was Brewer who played the count. We were shooting at Shepperton and Wanda I don't remember her name, the actress,

RF: What did she play

RD: She didn't play anything in this film, she was a well known actress, obviously of Central European, she marched onto the set from nowhere, she wasn't shooting there, right in front of the camera and said this man is a Nazi. Immediately I was called on to solve this problem. I got my car and went up to the foreign office. It was the passport department, which I shouldn't really say was a secret part of MI5,

RF: Why not.

RD: Because I signed the official secrets. I don't care. Had he been a died in the wool Nazi which he wasn't, he may have joined the party which they often did, he was just an actor. Obviously the foreign office

wasn't going to say he was a Nazi even if he had been, which I don't think he was. So shooting continued but she had all the unions come out, she'd probably done some work beforehand with the unions.

(Unsuccessfully try to identify the actress)

RD: She was obviously a left wing actress.

RF: And deliberately setting out to start trouble.

RD: Yes in a way. But to give her her due, if she genuinely thought he was a Nazi, she was coming to denounce him.

SIDE 7, TAPE 4

RF: We were talking about the krauts and the attitudes to them

RD: This was 48 to 49.

RF: Feelings ran high. I remember in the 50s travelling on a German ship and being terrified. In retrospect it sounds zenophobic and today some of my best friends are German.

RD: It was in a sense specific not because people were German but because they were Nazis. The idea was you shot them or punished them some way because they were war criminals. Obviously it didn't work out that way because they would have had to exterminated more people than they exterminated Jews

RF: Also political expediency overruled. The cold war arrived.

RD: Left wing people were even more anti Nazi because they were on the other side in the cold war. And their accusations might have been whether sincere or otherwise that the people who weren't on the side of Russia were being fascist or Nazi. So there was a bit more complicated politics to all that at the time, in a way.

RF: It also had to do with the reconstitution of Europe.

RD: Anyway I got all these Germans across. One decisions which was made to let the Austrians speak German not speak English with a funny accent. Especially when talking to each other. If you've got an Austrian talking to an English person they would have a foreign accent but you've got two Austrians talking together it's fairly ludicrous when they're talking with a stage Austrian accent to each other. I got all these people back including a half witted, I suppose I'm being a bit unkind, one of the electrician's kids.

RF: The child with the ball.

RD: I got the job of directing him on another stage. I got him to do all his bits by promising him a run round in my broken down old car. Sweets didn't work. Someone else gave me this idea, I think the camera boy. I got him to get his marks by putting his foot on a coin which he could then have afterwards.

RF: He was so tiny.

RD: He was minute.

RF: Was he older than he appeared.

RD: Not really. He was quite difficult to. He was not advanced for his age. I remember on the second unit was Denys Coop who died unfortunately rather young, So we went on shooting at Shepperton because of all these actors I managed to get into the country and they all had their cameos which may be one of the reasons that they did remain cameo roles rather than come develop. They were the Austrians in the background speaking their own language.

RF: Most of them didn't get shot.

RD: They all speak English. If they're speaking to Harry Lime or the sergeant or Holly Martin of course they spoke English because with perfect versimilitude the English or the Americans did not speak any damn German. All power for the course.

I can't remember if any of them were bits on the cutting room floor. In the whole I would say once we were in the studio we watched the rough cut virtually every night and he would nip off three ft here and 10 ft there. Most of the editing was done in that way rather than by dropping scenes, it was a continuous process of tightening.

RF: So it wasn't an overlong script.

RD: No. The cutting was done that way very much. Unfortunately the poor editor was an Austrian called Ossie Haffenrichter and he was never got asked to Vienna. He was really bitter about that at the time. We could have given him a cutting room out there. But Hugh Perceval didn't want him out there. I think Carol would have had him out.

RF: Was it an expensive picture

RD: For its day it was. I got £1,000 overtime for 8 weeks work. The only overtime I earned in my whole life but it was very welcome.

RF: A good budget in those days was £150,00-£200,000

RD: It would have been more than that. I think it must have cost at least £400,000 It couldn't have cost much less than than. Korda's films weren't cheap and this was Selznick's money and a large unit staying in Vienna OK modest only 8 weeks and not very much more in a studio but that's still quite a long time for a big unit to pay in and a share of studio rent. I'm sure Korda didn't undercharge for what he put in for Shepperton.

RF: Someone was paying for that suite at Claridges

RD: And the office at Hyde Park Corner.

RF: And I don't know whether he had the house yet at Kensington Palace Green.

RD: I don't know. I never got that intimate with Korda.

RF: One thing you mention earlier was that you discovered Karøs.

RD: I'm boasting a bit. Carol had this idea of having the zither pictorially on the titles which indeed we kept. He said go out and find a zitherer. So I just sussed out around the various cafes that this bloke was the best. Anyone could have done that. It's like I was saying on the tape earlier. I don't want to make any stupid claim. I just happened to be the bloke who went and got him. That was interesting in a sense. A unit spread out over Vienna with 11 generators generating light and it was getting long past the call time because I got hold of Karøs and brought him up to Carol's hotel room and Carol wouldn't come out. Guy Hamilton or whoever it was kept going in saying, hey come on Carol, they're all waiting for you on location. Carol got so fascinated it dawned on him no don't just let's have the music over the titles let's have it all the way through. So he was the one who appreciated it and was the one who originally had the idea of the zither. Then I think

between Selznick and Korda they diddled him. They kept the rights for the gramophone record. I don't thing he made as much as he ought to have. At the time we had an Austrian au pair girl, purely co-incidental at home, four kids, and we did have this au pair girl. Delightful person part of the family. She got hold of this record and played it all day long. One side and then the next because she came from Vienna. I got fed up with it.

RF: It was exciting. It certainly took my fancy

RD: And it suited the thing beautifully. Carol when he heard the actual bloke realised it would the ideal thing to have over the whole film.

RF: Some of the classic scenes in the film especially the ending in the cemetery. Did that go painlessly.

RD: Not quite. We shot it originally in Vienna. I don't know when the final decision was made what the end should be. Should Holly Martin get off with Valli. She worked under her surname Valli. I don't know when where it was decided he would go along with here or not. It was decided not, which was probably the right answer, but possibly people felt Selznick might not agree. I got landed with all the lousy jobs. It turned out because all this was going on we needed some more shots. So I went round London, just go and fix up a cemetery in London to match the cemetery. I found the Brompton Cemetery but in those days in no way could you get permission. I'd tried but was told it was disgusting, you couldn't film in a cemetery. So I resorted to the simple of expedience of slipping the guy in charge £10. I tried some where else and knew I was going to be refused.

RF: How much is the Brompton Cemetery and how much is Vienna.

RD: I think it's mostly Vienna but it's some shots to make the end work. I can't remember the details now. It didn't match up too badly. The Brompton Park and the long path where she walks.

RF: The long shot in Vienna where she walks and walks and walks.

RD: It was like that in Vienna but it was the nearest I could in London to something of that sort.

RF: But the long shot's Vienna.

RD: Yes, the long shot has to be, it has to be.

RF: Maybe's it's around the grave.

RD: No, I don't think we redid that. That would have been more difficult to match up. It's just on this long path. It was to confirm what is already supposed to have been open ended whether they went off together or not..

RF: Was it shot both ways.

RD: It was but then they decided it wasn't clear enough or the timing wasn't right. We did do some reshooting there. I can't remember any other London locations, if any. We did have some simulated sewer shots because the day unit which had been down the sewer had been absolutely useless.

RF: I've always assumed most of that was studio

RD: A lot of it was actually shot down the poor end of the sewer. Monty Berman was the operator and Stan Pavey the cameraman but he was really led astray by Monty. This is all libelous stuff. It was Monty. I found their room all full of stuff which they got from the PX and one way or another most of the stuff which is not uncommon. Not being a very good camera operator, most of the stuff which to be fair to them is not uncommon, was not liked at all. Most of the second unit stuff.

But then so often directors can't stand second unit stuff at the best of times, can they. So we had to shoot most of that. It's quite extraordinary to go to the nasty ends of the sewers, and there's this immasculate Austrian waiter carrying round a tray of sandwiches and handing them round to the unit. The grand end of the sewer where the sewer is as wide as Piccadilly, they had to be done by the day unit, with Bobby Krasker and so.

RF: That being so they're very cleverly set because they're staged in such a way and lit in such a way that one would have thought they had to be done in a studio.

RD: Bobby Krasker had lights down there and a generator. We reproduced lots of crowd stuff in the studio. The hand coming up at the end. That was a bit over done and went on too long. We did all this every night. Cutting bits off and reediting. Then I was eased out. I heard it all from the chauffeur who drove Carol back. Carol started staying that Dunbar's a good fellow and Hugh said he's no good at all because I think Hugh thought I was going to corner in on his act. I'm not the kind of chap that attaches himself to somebody like that. It would never enter my mind. So I was eased off it. They didn't say I was no good, simply that they didn't need me any more, which they didn't. So I was off it. Never got a credit. Never asked for a credit. That was me all over, very stupid. But I had contributed it quite a bit in my way by my ideas and my ability to get these actors into the country. They would have been stuck without me.

RF: It's extraordinary they would get into that situation without looking ahead.

RD: I don't think originally they'd bring them back. And then, like any director, he found there were these scenes he still wanted.

RF: Did it go over budget and over schedule.

RD: I think it did a bit. Not all that much. I always remember in the Tyrol coming down to the lobby of the hotel those people sitting around in the lobby and you'd immediately know they were crowd artists. I thought do I have a funny attitude to life or is it really true that these people are different in some way.

RF: I think there are people who drift into this kind of job.

RD: But in those days particularly the men. Quite a lot of them were girls. Quite mistakenly hoped they would become great film stars. But a lot of the men were just down and outs. Sometimes they didn't have the right clothes. It was always difficult to get them to look like people. I think it's cheap in England later on. If I had a small crowd, I would

cast Equity members at the minimum but I always gave them names on the call sheet. I found it paid. Anyway why should they have to go and sell socks in Selfridges why these other layabouts came into the studio. At least it kept them in contact. I always thought it was terribly wrong. I just went against it and cast Equity members where you could get some character in the faces

RF: I don't think crowd is much better today.

RD: I don't know because I'm out of touch.

RD: They are a funny bunch because they look not part of what is going on on. I used to go round always and give them all parts. I would go round and was frightfully polite to crowd artists and give them all parts. I still think it's right because otherwise they're in a background going rhubarb and it doesn't give them a fair chance.

RF: I suppose it's they don't quite know what they're supposed to do and they fall back on cliche.

RD: I suppose I could not have carried on with Carol if not for this. But I did not want to hang onto one director's coat tail.

RF: These were very productive years for Shepperton or was it the end

RD: I think it was tailing off. The production manager was a chap called Lou Thornberg who claimed he was the only Norwegian Jew, his sister was married to Charlie Frend, I got on very well with him. But the boss of the studio was really Vincent Zorda, he ran everything in a quiet sort of way. Everyone assumed he was totally disorganised, he was just an artist, but in a sense he kept it together, he was a presence. Alex probably only visited the set of The Third Man once that I can remember. He never came near the studio. he got very much into this high finance game. Chatting up financiers and high society too. He no longer had that personal control of the studio he could have, it was Vincent who did.

RF: Tell us what you know about Alex

RD: I know little about him. You could read more out of books. He was charming. He was cultivated. He was reasonably well educated. He was unlike the average film bloke. I suppose you can say Micky Balcon was up to a point. He was also charming if you went to see him about something. Alex had that Central European charm and apparently great erudition. Perhaps he didn't have much as he pretended.

RF: Very poor background.

RD: But like the Scots. We're supposed to be the lost tribe sometimes. But like the Jews are terribly keen on their children being properly educated. You may come from a poor background but you get more than the average English child.

RF: I think he was self educated.

RD: Definitely he was.

RF: Was he more Hungarian than Jew or can you make that distinction.

RD: I really don't know. He came on Hungarian rather than Jewish. I don't know whether he was a Jew, I don't mean racially, I mean practising religion.

RF: I think he was totally assimilated wherever he was.

RD: He did become more British than the British.

RF: Was there any inkling at that time of his alleged intelligence activities.

RD: No. I didn't know anything about it although I'd been in the foreign office. I wouldn't necessarily know. I have a feeling that is rather exagerated. I'm sure he did something he was asked to do. But I don't think he was permanently engaged by MI5 or MI6.

He had Churchill on the payroll and he made Churchill's movie is the other side of the story. I met many year's later I met Baroness Bruberg who was H.G. Wells mistress and later Corky's mistress. She for some reason was working at 143 Piccadilly and we got quite pally because I'd been working in Russia.

She was supposed to be an agent. She was probably a double treble agent. She was quite an amusing character. There she was hanging around there. I had no idea what she was doing

RF: Something in the script department.

RD: Probably but I don't think anything ever came of it. He did tend to collect people around him.

RF: You knew Vincent better.

RD: I probably did. Alex had become very remote apart from hiring me. And occasionally seeing me around. In earlier days when I was a kid he would give me a cigar. He was more like a film director than a tycoon in those days. The kind of bloke who spoke to all the technicians and had been doing so all his life and was part of the team. He was no longer part of that team after the war. He was off on his tycoon thing and Vincent ran the studio. Lou Thornberg did it very well but the Korda there, the fellow from the family was Vincent because nobody else was there. I didn't see Zolly

RF: I think after the war he mostly stayed in the States.

RD: I think he did.

RF: What do you remember before the war of him.

RD: I didn't. I never got close to him at all.

RF: Did you have anything to do with either Rembrandt or The Private Life of Don Juan.

RD: I had nothing to do with either of them. I used to see Vincent quite often because of long forgotten films made at Shepperton. People say he was a very expensive art director. I remember Carol asked for a flat for a shot he wanted the next day and I told Vincent wanted the flat. I went to look at it to see if it was alright for Carol - he'd probably had

people working on it all night. It was a bloody great staircase. All I'd asked for a staircase. I said Vincent you're crazy. All I asked for was a flat. he said don't worry Bob they'll use it. That didn't make the films very cheap.

RF: I was watching Rembrandt the other day and it's quite a small scale picture but they're not enormous sets.

RD: I'm not sure where it was made. It could have been made at Worton Hall. But that was the subject. He was living in small interiors and living in small interiors.

RF: There are a lot of studio exteriors and a lot of them are on the sound stage rather than the back lot. Largely for lighting reasons. They wanted Rembrandt lighting.

RD: They wanted Perry to reproduce Rembrandt's style. There's a cliche that Rembrandt was the first lighting cameraman to which there's a grain of truth because he uses light positively rather than just accepting where it was.

RF: The wonderful thing about the Dutch school. And it was less of a cliche in the mid 30s than it is now.

RD: It's very easy to be a nuts and bolts cameraman and it still is, to sneer at people who have more than a craft. On the other hand I've found in the past that some of the best cameramen would blush if you called them artistic. Yet they may be among the best cameramen.

RF: Harry Waxman always comes to mind. He was a lovely cameraman in many ways; he would have been upset if you called him artistic.

RD: Suschitzky when we have him honorary membership. He's another modest chap and a marvellous artist of the camera.

RF: Where do we move onto from that particular period.

RD: After the Third Man I was out of work again. I was approached by the Foreign Office to come back. " I don't want to come back. Although I wouldn't mind the money. I don't see why I should come back as a temporary civil servant." No, you'll get a permanent commission. Important job and everything. So I caved in. That particular branch was highly secret. Carlton House Terrace at the time. Somehow the chap who was running it, his brother was a well known actor, Steven Murray, I worked with Brough Murray. During the War I had reached a fairly senior rank for my age. The equivalent of a colonel. I couldn't in a sense ~~of~~ have gone wrong with this commission. I hated it in peace time. I only got promoted in wartime because I was able to do all the wrong things. I couldn't stand it. Also it was meant to be anti communist. I was suppose to chat to journalists in the Daily Mirror to be anti communist. The whole thing sound absolutely cracked to me. But there I was stuck. I got a telephone call from Herbert Wilcox offering me the job of his general manager. So I had this perfect excuse. I didn't have to say I can't stand all the rings of the teacups, the bureaucracy and I think its a lot of crap. I was able to say I'd been offered much more money, I've got four kids, I've only been here a week, do you mind. I went off to be Herbert Wilcox's general manager.

They were working at that time out at MGM Studios at Elstree and

finishing some film with Michael Wilding who I'd known since I was a kid. He couldn't act really but was a awful nice man. One of these Maytimes in Mayfair or Spring in Park Lane whichever it was. It was still being dubbed. Meanwhile he was launching on making this story about making a secret agent in the French resistance. I helped a bit with the scripting. The script was written by a chap called Gerard Tickel who tended to bring the script in on the back of cigarette packets. I trained him. I told him he was a damned fool and he should write decent scripts and put photos in and he'd do better and he did do better. He was perfectly intelligent bloke. I think he really took a pride in doing it the other way and Herbert thought ha ha ha isn't it cute. But I didn' think it was cute. I have intervened in writing scripts all my life usually without any credit. I was a great blue pencil expert. Many scripts had too many words and they needed striking out and improving a bit. Then we went on a ~~reckie~~ recce with Odette herself and Peter Churchill her husband of the time who had been in the resistance, Mutzi Greenbaum and his wife and Bill Andrews and his wife. And we went on a reckie round the South of France looking at all the places Odette had been an agent which was fascinating. Rather an expensive trip. We didn't stay at the Carlton, we stayed at the Martinez, which is still expensive. I remember for the weekend we stayed there, and remember that was in 1949, it was over £800. True there was 8 of us.

RF: It wasn't easy to get money out of the country then.

RD: You could for going on a ~~reckie~~ recce. The place was full of these chaps with Northern accents driving around in Rolls Royces with their family. So they'd managed to get out there all right. I'd never seen so many Rolls Royces at that time.

RF: Men with hard faces, big jowels and big appetites.

RD: Made their pile during the war

I always remember a hotel in In this hotel in the script

SIDE 8, TAPE 4

We were on a ~~reckie~~ Reece in the South of France and we were in this hotel called , Cock of the North. And it became patently obvious that nobody could have carried a piano up the stairs so poor little Gerard who I think was carrying a torch for Odette he practically burst into tears and he got blamed for it. But he hadn't made it up. Odette had told him.

This was fascinating when we made the film. It was rather like a Chinese box. It was quite interesting because she was such a liar. She seemed to be a survivor and we were always peeling away the stories like peeling away the skins of an onion. Basically she was a very brave person and she did what she was supposed to do and she was an agent. But to have survived Ravensbr~~o~~ok and everything else she must have been a jolly good actress and everything else. She had to have tremendous guts and everything else. But we were all fascinated by the way she elaborated on the truth. And we'd peel a bit a way and she would say yes, but, and another story. Another interesting thing is that Herbert kept Anna wrapped entirely in cotton wool, always. If there was a bad review of one of their films. Everyone was sent to the newsagents around Berkeley Sq to buy up all the Evening Standards so she wouldn't see the review. Somehow with Odette there she was inspired to rebellion. Also she was required to act which she didn't do badly at all if you watch that film. She started getting quite bolshy because Herbert fussed like an old hen and and he wouldn't let her read the bad reviews and he would pick her bag up and hand it to her. She would say oh Herbert I can pick up my own bag. She began to get quite shirty. Odette was beginning to have this influence on her. It worried Herbert quite a lot. He swore he would never make a film like that again. It was interesting the interplay of characters.

RF: What do you think she was to him, a property, or genuine affection.

RD: I think both. She was very nice. And that's the right word. She was conscientious, a hard worker, I think she was kind. I remember Herbert's son John, John Wilcox, was supposed to be the associate producer, if I didn't ge full card, I shared it with the cameraman, I was more than an ordinary production manager. He was down among the focus pullers. He didn't have a proper job. He wasn't too fond of Anna. She was his step mother. He wasn't nasty to her.

RF: There had been a divorce.

RD: She helped me to lean on Herbert to give John as a proper job as a production manager on the next film. None of this associate producer. If anyone asked Herbert what was an associate producer he always cracked back somebody's nephew. That was why I was never called associate producer. I was happy being a straight forward production manager/ general manager. That illustrates she was a kind person. And like the royal family she portrayed in earlier days, Queen Victoria for instance, I remember we were down on Lord Montagu's estate, because a house in the grounds, not the main house, was the place where the SOE had been trained. We got a permit. In those days you didn't pay them anything as far as I remember. I knew his sister or something. The waiter came and served the lunch and Anna said hello George. He had been a steward on a liner to South Africa when she'd been a chorus girl. He didn't remember her but she remembered him. She would have made an excellent member of the royal family because she remembered everything. She was nice. When Herbert went bust there she was in her seventies kicking up her legs on

the stage and restoring the family fortune. An amazing woman.

RF: She hocked all her jewelry.

RD: Anyone can hock jewels but to go and dance on the stage every night and two matinees at her age takes some doing. I've a lot of time for her.

RF: Herbert is an interesting character.

RD: Yes he is. He was a bit of a so and so in a way. He used to embarrass me enormously, but I am easily embarrassed. He never used to just introduce me as Bob or Mr. Dunbar, this is Bob Dunbar, I couldn't do without him, all this excess.

RF: That's the Irish blarney presumably.

RD: This went on and so on, and he couldn't live without me. Then because somebody else he wanted to take on, first I think it was Eric Goodhead who was an agent and he wanted to get, I think Eric had Michael Wilding as an agent and he was giving him a job. Also I didn't realise he got a much more posh, he liked posh people, he had a much more posh production manager up his sleeve, Brabourne, belonged to the royal family. So what do you think Herbert did. He made 60 people redundant and took 59 of them back again two weeks later minus me and took these other two people on. Up to that moment he had done nothing but rave about me. I did go and see him for my own satisfaction a few weeks later and said you're a so and so you might have told me, it would have been much easier for me to get a decent job if you'd said I want to take someone else on, for various reasons it's time for us to part or whatever you like, but to do this to me was quite disgusting. So I let him have it, I didn't see why he should get away with it. He's done that to other people in the past and probably afterwards.

RF: I think he was quite unprincipled.

RD: He was, and it was a pity because if he hadn't been so small minded, he was a rotten film director but he had great qualities as a film producer. He taught me a lot about public relations. For instance after a film he would hire a suite at Claridges. He wasn't idiotic enough to hire one all the year round but we'd hire one for a week or two and we would ask round, the same with film shows, we would always ask one weekly journalist, one evening journalist, one daily journalist and one trade journalist, four people but never two from the same area. We'd then give them several drinks, in the meantime Anna who would be sitting in the next room on the side of the bed until I went in and gave her the wink and she would sail in like royalty at the right moment, all that sort of thing he did so well. And this idea of asking the journalists round to shows as well as for the drinks and meeting Anna, to see show's of the films, asking their advice and so on. An acquaintance, friend of ours was Caroline Lejeune who was a famous film critic at the time for the Observer, just as Powell was in her time for the Sunday Times. I'd known her for years, She lived right near us and her husband used to work for my dad at one point, so we'd known her for years and years. She got terribly keen, I think she got keen on a young man if you ask me but I'm not quite sure, she got very keen on amateur dramatics down at Pinner so we would give her some flaps and things, you couldn't bribe Caroline Lejeune but up to the point she wouldn't give us any bad reviews, if she couldn't stand it she wouldn't give us any reviews at all, she never gave

us a bad review. Whether that was connected with us presenting her with bits of surplus scenery or not I don't know but he was very cunning in a way, very good at doing all that public relation stuff. He was not a man with great fantastic charisma, personality, there was nothing to him in that way.

RF: Which of the Wilcox pictures were you on.

RD: Just that one

RF: Did you see it all the way through

RD: Oh yes. Then he got another one going and he hired Donald Taylor, that was before I left, to produce it. And he hired Fergus MacDonald to direct it and he cast Michael Wilding and a girl i got on terribly well with who was Odile Versois, and my old boss Jack Hulbert and that very nice American actress, Constance Cummings. It was a disaster and I was sent out. And I had no real status except that I was the general manager, it was very awkward. I hired a boat and took it out because the damn thing was about a boat which went across the channel and down through all the canals to the Medi and whatever adventures happened, presumably Michael getting off with Odile Versois. And to be honest going through Normandy which is not uncommon, the postcards they sell in Rouen include an upside down piss pot and it's called le pot de chambre normandie, it's a very rainy place, it's even worse than England, it pissed with rain the whole time. I took this boat across and it just pissed with rain. Fergus Macdonald was a brilliant editor and he'd done this really nice film called The Rocking Horse Winner.

RF: No that was Anthony Pellissier.

RD: Well he did another one about a kid. It was a very good film but I don't think he was right casting for a light comedy in the Herbert Wilcox mold. It poured with rain, so that's not fair on poor Fergus. And I joined in and so did Donald and Mutzi, the cameraman, Max Greene, we went all the way along there and even when there was a break in the rain, he shot everything up against the deck house of the small boat, it could all have been shot in the studio. How a chap who was an editor could have done that I don't know, I think he was completely thrown by everything. It was wrong casting, he shouldn't have been asked to do that, it was very sad because I think it brought his career as a director to an end and he had to go back to editing. I think it was unfair because he could have been a good director. But the script was crap in any case, and it wasn't up his street, something from a short story by Aldous Huxley was up his street up not this drivel.

RF: Were you thinking of the Spanish Gardener.

RD: No that was much later. Anyway this film didn't work very well and I must say I got very fond of Odile to the extent that the only thing I could do was bring her back and introduce her to my wife as it might have got dangerous otherwise. Charming girl. She was very nice. I think Eric Goodhead was looming, I think he thought I was conducting an affair which I wasn't. We'd go off swimming but we weren't conducting any affair. I was far too Presbyterian, I suppose, and too faithful. It was a fair disaster and we didn't take that same boat all the way down to the Médi, it was bad enough taking it down to Paris. We had a ringer in Avignon, another similar MTB. That was rather exciting because the assistant art director was down there with it who'd been in the merchant

navy. The first thing which happened, went down there to go on board and he cast off too soon and bumped into some bloody woman's boat in the next bit of the quay in Avignon, this boat was wizzing at about 8 knots, you could see the barges coming out, the tugs with the barges moving about at 1 knot, less than a mile an hour, against this vast current. A hoo haa there and we had to cross her palm with silver. And the guy who owned this had a whole family, a Frenchman and I think he mostly made his money out of smuggling, smuggling cigarettes into Italy, or wherever things were fashionable. I don't think he was into heroin or anything like that, he wasn't that rich, he wouldn't have needed to hire the yacht to us. It went a bit better down there, but again somehow everything was shot against the deck house and it didn't work out well. And Fergie got a bit obstinate and he thought Mutzi and I were trying to interfere with him directing. Honestly we were trying to do our best for the poor sod but it didn't work out, he did get obstinate, he couldn't see what we were on about. I was very particular not to say rewrite the script although I felt it needed a bit of help there, but just to bring back something which was, and as I said he was an editor, I don't know how, but I think he just got thrown by this ghastly experience.

RF: Did you get a reputation for being stroppy.

RD: No, not usually. I was bossy I suppose, I don't think I was ever stroppy. I used to get on well with people. Mutzi wasn't being stroppy either, we were just trying to be helpful.

RF: But it doesn't always work.

RD: So to end that bit of story, we went back to the studios and I had to get Bill Andrews to make some kind of rocking affair with tubular springs and Herbert reshot the whole damn thing in the studio. We sent out some second unit to get a few extra shots, up the Seine or something and that was it and the film was pretty dreadful, not surprisingly. But I do feel very sad about poor Fergie because i really did feel he had some talent. But it was just a case of ludicrous miscasting. Because he was Eric Goodhead's client, it's bad to do that to people. I suppose he shouldn't have accepted. But you don't know. I know other directors who have gone in for comedy. Comedy is not easy. A guy like Val Guest who is not considered hi-brow, he can do comedy, he should have done more comedies instead of doing these thrillers, he isn't bad at them, because he has just knew about timing, he had all this experience and natural gift for comedy which basically you can't separate it from slapstick on the stage, it's all got certain basic rules which come down to timing.

RF: Interestingly Val says he learnt that to some extent largely from Varnel, Marcel Varnel who was rather good at it, you look at these pictures now and they work superbly and Walter Forde also.

RD: Also they'd done all these silent films too. But Val is very good about physical prop stuff and timing that.

RF: But what I'm saying is O'Donnell didn't learn that particular craft because comedy is as much a craft as it's instinctive.

RD: But a lot of directors don't realise how difficult it is.

RF: I think it is the most difficult thing in the world to time.

RD: It's very sad because I'm sure he's a very talented chap. Very good

editor but he had more potential and this film was so disastrous it brought his directorial career to an end. I don't remember him directing any more. And he was a nice man too.

RF: So it was a disaster as only the British film industry can produce.

RD: It didn't help me either. It was very awkward for me because Eric Goodhead, for some reason was hanging around, Donald Taylor was meant to be the producer but I was there. Was I in charge, was I not in charge, I hadn't a clue.

RF: Were you blamed for the disaster.

RD: Not really. Herbert never specifically blamed me. He hardly could. The only thing he could blame me was probably I should have fired Fergie, but I wasn't given that sort of power.

RF: Was Wilcox an independent or was he tied up with one of the companies.

RD: He was independent but he was tied up with British Lion. One his daughters was either married to or the girlfriend of Jarrett, whether that had anything to do with it, probably in the film business.

RD: It couldn't have hurt. But this one couldn't have made any money. A dreadful story. We had a new dance invented for it which I have a feeling is what they used to introduce the programme Breakaway on the BBC.

RF: I hope you're not going to say Jack invented it.

RD: No, it was a couple who were famous for inventing dances. They had names if you remember, they were ballroom dancers, this was before you started shuffling around on your own. Also because Michael liked it very much we bought Autumn Leaves, a French song. But all in all it just didn't get together, it was just a dreadful disaster. That was when I left, around that time. I was made redundant with the 60 members of the crew. But before that happened, whilst I was still Herbert's general manager, 20th Century Fox was making a vast film in Morocco and they kept running into trouble because it was being directed by a notorious character called Henry Hathaway, possibly the most unpopular director who ever lived in Hollywood. And there they were out in Morocco and they kept firing everybody. And Mutzi was on another 20th Century Fox film called Night in the City or something, no Jack Cardiff was the cameraman and i think Paul Beeson was the operator on that. There it was, I'd lent out everybody we had to 20th Century Fox. So Herbert called me into his office one day, his usual way he had this habit of rubbing the side of his nose. He said 20th Century want somebody else, I said they've had everybody Herbert, he said they want you now. So I was dispatched to Morocco because the production manager had been fired, because everybody was being fired by Hathaway. I heard about this man being an absolute dragon so I went to a tropical outfitters and bought myself an outfit with gleaming white shorts, rather like Mountbatten, like officers wear in the navy. Got myself all this gear and though that'll throw him. Flew out to Casablanca where I got a tiny plane which flew through the Atlas Mountains to place called which is in the Sahara where this huge unit was encamped in what had been a foreign legion camp. They'd had to burn down the trees in the kitchen and so on and clean everything up, white wash, and rebuild everything. There was no hotel. There was

nothing, and a brothel, that was the only entertainment in the entire place except Tuesday and Thursday when it was Senegelese night, they had these great tall black Senegelese soldiers who were 6ft 4". They had exclusive rights on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most of our English electricians and stagehands went there and caught clap, but there you are, that's life. It's just like being in the army. We went there too occasionally as a relaxation. It had a bar, you didn't have to sleep with these wretched whores who'd been through Paris and the South of France and were all aged about 50 poor things, pretty dire state they were in by then, even if you'd been inclined to patronise the brothels. But we did watch some of the films which were disgusting. But in a way they were terribly funny because they'd all been made in about 1920 and they had all this oldfashioned underwear and they all ended up with everyone doing everything unspeakable to everybody else in a great heap.

RF: Any idea where they might have been made.

RD: Paris I think. We got over this slightly disgusting side of it by saying, Jack Cardiff, a marvellous bit of camera work there, Jack. And they are rather revolting these films, but at least they were quite funny and old-fashioned. And one of them had a brilliant script for once which justified the whole thing. It was about a sculptor and he was trying to sculpt this thing and the model couldn't get it up at all so all this was going on so the model could get it up so the sculptor could sculpt him with a hard on, this was slightly witty, the others had no story at all. This sounds if we saw a lot. We only saw two, the other was revolting without anything. That was the only time we went. There was this tough wife of the American assistant director and she said I'm going to see it. And we told her don't go, you won't like it. She did and she was sick.

RF: I can't imagine what was in them.

RD: It was just all those sexual goings on, you know, all the aberrations which everybody knows about nowadays.

RF: I can't imagine anyone being sick from it.

RD: I felt a bit queasy at times, it just wasn't nice. Sex should be something beautiful, not something revolting like this going on. It was nasty. I didn't like it. It had it's lighthearted moments.

So there we were. I arrive at this place in the desert, I walk into the canteen and there are all these peoples dressed up as god knows what, Chinese or Mongolians, and this chap comes across and whams me across the back and says you're a dirty bastard, don't you recognise me. And it's Orson Welles done up as Ghengis Kahn, how much he was being funny and how much he was in a bad temper at the time, anyway we got pally again. There was one old pal there, and that was Orson. Later on we moved back up to Marakesh and we had some bloke doing the inventory, who did it in a hopeless way, one cup, one teaspoon, one bed, one half lamb, three cotton sheets, he was doing that and the stuff was being sent up. Later when we looked into the thing at Marakesh there was missing 12 bedsteads, 12 wardrobes, 12 or 15 5Ks and 20,000 ft of technicolor stock gone missing. When i'd gone to see Orson in Italy before the Third Man, apart from working on Prince of Foxes, he was making his own film at weekends in Venice which was Othello. Now he was still making Othello in Morocco. He had quarrelled with his girlfriend who'd been playing Desdemona and there was another one and he was doing this down on the coast of Morocco at a place called Mogador or something like that, so I thought a bit

suspicious all this. I bet Orson's pinched this. By now Orson had a man secretary, he had a very bright woman secretary in Rome. I met this man in Marakesh, I said how are you, how are the 5ks and what about, and the idiot fell right into it. Indeed Orson had pinched all this stuff. So I ran back to General Monckson who seemed to be in charge of 20th Century Fox in London and I said you better deduct all this from Orson's wages, They never did he got away with it. He got away with staying in a hotel, they just paid the hotel bills, he bought and her illegitimate mum and sent them on a trip across the Atlantic, they never did a thing about it, they were quite frightened of him and he got away with it all. Anyway he had pinched it all, and they never got the money back, I didn't mind but it was my duty to, I had to account for it, it was my fault if it disappeared. I said Orson pinched it, do what you like and they never did anything.

RF: I suppose Orson Welles Othello is more important.

RD: But it wasn't a very good Othello unfortunately.

RF: It had interesting bits in it. Paul Beeson was your operator and he told me a story well about Orson Welles and the coat, that the coat was made at some insistence to Orson's specifications lined with mink.

RD: I don't remember that particular thing but I remember I had to go to Venice and buy the silk suits for The Third Man.

RF: Lined with mink according to Paul and in Othello it turns up inside out with the mink outside.

RD: That would figure. That's enough about Orson, let's get back to Henry Hathaway. He was notoriously the most hated director in the world and he was very hated by this unit I can tell you. They loathed his guts. Mind you he was up early in the morning working hard and he didn't ask anyone to do what he couldn't himself sort of thing. On top of that he had cancer of the rectum and he had his cassey, if he hadn't had that excuse I think they might have murdered him and left him in the desert.

RF: He had a colostomy I think.

RD: Something of that kind. So he lived on for another 20 years or more but there was the implication that he might be dying any minute. I always believed they might have lynched him otherwise, they hated him so much. Jack Cardiff and Paul, these great brave British cameramen, when it came to teatime Jack would pour putting one index figure on one hand under the index finger of the other hand to make a T because they didn't like to say it outloud because he would start on about goddamn, so and so fucking Englishmen. I thought I'd fix that one. So I got the props to get a beautiful little English willow pattern teaset and present it to Henry Hathway at four o'clock everyday and he never said anything more about cocksucking, English, teadrinking sods. He kept quiet.

RF: Maybe he wanted to be loved.

RD: He did I suppose, but he didn't go a very good way about it. Unfortunately in a way he took to me, he didn't know what to make of me the first time he saw me striding across the desert in my white shorts and things, he didn't know what to make of it, some goddamn English man this one, but the trouble was people either caved in completely or screamed back at him so the only thing to do was to treat him like a

spoiled child. I would just talk to him very quietly and more and more quietly and his voice would come down quietly. I'd reason with him like a spoilt child. I didn't cave in nor did I shreak. So I gradually I got him fairly tame except for one day we were shooting on the battlements in Marakesh and down below was the tannery. It was an old-fashioned native tannery and they used human excrement and piss and he strode up and down jesus i can smell England from here. The unit had put up with being dragged round the desert, they'd put up with everything but that was just the last straw so it was we're not going to stand anymore. I said look Hank you're going to have to apologise. He said, gee, I was just joking, haven't they got any sense of humour, I was joking. I said you'd better bloody apologise or we're in trouble. You don't just say that sort of thing to a lot of people you've been overworking in the desert, you just can't do that sort of thing, you've got to apologise I'm sorry. Again, like some unhappy schoolboy, he went to apologise to the unit for having said this and we went on working.

Another example of his method of direction, we had Jack Hawkins, we also had Ty Power. Jack Hawkins was one of the English characters, it was set in the 12th century. It was a sort of imitation Marco Polo and they all ended up in China which was what Morocco was. Bill Andrews put curves on the edges of the Moroccan palaces so they looked Chinese. Anyway we had mad Jack Churchill who was a great commando who went out with bows and arrows and shot German sentries, anyway he knew how to work this bow and kill people or not kill people. Jack had this elaborate jacket made with lots of cork and metal underneath and Jack got ready to fire the arrow and Hank said Jesus you're far too far away. So Jack tried to explain how the arrow settles down and how you have to be far enough way from the target to be accurate, goddamn stupid Englishman, get nearer. With great reluctance, and he shouldn't have said yes really, but Hank was a real bully, he thought OK, it'll be alright. The bloody arrow went in from one half inch from the edge of that jirkin thing at the back, if it had been an inch higher it would have gone through his neck. That shook Hank I must say, he went absolutely white. And it taught him a lesson not to interfere anymore. He knew it all. An he'd give me advice which meant he would be saying things about himself which the average person would never expect his worst enemy to say. How he was an underprop boy and he was waiting around for the under assistant to make a mistake. The minute he made a mistake I was at the front office and I got his job. And he told me all this stuff. Quite amazing. And he was giving me good advice because he liked me and he wanted me to get on.

RF: That was the way to do it.

SIDE 9, TAPE 5

RF: In this kind of situation which you were in The Black Rose with an offensive director an highly disgruntled crew on the point of mutiny, we're now into the early 50s, how strong was the union and how did the union operate in the situation.

RD: There was a unit steward, I can't remember now who he was. By the time we were on location in England at Warwick Castle I think it was our second assistant from Imperator, which is Wilcox, which we'd borrowed like every one else. We had the preproduction meeting and nobody wanted to be steward so I said to Harold Birt you better be steward, which was the stupidest thing I ever did because he was a jolly good second assistant and he became extremely good as steward. I'm happy I did it even if the steward was good and I was the guy who had to fight him. I was a union member anyway. We were at Warwick Castle. We'd been at Tunbridge Wells, and these places as well as all over Morocco and it was one of these weekends I think where there was a bank holiday and the call was for Monday whatever it was. It was a very right wing unit on the whole, I don't mean people like Paul Beeson who was a member of the Communist Party. Anyway they were pretty disgruntled by now so they said they weren't coming in. George Elvin used to keep his address in ~~Lee~~ Leigh on Sea completely secret. I had to find this out. I was a good union member but I believe in sticking to the contract and by the contract they had no right they had no right not to come in. I got hold of George Elvin to send everyone a telegraph to tell them to come in and they did. I wasn't very popular. Nobody could have been more disgusted by Hank than I was, but just as I was much tougher about union things, for instance I would always stick up for the union and their rights, you can't have it both ways. If they're not following the rules and there was no motivation except just fedupness, I just had to do it. And I got George reluctantly to send a telegram to every member of the union and they did.

RF: Was Hathaway also producing.

RD: No Bud ~~Leitman~~ Lightner was producing. And wrote the script. He wrote this memorable line. We were in Morocco at he time where it is all walls, you can imagine how the union burst out because the script was all balls. He was a terribly nice man. He was just as ~~time~~ as Hank was nasty. Maybe he was a good producer if he had anyone else than Hank but he couldn't do anything with Hank, he was far too nice. He was there but he didn't seem to have much effect other than writing these bits of dialogue. hank couldn't have written a line of dialogue, ever I don't suppose.

RF: He was almost blind at this point.

RD: Hank

RF: No Leitman.

RD: No I don't think he was yet. Of course we had not only Ty but his wife of that time there, dressed in the briefest of shorts.

RF: This is Linda Christian.

RD: I'd met her in Mexico. I had to tell her look, I'm sorry, I know it's a very hot climate but you can't go round the unit which has been starved of girls all this time, it's a bit much, you can't walk round like this. I had to say this to the publicity girl too, not because she was so sexy but because she looked so dreadful. I had know her years before in Mexico. This was a side light on this overcharge atmosphere. But I think the best illustration of the business and the lack of business sense of the big American film companies was the questions of the camels. There was this Moroccan who cornered the contract to supply the camels. We needed lots and lots of camels. So he was an absolutely brilliant business man this chap because what he did was buy up all the camels on their way to the knackers yard. Now camels are like horses, there are racing camels, military camels, car camels. Different sorts of camels.

RF: And camels which had had their day.

RD: Exactly. Now he had collected together all the camels which had had their day and rented them out as racing camels , military camels and you name it. With the double advantage that they did not cost him anything except 80 quid for the carcas or whatever the carcass fetched because he bought them on the way out. But they kept falling dead. But the moment they fell deal they weren't old camels but the best military camels, the best racing camels, etc. He already charging for these. Now he's picking up a lot more money. And he's still selling them for 8 quid to the knackers yard when they drop down. And he had it absolutely sown up.

RF: Was the money going through you.

RD: No thank god. No it wasn't going through me. I only realised half way through it had all been fixed up. It had nothing to do with Hathaway it had more to do with Bud Leitman. He should have been a sharper producer. In those days I think Americans were very naive in that sort of way. They let themselves get, when you think these tough American businessmen, they'd let themselves get conned. I suppose the con men are the most easily conned men in the world.

RF: I suppose there is that aspect of it. I suppose it's also true that they got themselves into situation and it happened a lot in Italy when they were taken for rides. If you remember they were coming over at that point because the tax laws in the United States said that if you were away from the country for 18 months or more you didn't have to pay any domestic taxes. And so they all came over on these deals and they had to stay away to satisfy internal revenue but they got lumbered with these extraordinary situations in pictures. Some one like Tyrone Powell was living over here.

RD: I think he was living in Acapulco because he used to bring his yacht down. He was a pleasant sort of chap but he didn't have much personality. I met him years and years earlier on Wings of the Morning. I got on all right with Linda.

RF: WAs she on the make. She was thought too be a very tough lady.

RD: I think she picked him up in Mexico, Acapulco. She was a German Mexican.

RF: It was Technicolor, was it still three strip.

RD: It was still three strip except some of the locations which was monopack which wasn't finished. I'm sure it was proper Technicolor.

RF: So you had this big camera, lumbering about.

RD: Yes you ask Paul. He was on it. I can't remember who was the second assistant but I remember Jack. I'd known him earlier. I think he was on Wings of the Morning. I think Jack started at Technicolor. He was taken on very early. Ray Rennahan was the cameraman on that film, Jack was only a young man

RF: He's about your age.

RD: I suppose he must be something like that. Jack's a charming man but the way they were cowed by Hathaway is amazing. As I said going round making sighs about tea time. He had everybody in an awful state. he was a dreadful man. You might say how did he make good films. The answer is he was like the routine cameraman, technically very good. He was a routine director, he'd take the script and direct it. Not always with great sympathy and sometimes one can get good work out of people by being nasty to them. It doesn't generally work. There it is. If you handed him a script he got it in on time and on schedule, I don't think he every bothered too much about the director's week in the cutting room or whatever they allowed the poor sods. He just did his job. He started off as a prop boy and worked his way up. He did his job. He was pretty nasty. People didn't like him but he did his job and if he had a bloody good script, the film was good. if he didn't have a good script it was awful.

RF: Essentially he was a product and part of the Hollywood factory line. He came in at a certain stage, got the script and didn't even have a week in the cutting room. At Fox I don't think you did.

RD: I think you're right. Because I think Darryl was the first to have projects like movieloas which could be stopped and started. He sat in the viewing room and more or less re edited everything. So they say. I don't really know because I wasn't there.

RF: That's the way the system worked. Thalberg would have his favourite cutter, Margaret Booth and they saw the thing.

RD: But really Hank, he was very nasty.

RF: I think fear was part of the system.

RD: I think it was. He'd been kicked around when he was the prop boy. That was the way he was brought up and that was the way he was.

RF: Underlying everything you said about him, it strikes me that possibly that there was a crass misunderstood sense of humour at work, as he perceived it.

RD: I don't think he had any sense of humour.

RF: Maybe he thought he was being funny on occasion,

RD: He may have thought that. The other think was that he didn't drink and he used to get furious with the unit because they drank.

RF: He was totally dry.

RD: Totally. But again I said would you like a lager and he said yes. I had people fainting all round me so he wasn't that strict teatotler. But he was just tough, people drinking on my film, they're not ready, they're getting pissed, it was that sort of thing

RF: Did he betray, betray is the wrong word, did he demonstrate any sense of loyalty to the studio, did it seem that he felt responsible for the picture.

RD: Only in the sense he was going to bloody well get it in on time and that sort of thing.

RF: You were on schedule.

RD: I honestly don't remember. If we weren't there would be a good excuse. Those bloody fucking English men who formed the whole unit. It was cheaper. They didn't send an American unit it was a unit from Shepperton.

RF: But Fox had half Shepperton in those days, They had two stages there and they were producing some bloody good pictures, expensive pictures, more than just quota.

RD: This was nothing to do with quota.

RF: Quota still existed.

RD: This had nothing to do with quota it was an immensely expensive film.

RF: I know it was Bob, what I'm saying is that they weren't just making quota films, they were trying to make international pictures in Britain.

RD: They thought it was cheaper, indeed the unit from Shepperton was paid less than one from Hollywood and the fares were less. Some of them were put at a fairly second class hotel. I don't know.

RF: But they were making fairly serious films.

RD: Yes some one wrote a fictionalisation of Marco Polo.

RF: Blockbuster movies.

RD: Yes, 120 or more people at Shepperton and at least as many Moroccans working along side them. Redoing all the Moroccan palaces into Chinese. Buying up a camp from the French government. The French were still there although it was meant to be an independent country up to a point it was still a French colony. Really it was General Jouin who was the governor and I would ring up General Jouin and say we're shooting, don't do any firing today and it was fine.

RF: Was there any evidence of corruption.

RD: I don't remember. I wouldn't know. Having lived for years in Mexico I might have assumed so.

RF: An Arab country, French Arab Country.

RD: God knows but I spent five years in Mexico and achieved a certain amount for British propaganda by a certain amount of corruption

RF: Did you ever see the picture when it was released.

RD: I've mercifully forgotten if I ever did. It must have been awful. In general it was an inefficient enterprise and I don't think to be fair in that environment one of the few efficient people apart from our camera crew was Hank himself, he was efficient. His producer wasn't efficient, a lot of the people who were sent from Shepperton weren't efficient. They were all fired. That's how I got there. That's how I had to get Herbert's team. They were all good people because he always paid over the odds to be fair to him, he always paid you quite a lot more than union rates.

RF: I think it was part of the Hollywood system, the producer was there to get the script made. The script values such as they were. Producers weren't strong in controlling a picture. The machinery of the studio did that.

RD: I think Hank had an overriding personality and Bud didn't get anywhere. i think Hank paid lip service to him but he made it obvious that he just didn't think that what the other bloke said figured. Al though probably he was virtually illiterate, he would accept rewriting the script however awful.

RF: Leitman was a respected writer back in Hollywood.

RD: But he had this thing which Hollywood always had. In historical films you never said can't and don't, cannot and do not, because that was meant to be in period, it was in 1200 when people spoke some strange Anglo Saxon or Norman French, it didn't matter. English people didn't speak with American accepts in those days so that was illogical too. Certainly Americans weren't going to worried. But they always had this pedantic way of talking if it was going to be an historical film.

RF: There were great conventions in the 50s with all the biblical pictures. If you remember, the Jews were always played by Americans whereas the wicked Romans were always played by British actors.

RD: Oh that still happens.

RF: That probably wraps up on Black Rose. Having finished Black Rose what did you do next.

RD: I think it would be interesting to deal with an organisation called Group Three. One of the attempts to reorganise the film industry in Britain divided the film industry under Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, I'm not sure about that. The other groups never really came to anything.

RF: Who did that reorganisation

RD: The Government I think

RF: But they did start Group 3. Group 3 was a sort of do good organisation.

RD: It was meant to provide a certain amount of training or at least

discover new talent. It was put in charge of as managing director in the beginning John Grierson, the documentary man but he was also on the board but the chairman of the board was sir Michael Balcon of Ealing studios. This group was based originally at Southall just further than Ealing, an outer London suburb and the studio was in a converted bus garage. just one floor, one studio. In that studio during the first year they completely 12 feature films which was pretty good going. I didn't join this Group 3 when it first started, I joined it sometime later, I can't remember how many films they'd already made but it was still in Southall Studios. I was taken on not really by Grierson originally, not by Grierson at all, I was taken on by Micky Balcon, the chairman, I had formally to go and see Grierson but that was the day I started work. He used to stay in a small hotel, it's still there but it's been jazzed up a bit, near Paddington Station, called the Norfolk, I got in touch with him and he said come and see him there 9 O'clock one morning. I got there an he was still in bed and I had to get his bloaters for him. Then when he was getting dressed he forgot his socks and we had a hell of a job with the chamber maid crawling under the bed looking for them. he was quite a character. I wasn't knocked out by him. I began to suspect he was a bit of a poseur, the way he went on with rather old fashion 30ish bad language and strident attitudes. But that was before I got to know him. I often think he charmed English people but as a fellow Scotsman that did not word with me. it was only when I got to know him i began to respect him quite a great deal. So I went down to the studio and started work. I think I was really meant to be put in there to keep Grierson in order and look after Michael Balcon's participation in the event which I did not in the event do. It was I think whoever made it a very grave mistake to put Micky Balcon in supreme charge of this Group 3 enterprise because he was still of course in charge of Ealing Studios and still making these Ealing comedies and so on. His behaviour with Group 3 was at best ambivalent. For instance group 3 films were to be distributed and were distributed if that is the word by his own distribution company. I've forgotten what it was called.

RF: It was Ealing Distributors.

RD: No it wasn't Ealing Distributors and Ealing films were not distributed by this company they were distributed by GFD. It was the laughing stock of Wardour St.

RF: I think it varied but there was a company called Ealing Distributors.

RD: This was was not Ealing. It was ABFD. It was run by a colonel something. it was in fact the laughing stock of Wardour St and not the distributor or Ealing films. There was a tendency if you had an idea for a film that one would be told by Mick that no we couldn't do that because they were thinking of doing that at Ealing. On the other hand he kept on trying to shove projects which had been hanging around at Ealing and hadn't got off the ground onto us. One which I had to do and I think we had to pay £1,000 which may not seen much nowadays but with the limited budgets we had was pretty irritating of some kind of grandiose documentary, patriotic documentary about Britain, I suppose trying to recapture the wartime type of documentary. This was to be directed by John Eldridge who I think had already done some work on it for Ealing. It was doomed to failure. We worked on the script together. We got on very well together but John already was suffering from TB and was not a well man. It wasn't the sort of project which would every have been a runner. I don't see it would have ever have made any money. It was the beautiful English countryside, it was just too twee at the best. That

was just one. John Eldridge had to do a feature or two for Group 3 but I'e forgotten which ones they were.

RF: Who was financing these activities.

RD: I think there was some help from the government. I think at the same time Harold Wilson started up the National Film Finance Corporation, I may be wrong, I'm pretty sure it was because some of the people to do with Group 3 were also on the NFFC. I think John Terry was tied up, at least we used to see him.

RF: Was it meant to be a commercial enterprise.

RD: Yes, it was meant to make money but it was also meant to serve as a training ground for talent and so on. So it went on. Perhaps the most successful film financially made by Group 3 was one which Grierson was allowed as a sort of sop which wasn't thought to be a commercial film which was a thing called the Brave don't Cry which was about the coal mine disaster in Scotland and one way or another than made more money than any of the other films, partly because it has a specialised audience and played the coalmining areas year after year after year apart from having done well the first time. It was a very well made film. Who made it, who directed it. I think maybe it was Phil Leacock, I'm not sure.

RF: This the training aspect of this project fructify.

RD: There was no training, it was opportunity rather than training we were able to give and indeed it did. John Gibbon for instance has been very successful, Phil Leacock and other directors who started there, Don Sharp.

RF: So it was useful.

RD: Yes it was useful. Meanwhile, Balcon and Grierson were not getting along very well together.

RF: Do you know why Was it a conflict of policy or personality.

RD: Personality plus policy I suppose. The legend was that John Grierson was a wild man, not properly disciplined which is not very fair considering the number of films he managed to produce. Furthermore he did as production manager and eventually producer in charge we had a woman called Pargy, Isobel Pargeter who was extremely efficient and helped run the whole place. The only thing is that she got extremely frustrated. I think she was paid no more than half of what she would have been paid than if she had been a man in those days and she kept threatening if we did not pull ourselves together, Balcon and Grierson, she would just go off and start a boarding home and we all fell about laughing. But eventually she got did and she did start a boarding house.

RF: Grierson presumably had never worked to commercial disciplines, do you think that's the key to the thing between him and Balcon.

RD: I think it might have been. But I think it was more a conflict of personalities. It was possibly Grierson had weird ideas sometimes. But he also had a very sharp brain and some very good ideas.

RF: What are your suspicions of Balcon.

RD: Shall we say I tried to give him as much benefit of the doubt but he was the sort of personality that what seems to be in many ways was quite wicked behaviour towards Group 3 and Grierson was possibly more subconscious than conscious. I don't know, I'm being kind about it maybe. Perhaps he didn't admit to himself how much he was jeolous of Ealing's reputation and how he didn't want Group 3 to be that successful. i don't think he wanted us to compete. He wanted to be in a position of being patronising. This was the junior outfit which musn't compete with the senior outfit. Indeed when we were made to use this distributor bears this out. I think Grierson was very good on many things. He was very good at criticising a script, he could put his finger on weakness, suggest improvements and I think he began to think I was good at this too because I used to go down at weekends to his cottage on the Downs at and go through scripts with him. Especially if Margaret his wife was away these sessions tended to degenerate into drinking sessions rather than serious scripting sessions. That's not being very fair. In the mornings we did even in these weekends a good deal of work. At that time to complicate matters and might have given Balcon a lever to edge Grierson out and this is what he was trying to do and I think this is where my opportunity might have been to get a job if I'd helped with the edging which I refused to do. What complicated it around that time was that Grierson got TB. They had this character staying with them called Golightly who I think had been in films. Not being a documentary man I don't know the details of that. He was a sort of permanent house guest, nice guy. Grierson did catch TB which probably gave Balcon some excuse to be beastly about him which he did by making John Baxter, a director at the time, a co managing director. Grierson was gradually eased out in preference to Baxter. Grierson with TB was quite something. He was in the Brompton Hospital which was still famous and he would expect one to go along with envelopes or he would stuff an envelope full of fag ends for you to take away. He shouldn't have been smoking at all. He would insist that one always brought bottles of Guinness or something. I think that he might not have survived if his wife Margaret had not have had the sense to whip him out of the Brompton Hospital and take him back to Wiltshire where he was propped up in bed with a shot gun trying to shot the crows out of the window and looked after by Margaret his charming wife and he got better pretty quickly at that point. Meanwhile not only did Baxter have this opportunity but he was given very much better studios because we moved from Southall to the well established Beaconsfield Studios which now houses the National Film School. But when Baxter was in charge they only managed to make two or three films in the year rather than the 12 made in that converted bus garage when Grierson was in sole charge. The whole enterprise gradually fizzled out.

RF: Balcon was a very important figure in the British film industry for several decades. It does sound as if he was very difficult to work in harness because his career is a series of leavings. He ran Ealing but whenever he had to answer to other people there was always a problem.

RD: He ran before that in a sense Gaumont British and Gainsborough for many years. Thought of course he didn't own them. The Ostrer Brothers were more in charge than him but he did run them.

RF: But there were Board level problems were there not. There certainly was when he went to work with MGM British. And later when you get to Bryanston.

RD: On the other hand what we were discussing with group 3 was the reverse, it was where he Balcon was acting as the wicked super boss as Ostrer and

MGM of Group 3, he was in the other role, not the role of the junior, he was the senior.

RF: What was his input into Group 3

RD: A lot went on at these Board meetings. I never went to these board meetings, I was never on the board. But Grierson would be somehow on the board meetings backed up and tell him where to get off, but in a way I don't think he did. Although Grierson was a strong personality breathing fire and so on, Micky Balcon was a very formidable character in his quiet and charming way, he was very formidable and he tended to squash Grierson, I was never personally present but this is what I gathered from other people and I suppose that was where policy was made.

RF: During your presence at Southall and Beaconsfield what were you doing and what were you working on.

RD: I had a scheme which deflected me from just attacking Grierson or what I was perhaps meant to do, I had a scheme whereby I thought perhaps the scheme was the budgets of the films which meant the kind of films being made was neither here nor there but if we made some of the films a bit more expensive and then we had some cheaper ones which I would run with which we would really try out new directors, we could spend just a bit more to make the first features viable at the same time these experimental second feature type ones would work on the smaller budget so we would split it up 30 to 70 rather than the same money for all the budgets which is what more or less was happening, it never came to anything very much. There was one I was going to do at Beaconsfield which was written by a chap Forsyth, it was a simple story about a chap who was retiring and given his gold watch and didn't want to retire and had a relationship with his grandson it was called Old Knick Knack. There was too much experimentation in it, eventually he said we'd run out of money and we couldn't make in. In fact I think he was worried about the experimentation which the art director and he thought it was altogether too hi brow so I had to go off and find another job with I did, which was to make a film with a radio comedy team of the time called the Lyons.

SIDE 10, TAPE 5

RF: Before we leave group 3 I was going to ask you if you knew the budget figures the type of money being spent on films.

RD: I'm sure I could find out but I can't remember off hand. I should think about £50,000, £50-60,000.

RF: That was a second feature.

RD: No a second feature was about £20,000

RF: So these went out top of the bill.

RD: Yes that was the idea.

RF: But they never got much of a release is what you've implying.

RD: Some did. But they were doomed at the beginning by the distributor. I haven't much more to say. As soon as I got myself fixed up Baxter called in Wolf Rilla who I don't think had ever directed a film I thin he'd done tv, and gave him the film to direct. With all my cast and everything else but he didn't understand it.

RF: What was the title of the picture.

RD: Mick Knack. I hope they had another title by the time they finished.

RF: Was this the only time you worked with Baxter because he's another interesting historical personage. He brought a certain, not left wing, but liberal stance to films.

RD: He was right wing compared to Grierson.

RF: But it was Baxter who made some of the working class films.

RD: He did do that but it was that kind of English film type working class, a bit patronising and funny.

RF: Maybe a little less jokey than some of the others.

RD: He did take a novel.

RF: He did a working class novel, I can't remember the title but it's a matter of record. Do you have any particular recollections him.

RD: I said all this about Wolf which I didn't mean to, it wasn't his fault. Baxter was one of these people who's extremely good at finding reasons for not making films. He would sit in his office at Beaconsfield and one would have interminable interviews with him and it was like dealing with cotton wool nothing ever seemed to come out of them. He would open and shut the drawers of his desk and say I've got a desk full of scripts old boy, dozens of scripts. One day when he wasn't there I opened the drawers and found there was nothing but blank paper and he was a bit like that. He did make a football film which didn't go which he directed himself but traditionally football films have never made any money although it's such a popular sport. Then the thing seemed to fizzle out but as I've said I'd already left and gone to work with Jimmy

Carreras. This was an enterprise whereby the Lyons, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon, were popular artists of the time and they wanted to switch to television. The proposition I had was to take 3 episodes which I would pick from their 3 radio episodes but also make them so they would stick together seamlessly to form a feature length film for the cinema which I did. This was extremely interesting in a way, completely different from the hibrow little film we were going to make at Group 3 but it was an interesting experience. One thing which was interesting was just how professional Bebe Daniels was. She had in the basement a study in a house near Paddington which featured in the Radio things and was to feature in the film although we din't use the actual location. She had a library of gags pinched from anywhere and every where, a very efficient woman. Ben comparatively was a bit of a layabout. She was the brains of the family. it was very interesting working with her. Then we called in Val Guest to do the directing because it seemed to be that was probably the best comedy director was had. And I think he was an d still is. And of course we all collaborated and I think I managed to make the script apparently seamless enough that the film went out and it only cost second feature money, not more than £30,000 at the most. It made a lot of money. It never did lead to any television series. The television series was never made. But this gave a bit of a lift to Hammer films in that they'd only been making second features before and it gave them slightly more pretentions, they would launch into these rather more posh second features or co features with the Hammer horrors directed by my old pal Terry Fisher and people like that. We did make another series of 3 which never got onto television or didn't start a television series called The Lyons Abroad, I think the idea was that we wanted a location in Paris and thought it might be rather fun which it was in away. The budge for that and it may have been a bit cooked up for two weeks in Paris, I was a bit cunning as to the people I took, always consulting both unions every time I was on location in France I had to consult both unions the French and the English but always insisted that we should have a combined unit and never have units watching each other which saved money which was my job but also I just hate the idea, it was a false thing, just as Joe Losey directing films to be directed by somebody else I think I was instrumental that this should never happen in the ACTT again so this was quite interesting negotiating a mixed French and English unit and for the two weeks it was about £2,000 including everything, hotels, amazing. We didn't take sound because that would have meant four English or French soundmen. One often got landed with French soundmen, I don't know how that came about. Obviously one would have an English continuity girl, a bit of French secretary, it all made sense.

RF: It's a bit of a surprise because one always thinks of that time, and it was the 50s,

RD: Yes

RF: that was the hayday of restrictive practices and the bulldog union which stuck to agreements absolutely.

RD: You're quite right but it was possible with a bit of commuting between Paris and London and it meant dealing with the general secretary of our union at the time direct, but one was able to get concessions.

RF: A couple of questions come to mind. You mention Joe Losey and the black list is in full swing in the States, is this worth talking about now. And the other thing I think we can dispose of quickly is how did one find a job in those days, did you have an agent.

RD: I did for a while but I don't think she ever got me a job, very nice she's still around, Dina Lom, she was married at that time to Herbert Lom. I can't remember when I first met her but I think when I was at Group 3. But once one ceased to be a general manager and one decides one is a producer, agents don't get jobs for producers very much, one had to go and create one's own work and go perhaps to an agent to get the director. I don't think producers in those days were expected to have agents.

RF: Do you remember how you got that particular job. Did you make contact with Carreras.

RD: I think so.

RF: Was there any middleman.

RD: I can't remember any middleman. I can't remember whether I was approached or not. I probably approached them. I was friendly because my father was the chief editorial director of Odham's Press and had in his youth been director of Kinematograph Weekly. I used to know the Kine Editor and get form him a journalist card and so I'd get invited to press shows and I got that way to meet people and also he would tick me off about people who were starting. That's what I would use as a lever.

A lot of the business in those days was done around the Wardour St pubs. In some times it was embarrassing to go into a Wardour St pub especially if you were going to start a film soon because you got surrounded by out of work actors and technicians. But I suppose one was also looking hopefully for some contacts oneself.

RF: Were there particular pubs for particular areas of business.

RD: The Wellington seemed to be very popular at one time. There was always the ship further up the street. There was the Roundhouse which no longer exists. That was between the Intrepid Fox and the Wellington. I think fashion changed from one pub to another. The Dog and Duck was meant to be the documentary pub. The Wardour St ones were all feature I think on th whole but he Dog and Duck was a whole st away it was in Dean St.

I think the ACTT was very welcoming and think perhaps at first I don't don't know why we had to go through this fiction of Charles Latour directing

RF: The reason was because release in the States.

RD: I think that was the reason because I think we were very generous especially to producers and directors in welcoming these people. It was later it became obvious that the American distributors no longer gave a damn whether it was directed by Joe Losey, if it was a good film they could seel it, it was probably a well justified fear. It was an awful period but it wasn't too long before McCarthy was discredited. This did not mean that people were invited back because they weren't but it did mean that they did not worry about their names being on the credits any more.

RF: It lasted till the middle to late 50s

RD: But for some reason I don't think Hollywood people cared about peoples name on the screens.

RF: I don't think Hollywood ever cared it was the pressure groups who were the problem and I suppose they lessened their boycotting activities.

RD: It was people working on Hollywood they would be still attacking perhaps. I think that's fair to say. They did very well. It's said Eddy Dmytryk, I don't know but it's the accepted story of the time, who was one of the few Communist Party members did go back to Hollywood and did in the Los Angeles Examiner did what they were expected to do in Pravda, attacked all his mates, so he was accepted back. I don't know if it's a horrible travesty but this is what everybody tells me. So he's the guy who got there, one was one of the few, I don't say who ought to have been thrown out because I don't think you ought to throw out Communists either, but he was the few for whom there was a real excuse even from the point of view of the McCarthyites, he was the one who was accepted back because he recanted.

RF: You had to recant and you had to name names and then you could work.

RD: And that he did which I think is nothing to do with films but is an illustration of what is wrong with modern society, you cannot defeat the enemy whatever the enemy is by using the enemies methods. And that's what McCarthy and all his cronies were doing, they were doing exactly what Stalinist people were doing in Moscow. You don't support democracy by pinching the methods of the other side. I think that's a very important principle

I'm no expert on the people from the blacklist. There's a very genial character I used to know, who had been the chief scriptwriter of MGM, Donald Ogden Stewart. He was great, he was such a nice fellow and he was such a mild liberal. His wife whom I'd know in Moscow was a pretty hard line leftist, she had been a correspondent in Moscow when I was stationed there, unpopular with the other correspondents but Donald was a sweet guy.

RF: A small interjection from me is interesting from this point of time in view of the recent American election. 30 years ago Communist was a dirty word now it's liberal which is the dirty word and who's not to say there won't be a purge of liberals sooner or later. Certainly in this country there's a threat to political conviction and free speech.

RD: There are Conservatives in this country who still cannot distinguish between the labour party and the Communists, apart for the fact that the Communists are no longer the same as they used to be apart from the fact that there are two lots and some of them seem to be to the right of the Labour Party, certainly some of the Labour party are to the left of some of the Communists. It's all very complicated.

We were originally before we strayed onto politics talking about Life with the Lyons. Perhaps I should say a bit more about the company I was working with, Hammer Films and Hammer films was the production end and Exclusive Films the distribution end but it was ll the same. Hammer Films came from a chap called Hinds whose son was active but the father who was the jeweller had been on the halls when he was young under the name of Hammer and that's where the name Hammer Films came from. Jimmy Carreras was always known as the Colonel. It was said that he was in the catering Corp. One never knows if these stories are true. He was quite character.

I'd say aren't you coming down to the studios and he would reluctantly come down for half an hour. His moto in talking to me if I can see it and hear it I can sell it. The offices were in Wardour St not far from where the present ACTT offices were. I think we had several floors one of which was let out to another company but it was distribution as well as the production side and eventually they had Bray but I did the Life with Lyons at Group 3 old studios in Southall which I had got rather to like and I found it rather pleasant in a way. The production office had a door opening onto the set. And I had this system which I think I pinched from Tony Hinds, one of the directors on the Hammer side of the company, whereby I had the mike on the set wired up so I heard every thing which was going on in my office. I think that it was said that the other fellow did this, and I think it's not very fair, that he got in his car if he heard that anything wasn't very happy and went out. The way I use it was more positive. You did not have to stand around getting in the way all the time but if you heard some row brewing up between one of the actors and the director you could quietly wander on and sort it out. It was a bit Gestapoish I suppose but I found it rather useful as well as being rather fun. That's where we made Life with the Lyons and I think we made the second one there. I'm not quite sure. But I did make a film out at Bray at least one. It's difficult to distinguish the various second features I made with people when I made quite a few for ACT films. One I remember at Bray, there was a rather unfortunate one which was directed by a quite well known director at the time who had been an editor known as Dan Birt, a friend of mine, but we'd only been a week into the film when Dan caught pneumonia and I had to direct the rest of it myself. This was on of these so called co productions which you did with America. But it was only a second feature frankly. And the American side would produce a star but the sort of thing wehich generally happened the Saturday before the Monday you were ready to start in the studio you got a telegram, Clark Gable stubbed toe, unable to arrive, sending in this case they sent Lloyd Bridges who's a terribly nice fellow and I can remember going out on picnics with him on the Thames near Bray Studios with these two little boys both of whom are well know film stars themselves, better known than their dad ever was. I had as one of the villains the chap I had cast in the Mick Knack film, Finlay Currie, Madwidge. He was so delighted with my direction that at the end of it he gave me a lovely sliver snuff box which I still have but I never managed to get much into directing after that.

RF: Did you have a desire to.

RD: Yes I think so. I was mostly concerned with directing or producing, I would always have a 50% participation in a script. I think the script was the most important thing for a producer. I think if you're a writer and genuinely interested in filmmaking it's pretty important to become a producer. At one time it wasn't very easy to become a director, it was easier to become a producer because directors had come up another way. In a way you had perhaps more control of what the story was going to be if you were the producer than if you were the director who was often handed the script and said here shoot this mate. Also I'd been production manager and my experience was more on the production side. I enjoyed directing. But I find making a documentary I'm perfectly happy to produce and direct and write and I think if you're engaged on a major feature film that is perhaps a mistake and results in films even by talented people you need the discipline of two people of equal importance who get on reasonably well together but are not just echoes of each other in order to get some discipline into the whole thing, even the script.

RF: Discipline and objectivity.

RD: Yes, this may be the greatest shot you've ever shot but it isn't worth more that 5 seconds and having seen it from both sides you d get to love shots quite subjectively because of the circumstances of when you shot them and so on. You get to love them like children and you do need someone to say that perhaps its's a lovely shot it's unbalancing the film it's only worth five seconds not five minutes sort of thing.

RF: It's quite extraordinary what can come and not harm but actually improve

RD: But on the whole, from the whole point of view of budgeting which is important if you're making cheap films, the way to save money without ruining the film is in the scripting stage. To be able to see you could do with less locations and less rooms which in the sense is a sort of discipline. Not just that it would cost you more money but it's a mistake to have them because they dissipate the story some time dashing all over the place with lots of different location which aren't really relevant. That was a pleasant film because of the nice sunny weather. We weren't in the new studio which wasn't build.

RF: You were saying you weren't in the new studio at Bray.

RD: No we were in the old house which was minute not the specially built new studio but it worked quite well. It was meant to be set in Spain. One had one weeks location in a three week schedule, maybe four but I think only three. I did the exteriors in the Cheddar Gorge with a few shrines where people had crashes in the mountain.

A tree is a tree and a rock is a rock. People thought we'd been to Spain I'd loved to have gone to Spain but we couldn't have afforded it. I couldn't remember if I'd done any others for Jimmy but the Lyons did very well. I had my fee and 5% or more of the profits and of course this was quite farcical because they kept at least 3 sets of books, one for the income tax, one for the shareholders and a secret one for themselves. So long as I was still working for them I got a certain amount of royalties every month but the minute I left I got a thing saying I'd been overpaid several hundred pounds which was absolute nonsense but meanwhile I wouldn't get paid. So I would go and see the Colonel and he would always have the same act. What, you haven't had your royalties, he would ring up this accountant, he was called Henson I think, Henson, Bob Dunbar tells me, etc, etc and we all knew jolly well that the only person who said we'd be paid was Jimmy himself. I think that if I had all the percentages I was supposed to have from people in those days I'd be a damn sight richer than I am now. But it was all pretty notional because who knew really what the profits were.

RF: Apart from being financially shafted what were the other merits or demerits for working for Jimmy Carreras.

RD: I thought he was quite pleasant enough to work with and that attitude if I can can see it and hear it I can sell it is quite pleasant, you didn't get any interference, you just went ahead and shot the film.

RF: Val Guest said that he made the poster or the poster was the first thing he ever devised and the the film followed the poster.

RD: This wasn't the case in the case of the Lyons. The other one was a novel and I can't remember whose novel it was, probably Bentley, not Michael, the uncle who wrote detective stories, It was the young one because I consulted him about the script.

RF: Who were some of the technicians who were working at Bray. You mentioned Terry Fisher earlier, was he directing.

RD: He was directing, he'd been directing for some time. I can't remember who was on the camera on these films.

RF: They were all people on the payroll not freelance people brought in.

RD: I think for the Lyons it was probably a freelance crew. I took them on, obviously people I knew. They were probably people who had worked with me.

RF: I hadn't realised that the Hinds money was the jewelers chain. What can you tell us about Tony Hinds.

RD: I got on very well with him. I was left to be the producer. He didn't interfere. I wasn't sure whether he was meant to be directly connected with these films or not. The other young, even younger lad was Jimmy's son, Michael, and he began to take more an interest, put his oar in a bit more but I don't remember it being particularly irksome.

RF: Opinions vary enormously about Michael, what can you tell us about him.

RD: I suppose he was at that time he was youngish and people just thought he was the boss' son which was probably quite unfair because he probably knew a good deal more about film production that his father who had this attitude about selling them. But I didn't stay on long enough to experience his taking more, I think he had much more to do with the films they went on to make. I think he had quite a lot to do with them but he was just as it were at the beginning of his career. He seemed a very pleasant fellow, a bit sharper than Tony Hinds.

RF: Was it a poverty row operation.

RD: It had been but it became less so. In some ways they were generous, you would ask for films and you would get them.

RF: The house was used a lot in their films.

RD: We shot the film inside this house.

RF: But both the interior and the exterior was used for shooting. Did you ever shoot at Oakley court which was just down the road a bit, that marvellous Gothic mansion.

RD: I don't think I did. I don't remember if it was this film or another one but there was an old barn there which we burnt down. We had a fire in one of the films we burnt earlier. I can always remember when we had that stuff petgel which they smeared all over this old barn and the camera crew and I got practically burnt to death in the thing because they had been so generous in smearing the stuff all over the thing.

RF: Was it a barn worth saving.

RD: I wouldn't say so

RF: You don't feel too guilty about it looking back.

RD: Not really.

RF: Because film crews have done some terrible things.

RD: I don't think it was in any way valuable. I think it was a barn built for a previous film.

RF: Was that the last film for Carreras.

RD: I think so because I don't remember making anything in the modern studio at Bray.

RF: Shall we try and remember individual as we go along such as Terry Fisher and Dan Birt who is forgotten very much.

RD: He was a very keen and dedicated filmmaker. Very keen on technical things. He invented, I had it for a while, he invented some kind of device you stuck on a camera between the magazine and the camera whereby you could do a sort of trick shot without waiting to do it in the labs, a sort of home made matte shot. It was an ingenious idea but he was never able to get it taken up in a big way. He had made some more serious films. That was the only time we worked together. We were pretty friendly but it was the only time we worked together. Then a few years later he got pneumonia again and died rather young. Other technicians, I'm trying to sort them out in my mind. It was a long time ago and they all get mixed up together.

The other place I worked for several times was ACT Films which was as everybody should know was started in a sense to provide work for the unemployed and one was expected to work for the minimum rates.

RF: Go into this with as much detail as you can because as far as I can recall we haven't touched upon ACT films in any of the interviews so far.

RD: I did particularly remember the setting up except that was meant to be the general reason for having it. It was always until recent years administered by Ralph Bond there was always a Committee, not a committee but technically the directors of ACT Films that would meet who I think were all union member of various sorts and every now again they would make a film. I think I made one for them that got the out of a fair amount of trouble and in return when I was out of work they gave me one to do. And then another. I made three altogether rather than one which would be the normal sort of thing.

RF: You you think it worked a union trying to run

RD: I think it did. It seemed to work quite well. The quality of the films seemed to vary quite a lot but that depended on the quality of the independent producers and directors or other circumstances. They were of course, it was not able to exert a great deal of influence because it had in no way any distribution company.

RF: How were they distributed.

RD: As far as I remember they tended to be with British Lion.

RF: Monarch as well.

RD: I can't remember. All I remember is that nothing I made ever went to Monarch, they all went through British Lion.

RF: I'm going by the posters in ACTT.

RD: I don't remember Monarch.

RF: How were they financed.

RD: In the normal ways films were which is one of the terrible things about the British films industry, they weren't financed normally, they're guaranteed by the distribution company which was an iniquitous thing.

RF: It's still partly true but not so much as it used to be. Did the union put any money up front.

RD: A little bit up front but from the profits of any theoretically of what they'd done before.

RF: There was a revolving fund.

RD: Yes. I don't think many of them made much money.

SIDE 11, TAPE 6

RF: So the mysteries of ACT Films and its financing is nothing we can really go into detail

RD: I would say one has to remember that a great opportunity was lost because in a sense British Lion was in a sense was a national distribution company. That all grew out of the period when Group 3 was started I think. But British Lion was virtually a nationalised company.

RF: It had been saved out of the Korda deprevations.

RD: That's right and it's all been peculiar and a lot of people made money on the side because first they made money when it was nationalised and then some guys made money when it was denationalised.

RF: The Boutling Brothers

RD: And Sidney and Frank Launder were on the board too and they all seemed to all turned up on the board of the privatised company having got some kind of golden handshake I think. But I don't want to go into too much detail about that because I don't remember the detail.

RF: I think they claimed a lot of profit from the sale of Shepperton.

RD: That was later, that was another time.

As it was in a sense in a semi nationalised company where British filmmakers claimed at one time to be left wing such as the Boultings, who changed later, it was more sympathetic to a union enterprise than some others. Mostly I remember having to deal with British Lion and they interfered quite a lot with ACT Films and the general manager was Ralph Bond, when it came to having arguments about casting I seem to remember having them with the Boutling Brothers and other people at British Lion. It was the distribution companies had a very close control on production in those days certainly. There wasn't any exception here.

RF: I think ACT Films now are in a fairly sorry plight and I gather it's being brought out with a hope of reformulating it. In those days who were the nasties at the union. Was there this ponderous democratic machine and general council dictating content or was it run as a viable commercial proposition.

RD: It was run as a not very viable or commercial undertaking. I don't remember them interfering very much. I was on the general council and I don't remember them interfering with it. I think there was a certain amount of interference with who was on the board but it was pointed out that it wasn't up to the general council to elect them. I can't remember how that all worked out but I have a feeling at one point the general council, or maybe it was the executive.

RF: How was it that Ralph came to be delegated for what was in effect executive producer.

RD: I presume because he was very much in with the general secretary of the union of the time.

RF: So loyalties such as that held sway.

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RD: Very much. I think that Ralph and George Elvin used to play golf together every week and he was often to be found in George's office. Sidney Cole as well up to a point but not quite so much. They were all great cricket fans and they would go to Lords together and they were part of a hierarchy of the union in those days. And I presume it was through that that they got the job.

I can remember making one film there was a script hanging around in a drawer and Ralph said could I make something of it and I did and I was landed I thought I was going to direct it myself and Ralph told me that John Terry said it was too old fashioned which made me laugh, these people didn't know anything about making films and I was far from old fashioned. It was just because I'd been out of the business for 8 years during the war probably. I don't know. So I didn't direct it. So it was poor Maurice Elvey who was out of work so we had to have Maurice. He was an old horror in many ways. I am now going to flash back to long before the war to when I was about 22 and I was working for Maurice on some film and when the scene was very difficult he would say dear boy i've got an urgent appointment in the West End which was wonderful for me, he left me to direct the scene because he hadn't a clue what to do with it. Blow me thirty years later or whatever it was I thought I was fixed up to go to Shepperton Studios, I had a deal there, I had a nice office. I was always as a producer there early in the morning. If the clapper boy was late on the first morning he was never late again without having to make a big song and dance about it. About 10 o'clock I thought I'd have a cup of coffee and do the Times crossword. I never got into that office more than 10 minutes before the 3rd assistant came to drag me on the floor to wave Maurice's arms about him for him. Although he claimed probably rightly to have directed far more films than anyone else in the world, he was extraordinarily unsure o what to do. It was quite weird. He lost confidence in himself even in his glorious days in earlier times. In those earlier days before he was able to get some benevolent stuff out of the the CTBF and ACT Benevolent Fund at once. He used to say at the end of a film right I'm going off down to the South of france dear boy with my silver plaited Daimler and a couple of birds. I always remember that because we thought in those days what a disgusting way to describe women as birds, this old Edwardian thing only to find that it came back again in the swinging 60s when they started calling girls birds again.

RF: We're now post war

RD: Yes we're well post war I suppose we're late 50s.

RF: The attitudes though

RD: Prewar ones about the birds and so on. Now this was a charity to give the old man a film to direct. He was broke. He managed to get every benevolent fund to pay him £10 a week including the Savage Club.

RF: He made an awful lot of money in his day.

RD: Of course he had. As I say he had this silver plaited Daimler and he didn't only take one bird to the South of France, he would take two crowd artists with him. That was the days when you lived it up if you were a film director.

He really is the British example of the archetypal hack. Sometimes there were films he made which weren't bad but if you make 280 films or what ever he made they can't all be bad if he had a good script. I wrote the

script very carefully the one I'm talking about at the ACT Films with great care so it would edit together well. The end of one scene was designed to join onto the beginning of the next scene. But he couldn't see that at all. He had no visual sense whatsoever. In a way he could direct artists up to a point.

RF: He began as an actor and therefore one presupposes he had an insight. If you look at his films the actors are off on their own.

RD: That was the case in this.

RF: He worked fast.

RD: Fairly fast. The other characteristic he always had, I remember from before he still had, he had to have a stick, one of the prop men, you just paid him extra money because it let Maurice pick on him rather than anybody else and he would always yell at George.

RF: This was one steady scapegoat.

RD: Yes. you made sure it was this one particular one.

RF: Do you remember his name.

RD: No it was George something.

RF: He deserves a place in the records.

RD: It wasn't always the same one for every film. He hadn't made a film for several years on this particular occasion. It was all rather sad because it wasn't a bad little film. I had the casting of the leading man rather thrust on me by the Boultings who tended to interfere a great deal in casting. from their position as directors of British Lion.

RF: From what ways, their notions of what was commercial.

RD: From what was commercial, who their pals were. An actor I'd know for years before the film called Thorley Walters but he jeun premier but I had a really marvellous actress who in Hollywood would have become a great star but nobody was able to cope with her in England, we didn't have the system here, called Adrienne Corri, started off when she was a young girl in Renoir's The River. Highly intelligent woman too, he wasn't the same quality. So apart from poor old Maurice not being able to get them together that didn't help. I hate to say this about the fellow, Thorley's a nice pleasant chap but it was just wrong casting. He wasn a jeun premier but he wasn't a leading man.

RF: He wasn't a leading man of any sort. Yes I worked with him. He is a pleasant man.

RD: This was a comedy called Second Fiddle and she was a successful writer of jingles for the radio, we still didn't have commercial television. I can't remember what he was and she was much more successful than him. An I wrote lots of jingles and got the composer to make tunes for them. And it cold have been quite funny. It wasn't bad. It did well. It didn't do well because that's one of the awful things I ought to mention now. When you made a feature which was really good it was usually sent out with a really bad first feature in the forlorn hope it might back it up. If you made a load of crap it went out with a

surefire first feature and made a bomb. So in a way if one wanted to be a good business man you milked them and kept the money for the miserable budget and made them just about acceptable especially if you bribed the booker which you were able to do in those days and there you were. If you made a good one you were an idiot. And unfortunately I did try to make them as well as I could and it was very foolish of me from the business point of view.

RF: The bookers were on the take.

RD: Yes

RF: From the major circuits.

RD: Oh yes, absolutely, there's no question about that. Jimmy used to tell me if you could see it and hear it you could sell it. One of the ways you could sell it no doubt, I don't think I'm telling you anything which wasn't pretty well known at the time

RF: Significant sums

RD: Probably not what we would consider all that significant because they weren't paid all that much money in those days. Traditionally the people in renting offices were poorly paid from the secretaries all the way through. I think they were pretty poorly paid.

RF: They were grey second rate people, they still are.

RD: At least ACTT saw the salaries were a bit better on the production side but they didn't have anything to do with the other side. I don't know whether NATKE did. NATKE was never very powerful and never bothered very much in those days

RF: They were such 10th rate people. When you look back on the quality of the art work for instance.

RD: Terrible, awful. And they were very bad at selling films. They didn't really bother. Which was terribly disappointing. They sold them, certainly with the cheaper sort of film. They never gave it any special treatment at all. They didn't bother. And they never got the idea, say that film with Lloyd Bridges, he said you make me a load of crap which costs £30,000 and I spend the same amount on selling it as some other crap somebody spend 2 million dollars on making. I've already made 2 million dollars before I start. But nobody in England ever seemed to have that idea. The distributors tended to fix the promotion budget as a percentage of the cost which is completely ridiculous, why.

RF: I think we're still barely in the days of the major studios making 50 films each year. The machine to feed and it was still that industrial process.

RD: On the other hand films are not shoes or motor cars, they need individual attention, there are audiences you can sell certain films to.

RF: That's the problem. They were treated as a car or pair of shoes.

RD: Absolutely. And the budgets were pathetic for promotion absolutely pathetic unless it was a very expensive film.

RF: I'm curious about ACT Films and what we can get out of that activity at the time. It must have been unique in that a union in this country was operating in the market place. I don't know how to delve into this.

RD: I don't know how to delve into this and I don't know it I ever bothered at the time. But looking back on it maybe I might be libelling the gentleman, but it's not a nasty libel, I would say it was quite a lot to do with John Terry who had quite a lot to do with George Elvin, and John Terry ran the National Film Finance Corporation, and no doubt we got money from them. But again there are a lot of people in British Lion in it's nationalised phase who were very much tied up with NFFC, at least the same employees were going from one to the other.

RF: British Lion was in hock to the NFFC almost all of it's life.

RD: So the whole thing was all tied together and this and the personal thing. The personal thing may have come from the circumstances rather than the circumstances from the relationship to be fair to John Terry and everybody else. The circumstances were riper for this sort of thing than they've every been before or since.

I may have known more about it but I've never been a manipulator and for my sins have never taken much advantage of that kind of what's going on behind the scenes and who you know.

RF: But it was an essential prerequisite to being an entrepreneurial producer, even a line producer.

RD: You're right. I'm just summing some of my inadequacies.

RF: I see. Lets try and go down the chronological route.

RD: The one which was the most successful which I made and indeed the most successful they ever made was a film called The Man Upstairs. This was again very much during the period of British Lion and NFFC. It was a story written by somebody Faulkner, Alan Faulkner. And he was a documentary film director, producer and he had seen an item in a newspaper about a chap hauled up in a rooming house in London, only a paragraph, and he'd written a script. I was taken on to produce this and Don Chaffey to direct. It was rather last minute. We had one month before going on the floor which was really not enough because we had, we didn't have to but we did, rewrite the whole script between the two of us. We got on very well and I think it was an extremely good script but it could have been better if we'd had a little more time. We asked Alan to collaborate with us. He said I've just got this new baby so I'll leave it to you two fellows, fine, I'm sure you'll be alright. We kept saying really, before both of us had a belief that to have the original author involved as much as possible is a good thing. Sometimes you come across an original author who is so difficult it's going to be murder, but he wouldn't. Every thing went along fine. I think the ACT had a small office in Victoria separate from the ACT in Soho Sq but we wrote this in a little basement club called Jerry's Club in Shaftesbury Ave with all that noise going on all around. Every thing seemed to be going on fine. We got our casting done with some arguments with them, shall we say suggestions from Frank and Sidney and the Boultings. They were quite interfering, it was interesting about things like that when there was a sudden blow. Ralph called us up and Ralph said the film was going to be postponed because we had ruined the script. Alan had seen the script and

had gone screaking round to see the Boultings and said we'd mucked up the whole script. As Ralph himself put it, he was a virgin, now he's been raped. We had not mucked the script up but we had to go round and be interviewed, the two of us, and defend what we'd done. The main thing was that the heroine we hadn't brought it out that she was of a different social class. There was absolutely nothing whatever in the description, dialogue or whatever to say this is what their idea had been and it was a relatively small part. It was the girlfriend of the man who was holed up in the room. We managed not to have the film postponed, not postponed but cancelled. Meanwhile we had approached Dickie Attenborough who I think if I remember rightly, and I think he was already a well known star at that time, expensive, he did it for nothing in a sense. We paid his normal fee whatever it might have been to the agent, £10,000. He did it more or less for nothing himself. He was most helpful. He get criticised perhaps because he's now a knight and is the chairman of everything left and right. Perhaps he's a fellow who likes to be loved as all actors do, but a lot of other people like to be loved, but he was always very cooperative in every way, did the job very well. And what was nice about him was that he did not buzz off to the canteen or stay at home when other actors were having their close up leaving it to the continuity girl who was directed to read the lines, he would always be there to read the lines himself. I've nothing but praise for him, he did it for nothing and he was most cooperative and helpful.

RF: Why do you think that he did it for nothing.

RD: Because he liked the script I think.

RF: it was the script not the cause.

RD: Maybe the cause perhaps. But I think he liked the script. But I think the fact that he liked the script carried against the idea of the raped virgin.

RF: Going back to the Boulting twins, did you get involved in the argy bargies that went on with them and if so tell about them.

RD: They had bad reputations at the time. The sort of thing is they were alleged to encourage directors to come along with their scripts, start shooting and then they would just take over completely and push him into the background. That sort of thing didn't happen but I can't remember the circumstances and who this particular fellow was. It was alleged they did it more than once. people like that do attract gossip, and sometimes it's exagerated but they did tend to do things like that. People always said that they played this game. One of them would play the nasty guy and then the other would say come along, like the alleged methods of the NKVD, and the other one would say come along and soft soap you

RF: I don't think it's only NKVD, I think it's West End Central too. Traditional ploy.

RD: Perhaps they were a bit like that. In earlier days I remember going along to a lecture, I can't remember by John or Roy, I went along with Carol Reed, I must have been working on The Third Man, and we went to this lecture on which John or Roy said how you must never use music unless it's motivated, it should never come from heaven. In fact I agree with that, The Third Man was the first and only film made without a note of music except one chord at the beginning of the film to make them turn on their gramophones in the theatre. As a theory I rather agree with. And

Carol afterwards, and John and Roy were a good deal younger than Carol, dear boy absolutely marvellous lecture, when I feel I can make films good enough I'll follow your advice which was rather bitchy but so true. One can have a theory as I have but it's certainly a great help to have some music to help what you're doing.

RF: I think it's very revealing how film is used. You can tell how desperate sometimes they've been.

RD: I feel it's back again to being tremendously over used for my taste.

RF: And recorded at too loud a level. The decibels overwhelm me today.

RD: I made other films for ACT Films but I don't think it's worth dwelling on them.

RF: Out of all the amorphous film which is running in you head is there any one or group of people who stand out. Anyone you remember over the years.

RD: I made one for Nicholas Parsons who owned theatres up in the Midlands. I think he was picking my brains, he wanted to produce his own films which I did with a chap called Terry Bishop. Terry was a very nice chap and we got on very well together. He'd been out in West Africa making films in West Africa, quite a well known character in his day.

RF: As a director.

RD: Yes. I always remember I do tend to have this fault of getting more inspirations about the script and I remember one morning when I brought some script amendments onto the floor to give to Terry. And he said I don't mind shooting off the cuff but I do wish that you'd bring me the cuff the night before. Which was very nice and put me in my place. But that was Terry. I remember another film I made with the director Freddy Shaughnessy who was a writer whose father I think had been Aide de Campe to the Prince of Wales, Edward VIII, an old Etonian type and he asked me if he should stick to writing or go on directing and I said rather cruelly that he better stick to writing, by which I didn't mean he was a terrible director or anything. It did seem to me that his talent was in writing.

RF: He went on to a great deal of writing, especially television writing.

RD: My advice was good advice, it wasn't not saying you're a lousy director, it was saying you're a good writer.

RF: Upstairs Downstairs was his.

RD: You mentioned Don Chaffey. He was a very good director but he got side tracked by Walt Disney. I remember at one time because we remained friends while he was still in this country, he had a kind of revolution against Walt Disney and said he's not going to work for them any more. You get the story board of the whole thing, it doesn't matter what brilliant idea you have, if it's not on the story board it's left on the cutting room floor. So he wasn't going to work for them any more. So the next thing I know, he's back in Hollywood with Walt Disney. Rather a waste because he was a talented director, I think. Very straight sort, very visual.

RF: We'll move on if that's the end of you ACT Films period.

RD: I think so, it was almost the end of my films period. What happened to me and it was an awful accident in some ways. Through Dan Birt or his wife a chap called Gilmore Roberts who ran the film department of an old established art school at which a friend of mine, Michael Wilding, later a film star went to study, near Victoria Station and in the basement there they had this film school. The whole art school was falling to pieces, they had 35mm cameras which did not work very well and they were down in this basement and I went and gave lectures. They then moved to Brixton, presumably the whole of the art school went up the spout, again it was the London School of Film Technique it was now to be called. I didn't go to the first premises but I got prevailed to go and give some more lectures. In their course 1, their star pupil was Arnold Wesker who never did get into films really. He wanted to write films but he couldn't get anywhere so he wrote plays instead.

RF: Was he a promising student.

RD: I think so. I wasn't much tied up with him. I just came and gave these lectures. And one way or another there was a revolution going on there. There was poor old Gilmore who was a stills photographer who was the boss of the place and the head of the art school was foolish enough to take nude pictures of one of his girl students and this was considered terribly scandalous so I was asked to take over of chairman of this company as it then was which I did. There was an ex student called Maurice Standen who ran it and I got down when I could between films. It was about 1957/58. That went on and I got more and more involved with the school. It never had any money. There were no grants or anything, country councils in those days. I started going down more often. It then started getting into a bad state and believe it or not I sold my house and said I'd take it over myself and run it which I did. I got my wife to come down to this place in Brixton which she hated because it was pretty grim. It was a lovely location for filming. It was off Electric Avenue where they had the best Indian market and the glass porch thing along the side of the road. The entrance to the film school was along an alley way besides not Sainsbury but used to be the rival of Sainsbury's in those days, Grege's where they were cutting up bacon and so on. You then went up some stairs at the back and the film school was on the rest of the floors at the back. The other thing was that it was difficult to get people to go there to lecture. Although the tube hadn't been built to Brixton, there were a couple of trains from Victoria to a Station which was right next to the school in four minutes, but somehow it was all far too down market. My wife not only got us altogether and made new curtains for me, had a lot of fun because she didn't know much about films, would come storming in saying why are you wasting money on McLaren shorts, can't you make your own costumes. She went off to find some where better and she found a house in Charlotte St. I think I was checking some prints in Humphrey's Lab right near there and it was behind Charlotte St and my wife found this regency house. We negotiated for it and got it very cheaply because they were going to pull it down in 2 years time. They promised us 2 years, a gentlemen's agreement, but they weren't gentlemen and we got thrown out after a year and a half but we spent a hell of a lot of time and effort fitting out the cutting rooms and whatever, it was a very pleasant house but it did get pulled down eventually. There's nothing but a boring office building where it use to stand.

RF: That's a particularly worried area now. Advertising agencies mostly.

RD: As we could not yet get grants for students we used to run evening courses which made life very difficult, very long hours. One of these evening students which often consisted of five Mr Kahn's from Pakistan, all hopeful gents who would cry if they didn't pass their exams. One other fellow was a chap named Mike Leigh. This was terrible for poor Tatian my wife, this beautiful house as I've described it in the parlour on the left hand side which was usually a lecture room, young Mr Leigh was allowed to shoot his evening film and he was already into what he claims to be realism and he was making a film about a student in a bed sit and the floor was all covered with stale eggs, fried eggs, paper and much of every sort, and of course it was going to be there for weeks and weeks and weeks because he was only shooting two or three times a week. He was staring in this, the only actor in it, was an actor called Halliwell who eventually bumped off his lover Joe Orton some years later. He was the chap who starred in this film. Later when we moved to the school in Covent Garden Mike rejoined us to teach acting techniques and that sort of thing. We moved to Covent Garden and we found this enormous warehouse where the London International Film School now operates. I had two warehouses, they're back to a single one. We managed to get the thing together and get the thing to a standard where we were able to get grants for the students in order to get working type people, people who didn't have rich parents and were already trying to work in the film industry. We were able to abolish the evening classes because such people could normally get grants and get to the day classes. So it built up to 250 students at which point we put a block on it and said we would never take at more than one time 250 students and we were pretty successful. We were convinced and indeed many people were that we would be made into the National Film School in the normal general sort of way these things have happened in England. But it wasn't to be because a committee was started with George Elvin on it and Lord Lloyd of Hampstead, I think John Terry was on it if I remember rightly, and George Elvin who always said he would tell my wife at parties, I'm very fond of Bob but over my dead body will you school become the National Film School.

RF: Why was that.

RD: He may have had something personal against me but I don't think so. I think it was because it was called

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the London Film School Ltd. Although I explained him this didn't mean a thing, it was the form charities took in this country which he appeared to understand, his mind seem to snap back, he was rather a fundamentalist in some ways, like the Scots cleric but not about God but about Socialism, that seemed to be one of the reasons. But paradoxically, it's exactly the status of the National Film School which is formed at Beaconsfield instead, it's also a a company limited by guarantee, it's the only way you can do it.

RF: Legally it's the only route.

RD: It can become a trust but that is very complicated. The other was is that there is idea around that they should make it like the Polish film school which at that time was the most fashionable film school, it had become more fashionable than the Moscow Film School because of two or three young directors who came out of it. Implying in a way the Polish Film School after a war where the country had been devastated, it was no longer a country, they needed a hot house to bring out some new directors for their film industry. And where my philosophy always was, and I still think it's a far better philosophy, is not to train directors as seems to be the fashion or cameramen but to take on people. How would these young people know they were going to be cameramen or directors. They didn't really know and none of them knew about being editors. The average layman thought that was cutting down lengths of film or something, being totally uncreative. Also I felt everybody should try and learn, the whole point of having a school should be and this is what I tried to make ours, to learn about everything so you would learn what it was all about. If you were a cameraman and you thought you were going to be a cameraman and you said to me I don't want to write a script I'd say as a cameraman you ought to know about writing scripts, it won't be a very good script. I don't care if it isn't a very good script, I want you to find out what the concept of writing a script is. Much more frequently would be the fellow who would say I'm a writer director type, I don't need to know about how to work a camera. I'd say yes you do need to know about it and you need to know about editing and so on. When they finally set up the National Film School they used this continental kind of entry where you joined as a cameraman or director or whatever which struck me as quite wrong.

Eventually during the crisis brought on by Ted Heath where the bottom dropped out of the market ludicrous things appeared in American newspapers about tanks being around Heathrow Airport, our intake for that year of Americans just dried up, they would have come back in time. That together with the fact there was a new bank manager in the bank who foreclosed us and Humphreys wasn't very helpful either and the whole thing went bust and that was that for me. We tried to keep it going but then I got thrown out of the thing. We never quite found out why. I think I was accused of having brought a cottage on the proceeds of this school which never made any money of course, whereas what I'd done is not only put in one house but I'd had to sell the house because I put it in as a guarantee of the film school's overdraft. I think I was being accused of something but I'm the sort of person who can't be bothered with anything like that, I just walked away from it. And since then I've really had no career at all to speak of. I did five years gardening because I couldn't get any films to make which I suppose at least was healthy.

RF: Sadly it's one of the rewards of working in the film industry in

this country. The rewards are eratic and god knows loyalties are very few.

RD: Meanwhile in earlier years.

RF: What I would like to do while we're talking about your school to talk about schools in general in this country. Originally the one you took over had it been founded as a commercial enterprise. It had been intended to be purely commercial

RD: I don't think it ever was in fact commercial, it never did anything but lose money. I never got paid for any of the lectures I did.

RF: There was no altruistic purpose.

RD: I think so. In those days it was more difficult, nowadays I think it may have got too easy to get charitable status and have a company limited by guarantee. It wasn't easy at all.

RF: There weren't many film schools around at that time.

RD: There weren't any at all.

RF: There was the Slade.

RD: That was a little later and anyway that wasn't a film school. It was an appreciation school. It was the same thing as a literature department in Oxford University. Thorold who became a great friend of mine although I never worked with him. He thought that everyone should at least make films in 8mm, if nothing else, 16mm or 8mm, because if you were going to be a film critic or film teacher or film historian you should have some idea of the medium which is a very revolutionary and very obvious idea. For instance you could go to Cambridge, Oxford or London University and get a degree in fine arts without being asked to put pencil to paper by writing essays about whoever, say Raphael. I think Thorold was quite right there. What I did try to do during all those years they were going to have a National Film School and nothing ever happened I formed the Film School Society as it were, that was a little later. By that time the Royal College of Art was going and the Poly had been going for years, the Poly Film School, so there was the Poly, the Royal College and Thorold also came along. What my idea was that instead of having a national film school is that we should have a body approving film school in which the union should certainly be included and perhaps setting exams and standards for any film school and preferably two sorts of standards. One for the professional film school where people hoped to go into the film school and the other for all the other courses and we wanted to encourage people learning about films in the same way they learned about writing in school and universities. They would then appreciate better films and it was something to be encouraged but we felt we could distinguish between the average film department in Southampton Poly and the few there might be which claimed to train people for jobs in the industry. This was going on fine but it was ratted on first by the chap at the Royal College, Keith Lucas, I think because of his boss at the time, the head off the whole Royal College of Art, thinking they'd get the job which of course they didn't. That rather cracked it up a bit although he rejoined later, but it rather cracked the whole thing up. Then when finally George Elvin kept insisting I should apply to be the principle of the National Film School, I reluctantly applied because I was still hoping I could get the concern going which was obviously going

to save the taxpayers a million pounds, well half a million, they'd have to spend half a million in stead of a million. But that didn't work out either.

RF: That probably runs out the aspect of films schools other than to ask do you believe in films schools.

RD: Obviously otherwise I wouldn't let myself get involved.

RF: Even with your experience.

RD: Oh yes. But I still think that my theory is the right one. I don't think they should accept people as directors or cameramen. I think they should give a good general course. I also think it should be film and television schools which I think the National is now supposed to be. It wasn't allowed to be, with all the money being spent on it it wasn't allowed to be. I put in all sorts of long papers to this committee and I think quite a few of the ideas I put were accepted but the school wasn't accepted. Also I think another reason apart from George Elvin was that Jenny Lee was the minister, the arts minister of the time and I think she wanted to leave monuments. She left the open university and I think she thought it would be good to leave a new film school.

RF: Something from the ground up.

RD: Yes. I don't think the National Film School was very good at first. Eventually it had a lot of good students because it's the film school now but at the time it didn't seem to be that marvellous and it didn't seem to most people all that marvellous.

RF: It didn't have any identity.

RD: But of course that sort of thing becomes very elitist because we had 250 students and they take what 25 at the time. We didn't take 250 at a time. I believe in taking more and being tougher about throwing them out.

RF: It was essentially post graduate.

RD: Well we were in a sense. We were post graduate for Americans say because we couldn't interview. We weren't necessarily for people coming to be interviewed. We went very much on the work they submitted. On the whole turned our faces resolutely against accepting anybody from school. it didn't matter if they hadn't been to university, if they'd been a coal miner for a year or had gone beachcombing in the West Indies for a year or something rather than straight from school. We found those straight from school were probably easier students but just sitting there hoping to have knowledge poured into them If they'd been out in the world, they'd know what it was all about.

RF: Were there famous alumni other than Mike Leigh.

RD: Yes. I can't remember, Franc Roddam, John Irvin, lots of others.

RF: Essentially we're looking back.

RD: Flashback now to even before that time. A year or two before this began. I was again between films and they were about to start commercial television. So I went along to see Associated Rediffusion which was one of the companies at that time. It lost its franchise during the first

reshuffle of franchises. I went there and I was interviewed by a chap called Lewis but not Cecil Day Lewis, I don't think it's the same one who wrote the books.

RF: No

RD: No he was the one who was at the BBC. He said they weren't very interested, they had all the directors they needed and I was just going out of the room and they called me back and said ah I think you're just the fellow we need to do our series of prestige documentaries. I said I've never made a documentary in my life. The more I said this and the usual wit is that you don't particularly want the job when they keep on trying to make you take it. You have to be a very good actor to be able to pretend all this and I'm not a very good actor. To cut a long story short I was given this job of making the prestige documentaries which they were making because this was part of other franchise, they had to do a certain amount of educational and documentary things. One of the programmes which opened the whole of commercial television the first one had to be about the Royal family. In those days you couldn't get near the royal family, absolutely impossible. You couldn't take pictures of the royal family except newsreels when they went on tours of Australia and newsmen went along, they reluctantly let themselves be photographed unless it was the queen mum who would stand on her head if she could do it in a dignified manner for her, whereas they hated the Duke of Edinburgh because they reckoned he wouldn't co-operate with them. I had that material to pinch from, newsreels, and I got stills from country life and put them on a rostrum and panned up to them so you thought you were walking through Buckingham Palace and that was that. I then found that I couldn't use the Coronation music because there was a dispute between the unions, particularly the MU and the new commercial people and the MU said that if you're going to use anything from the real Coronation music we had to pay all the musicians and all the choir boys and every body else. But unlike film in those days where it was near impossible to use any commercial disk even Beethoven unless you stole it from Russia or something, you could paradoxically to that for television. So I just used some Handel's Water Music or something. So that wasn't a very exciting prospect. I did one about the City of London and one about he navy. I think it would be interesting to tell you about that because I couldn't get anywhere with the Admiralty. Finally I went to see the PRO, who used to be a civilian PRO in those days and I said what gives. He said don't you realise that your boss, Captain Brownery, chairman of Associated Redifussion,he's the only fellow ever in the navy that when he was due to be promoted from captain to vice admiral 20 or so officers went and said they would resign if this officer was promoted. That's why you're having problems. I said forget about him, he's got nothing to do with it. Just fix me up and they fixed me up and they me introductions to all the serving captains and things and we were able to make a nice little film about the navy. This captain Brownery was really quite idiotic. One girl told me she went as an interview as a production secretary and he said what were you in the war and she said I was in the ATS and he said that's alright so long as you weren't a WAF, but a pity not you're not a Wren, that sort of thing. One of these programmes I did which I got rather nice letters from the advertisers which was rather nice, I suppose they were all new to the business, and as you know it was random or supposedly random advertising, it had to be. I got nice letters from all sorts of different people, banks, Oxford. Anyway I got called in to see Captain Brownery to be hauled over the carpets. He hauled me in and said your programme overran 14 seconds or whatever it was, 8 seconds. I said it may have but it's not my fault, it's measures to the frame. He said

what do you mean. He said there was a voltage drop yesterday, and there was, and that's why it overran. It's terribly simple to make a film the right length, there's no problem. What I kick myself in a way was that the thing was so badly organised I could have spent anything on them. I made them for about £1,500, half hour docs and I could have spent a fortune on the damned things. Again I was in trouble with music. I cheated a bit. It was all stuff about the City of London and the Navy, I did one on the English Sunday which was a comic one which I really enjoyed doing, it was a comic one, it got very good reviews, that was fun. But again with the music I found another way around it. For some reason it was alright to have singers so I got a quartet of singers and did the music that way mostly which rather suited the comic aspect of the traditional English Sunday. Because it was a whole new thing, all these new television stations started, there was no one on the books of ACTT. But Associated Redifussion was tied up with Movietone so I made most of these documentaries with one Movietone cameraman and a soundman and a big Humber car, we put the camera on top of them and that's all we had. My young daughter aged 16 at the weekends would act as a clapper girls and that was the full unit in many cases, because that's all there was, there was nobody on the books. An unusual situation. Paul Wyand was the cameraman who died youngish unfortunately was the cameraman. He was a great cameraman, great fun. We had these dreadful cameras, newsreel cameras, we didn't use them in their proper capacity in sense because they would register the sound on the edge of the same film in the same camera but we were using the so called portable, and it's fascinating to call them portable in this day, Levers Rich, two large rather heavy things to carry round. But Reg Sutton who was for many years was the head of sound at Samuelsons he was the recordist and there were just the three of us. We made these films. But Paul Wyand was so quick he could whizz the turret round from one lens to another so you could cut

RF: In the shot

RD: Yes amazing, fantastic. When it came to do some interiors because lighting was perfectly OK it was fine. There were some great people, these newsreel cameramen. Other times the cameramen, they did have some cameramen. Just like a bus garage there was a chap in charge called Ted Lloyd and you went that morning and you got this cameraman but not necessarily the cameraman you had the day before. It was just a different bus you were taking out, different cameraman which was fine in a way. Except sometimes you had to have a bit of an argy bargy with them because a lot of the directors had never directed before virtually and these cameramen got very bossy and told them what to do which was something I wasn't going to have, particularly they'd all been handed a book of instructions saying you musn't have a dark area in the bottom left hand of the screen and all sorts of other stuff and the ratio of contrast and blah, blah blah. What I usually did was take this thing and tear it up and throw it away. They'd get bit angry with me so I'd say wait a bit what did you like best on television last week and they'd nearly always say some old feature film being old feature cameramen, well I said there you are they didn't know about all these rules did they so let's just forget and it seemed to work perfectly well. But there was a lot of that sort of interference at the time, rules, trying to run the whole thing like a battleship. It just didn't work. There was a vast room where all the directors worked. The accountants were all put into little separate offices. They were as miserable as hell because accountants like to be all in a nice big office. But we were give this enormous great space. It was all half built. It was at the bottom end of Kingsway.

RF: I think it was the old air ministry building.

RD: Next door, I think, It may have been one of them.

RF: I think it was at one time.

RD: We had a nice little club there. For meals we used to go over the road to the BBC Overseas canteen because as it was full of foreigners their food was really good until Brownery got a snooty letter from the BBC saying his staff shouldn't go for subsidised meals in the BBC canteen. The sort of thing which would happen, I was working there one day and this chap came along and said shall we pull this wall down, yes, yes, pull the whole bloody thing down. It was so inefficient. The head of the film department was a chap called Ray Dix who then went to Humphreys afterwards, I think he was the manager. He said come and look at this, come and look. it was the new theatre, dubbing theatre and it was quite incredible. The Ports for the projectors were within 2ft of the ground. They'd got the plan upside down. Complete chaos, absolute chaos. At that times it didn't seem a license to print money, they were losing money. There's no question about it.

RF: The British muddling through by the sound of it. Amateurish and incompetence.

RD: Upstairs there was another lot at that time which was Lew Grade's lot, ATV. He was upstairs. I remember one time Ray Dix asked me to go with him, to support him because he had to talk with Lew about exchanging programmes or some damned thing. I went up there and one of the directors of ATV at the time was Harry Alan Towers, the notorious chap who used to make series and things like that and he was very ill, had got pneumonia or something like that, he was expected to die but did not at that time, and we witnessed this extraordinary scene of Lew sitting there and saying poor old Harry, poor old Harry, what flowers shall we send him, 10 guineas, no 50 guineas flowers. It was a different world from Captain Brownery. More efficient. Anyway we exchanged our films. But I always remember this Chicago gangsterish thing, the gangsters funeral, because they'd obviously stabbed poor old Harry in the back and got him out of the company as far as I remember.

RF: Mind you he wasn't noted for his business ethics,

RD: Not at all but he was no match for Lew Grade.

RF: Lew Grade or Val Parnell.

RD: He was a bit of a novelist or something, no that wasn't Harry Alan Towers, that was someone else.

RF: Norman Collins.

RD: Anyway it was one of the directors being eased out.

RF: Probably Norman Collins.

RD: There was another thing with Harry Alan Towers but I think that was Norman, I can't remember but whoever it was it was an elaborate stunt and the usual snazzy receptionist being called in even in those days practically a mini skirt, long before they were invented. You know the

type. It was all so typical and very funny. Eventually I got eased out of that. They got this theory they could get away without doing any documentaries anymore. I'd done six that I was contracted to do.. And because they told me that they'd been told the only thing that mattered was bums and tits and that was the only thing which would sell to the advertisers. They were as I said not making any money, they were losing money. So they decided they'd drop them. Then they had to start again and they got someone called Carol Doncaster to start making documentaries. I used to carry on working for them inbetween running the film school. I used to work for This Week programmes. I used to go out just freelance directing items. So I kept in touch with them up to a point. I think that's all I need say about Associated Redifussion.

Another film I did make, again it was through ACT, but it was actually for the Children's Film Foundation years ago and that was rather an interesting experience. It was before an old friend of mine who used to teach at the school took it over. It was when it was being run by Frank Wells. Frank Wells had got this script writer, she was really a scriptwriter, she was a children's story writer called Mary Borrer and they'd written a script and gone on a reckie to the Pyrenees so when I came to make the film there was no budget left to go to the Pyrenees so I had to take it to North Wales and Muriel Box directed it with me and we had a lot of fun. There was a big struggle, you were practically forced not to make a film which could go out and compete, it had to be the sort of film which would be limited to the Saturday matinees. It was that sort of attitude, quite extraordinary. I don't know whether it carried on when Henry Geddes took over. But although I'd known him for years I never made one for him. Mind you it wasn't anything you did to make money, you got paid absolute peanuts. Mind you it was interesting. I did make another children's film for them many years later but that was not for them. It was a documentary. I did also make a few documentaries - I had a partner who was a sort of retired journalist who had been running a pub in Wales and then he went back to journalism, freelancing and he started a film company and just met him in the Savage Club, that's how it all started. And he would sell ideas to managing directors and we made about three documentaries, very expensive ones, on 35mm, although copies were all going to be on 16, in the hope they might get a release, which I think was the idea. We made one for a chap called Lonsdale Hands who ran and ad agency at the time and I think it's the only one which has ever been made about a ad agency. He had an office in Lausanne and we had locations in Lausanne. We made this film for him which he marketted the film to market his advertising skills. We made on for Charlie Forte which was a bit long and that was mostly for internal use. Again it was 35mm. It was to boost the morale of the staff because they weren't able to keep their staff in the same way Lyons used to although it was also used for general publicity so I got to know him quite well. That was the trouble getting them made with the chairman. It gives you a much freer hand than through some films officer or PR man but you had to include some scene with the chairman which was always a disaster.

RF: Kiss of death

RD: It was exactly the same . I remember making that film about the navy with Associated Redifussion. The ordinary rating down below were absolutely natural, it was like looking through a keyhole. You knew they were acting because they didn't use the word fuck between every other word but they were totally natural. But as you went up the hierarchy they got more and more unnatural. The more professional people have invented personas for themselves and the camera shows it up in many

cases. By the time you get to captain he was a trembling mass of jelly, terribly nervous, very nice fellow. It's a very lonely job in any case being captain. I suppose it was an aircraft carrier, a big ship. I find that with chairmen on the whole. They've invented characters for themselves, they're certainly unnatural.

RF: Yes it's part of their process of achievement or arriving.

RD: I did one or two others of that sort inbetween. Once I got really into running this school which I wanted to get out of all the time, we all hoped it would be made the national film school, I wanted to run it but I couldn't get out because I couldn't find any other idiot to come and run it for me for no money or very little money. Otherwise I would have got out long before and gone back to making my own films.

One summer holiday the budget was far too low I made a background film for the opera, The Damnation of Faust, Berlioz, although it has quite impossible stage directions, though he did hope it would be put on in London because as he put it the English carpenters are so brilliant. It has scenes like where he arrives into hell. It was directed by a chap called Michael Cheviot who then went to the Welsh National Opera. It was Charles Mackerras who was the director of the orchestra. For instance for the rather corny Dance of the the Sylphs I shot with Gilly Watsall who was then the underwater cameraman at the underwater diving pool at Crystal Palace lots of naked girls so they appeared to be floating in the air. And for hell we had monsters which were actually horrible insects at the zoo. I think that was the last thing it did shooting.

RF: Does that bring us to the union, your views and activities with the union. Let's start with the union in general. What are your earliest memories of the ACTT/

RD: I may have mentioned before but I will do so again, my first contacts were really almost pre ACTT at Gainsborough Studios Islington where we got together with this chap called Charlie Wheeler who became quite a well known ACTT member and vice president. He was at that time in the Electricians Union and was a boom swinger, which he remained for the rest of his working life. Later at Islington, the Union got going first with a character called Captain Cope and I didn't join on the grounds that they wanted to have an association of gentlemen and I thought we ought to be much closer to the electricians than the other union. I think perhaps I was wrong because what people were basing this idea on is that the most powerful union in England was probably the BMA, the British Medical Association which it still my well be do if it's not the lawyers. So perhaps they were cleverer than I was. I was young and brash. Somehow once I got to London Films I didn't bother anymore but I did have my card but handed it back after arguments of this sort at Gaumont British. Shepherd's Bush because I did not agree with this gentlemen's association idea. So really I was out of it during the war I did not rejoin the ACTT till long after the war when I came back from Moscow and started working on the Third Man when I had to go and see George Elvin and one thing and another and indeed I was working with the very chap I had argued with in earlier days, a chap called Lynton Haynes. What with that and one thing and another there wasn't much of a problem about rejoining. Having rejoined I didn't immediately do much about it. I was a member and didn't attend meetings much, I think I went to annual meetings, until I was having a conversation with another member who was a producer and I said it's a bit difficult because for instance I think I was the chairman I was certainly on the BFPA relations committee and I

talking to this other fellow who was a member of the Communist Party. And he said just don't bother, it's alright if you're just a member. You don't need to bother about it, going to meetings, etc. I went home and thought this fellow is very,very active in the union indeed. And some how this made me think to hell with that, I'll go and be jolly active and I did too. I suppose with my experience in Russia and not being recruited by the Communist Party like so many others before the war, although I sympathised with the idea of a united front, I felt happy about being in the united front but not the communist wing of it. So I thought I'll go along. I can remember on one occasion several of us got to go along and all of us pretty left, I suppose, but not members of the Communist Party, we went to an annual meeting at what was then the Beale Hall, lovely old building, I think it's now been pulled down, and we noticed that in the evening everybody started drifting away to the pubs because we didn't have a fixed finish at six or seven, it just seemed to go on till it finished. At that time all the political resolutions such as the American President should be shot, that sort of rather exagerated political thing over which we had no control was always brought in towards the end. We also noticed there were some party chaps at the back of the hall turning back people we knew to be members of the Communist Party, when they would try and sneak out to the pub they were being sent back into the hall. So we thought we would do the same thing with our blokes and we threw out a lot of these political resolutions which we thought were doing no good to the union, not that we necessarily disagreed with them, some of the sentiments behind them. We thought it wasn't helping us at the moment, it was putting us into disrepute. Because they were foolish in the sense we had no influence whatsoever.

RF: Is it specifically abuses such as the time limit on committee meetings.

RD: I think partly. I think it was realised by some Communist Party members themselves that this was a foolish way of going on and we really ought to get ourselves together and be more efficient in any case. Then political resolutions were not left to the last thing from then on.

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RD: At that time there is no doubt there was a certain amount of communist influence on the ACTT, or ACT as it was, for good or ill. I think in many cases they did a lot of excellent work for the union, but always being somewhat anti Stalinist we were a bit worried about it.

RF: How did the ACTT compare with other unions in this respect.

RD: We were fairly leftish, although it actually became rather right wing, the ETU, the Electrician's Union of the time, was avowedly communist. It was left of Communist in influence. It was a very left wing union. But on the whole the TUC at the time was considered to be a dead right wingish organisation, that was the received opinion among the general left, not just the communists.

RF: The Ernie Bevins.

RD: Yes, and the other unions at the studios apart from the ETU, the studio part of the ETU was a minute part of a big electrician's union. There was the NATKE of course who organised all the carpenters and the make-up people and the studio accountants and other rather anonymous jobs. To us in the union the NATKE was considered extraordinarily right wing and stupid and useless, the head of their union was a chap called Sir Tom O'Brien who was universally known as Sir Tom Gos Prop O'Brien and was a rival of our George Elvin who was very left wing, though not ostensibly a member of the communist party. He was certainly a much better union leader from the point of view of the members than Tom O'Brien who was a bit of a middle-aged playboy who would sit around in a night club place all evening in Soho and hold court there. These were the only unions we came across and of course Equity and the Film Artistes, they were the main unions in the film studios. Sometimes it was irritating that the film artistes weren't in the same union as Equity. It would mean that actors out of work would have to stop me in Selfridges and we'd have to take on crowd artistes which seemed somehow wrong, it should all have been the same career really. They should have all been together. As time went on I eventually became chairman of the producers and directors section and got quite involved. At one time we got very near, and I'm talking about 30, 25 years ago, we got very near to getting residuals for directors. But at the time Equity was negotiating for the same thing, it was Peter Pouvier, he was negotiating but he wasn't the head of the union I don't think, he was the assistant general secretary, he persuaded our side to wait until Equity got their residuals and it would have been easier for us to get ours. It may have been a diabolical trick but it may have been genuine but in the meantime there was one of the usual crisis and although we got to the situation where we worked out the percentage, a good percentage, it all went sour because there was one of the usual crises and the employers thought they couldn't afford all this at all having already agreed to pay the actors they didn't want to pay residuals to us. So that happened all these years ago and we still haven't got our residuals. During the reorganisation of the union there was a reaction, obviously the people in the labs would be strong against this and quite a lot of other people, against the craft sections who were stripped really of their voting power and were restricted to being guild like meetings. But I managed with my colleagues to persuade the annual conference of that year if there was only to be shops, and that was the proper union thing, shops not sections, that the producers and directors would become the producers and directors shop, which we did. Although we lost it at some later reorganisation which I think was designed what was

a copy of ours for the unemployed called the freelance shop. That managed to survive but we got thrown out. And then it was reorganised once more and the sections had their powers restored. Through the years I've only once suffered as a producer or production manager from any industrial action and I think that was working with that dreadful character Hank Hathaway and I had to get George Elvin to send a telegram to every member of the union to turn up on the Monday although they'd voted not to do so. Although I'm a good union member I felt we must stick to the rules and they were outside the rules and acting emotionally because the director was such a horrible person and that was the only time I had any problems. I've never had to come out in a picket. The only time I came out on a picket was for the NUJ because I was writing something for a directory on Russian film directors and the NUJ chapel came out and I went on the picket lines with them but I never had to do that for the ACTT. Through the years I've continued to be a member of the producers and directors sections although some years ago I gave up standing for the general council or executive committee. That's all I do now except that I'm chairman of the journal committee.

RF: Let's go back and talk about some of the individuals involved in the union. I suppose some mention of George Elvin is unescapable.

RD: I think he was a very good general secretary who did good work for the union. He perhaps became less interested in the day to day running of the union as it got larger, he was extremely good at dealing with Lew Grade and people of that sort and knew how to chivvy that long

So looking at it from a slightly different point of view from the production point of view he did tend to take on himself the ability to make certain decisions which nowadays the general secretary wouldn't dare do.

RF: Such as.

RD: Going on location in France and doing deals with the French union. I don't think I had to wait for any meetings, I just dealt with George direct.

RF: He was an honest general secretary.

RD: I think so. Yes he wasn't dishonest. I think because he started when the union was minute and he was paid nothing, Thorold Dickinson and Tony Asquith who got together and reorganised the union after their first general secretary was a flop and they took George on and he built the whole think up from scratch and in different times and different circumstances quite rightly he was hired to be the general secretary and he thought he could make certain decisions a general secretary would not be able to make these days.

RF: Somewhat proprietorial.

RD: Slightly. He went by the general council and if it was anything of important principal he obviously would be instructed by them. He had a common sense approach to things like crewing and realised you couldn't wait till the next general council to find out what you could do.

RF: There have been times when there have been firms within the firm, you said the CP held sway and certainly at other times the Trotskyists. What are your observances on that.

RD: Whether the CP held sway I'm not sure. It's interesting to find and interview some disaffected ex member of the CP who belonged to the film cell if such a thing existed would be able to tell you about this which I'm unable to. Obviously people like Ivor Montagu, Ralph Bond and Sid Cole did have quite an influence. They took their duties seriously. They were very close to George and they had influence but I wouldn't call it sway in that sense.

RF: It was above board.

RD: Yes. Above board isn't quite the right expression. It was more private than being above board.

RF: It was a public presence.

RD: Oh yes, no it wasn't serruptitious. They knew each other well, they played golf together. I would say it was beneficial as it was harmful. Possibly it did not help with employers whether one was oneself a member of the communist party some employers assumed that you were a dangerous lefty if you held any office on the general council or anything. It didn't help people when they were applying for jobs.

RF: How many people did the general council comprise.

RD: I can't remember.

RF: Much smaller than now.

RD: It was pretty large, in theory. It wasn't always large in presence. I imagine in a sense the executive always a tremendous amount of power and here is any influence the communists may have had went on. Probably it's power base. Whereas the finance and general purpose committee had a lot of influence until relatively recently on the day to day running and being able to sell what they thought was the right thing to the larger committees.

RF: What about the later Trotskyite period.

RD: That was a very strange thing. That came out of the freelance branch which I mentioned earlier which based it's existence on what we'd invented for the producers and directors shop. It became a very large shop because more and more people became freelance instead of just a bunch of unemployed people, it consisted of a devil a lot of the film branch, it later became the film branch

RF: Once the studios were casualised

RD: People under contract were nearly all freelancers. It's true that the Trotskyists became very influencial in this department and therefore they were obviously voted in and had power as members of the executive and so on. What happened then because they started getting a bit above themselves by sending out notices, instructions as it were without having them legitimised by the general council and their general behaviour, rather bossy, in fact I thought the Trotskyists behaved in a much more Stalinist manner that ever the old fashioned communists, indeed at that period the older communist communist member came on rather like Tories in their attitude to the Trots. And what with one thing and another there was a general reaction to the power of the Trots and a meeting was called

and groups sent out special notices and there was a meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster with 900 or 1,00 people at which there were fascinating scenes going on and the Trots were all thrown out. It was quite an exciting evening. One of the chiefs was a lady called Yvonne Richards and Roy Battersby but Yvonne was the one bossing people around.

RF: I remember her struggling to keep the microphone away

RD: I remember at a slightly earlier mass meeting at the Criterion Theatre which we had one weekend. I can remember it coming at this meeting and I think it was Roy one of the well known Trotskyists of the time, sort of flat against the wall in Piccadilly Circus being berated by Yvonne for failing to annihilate Cole, you did not do what you were supposed to do and put Cole down, or whoever it was flat against the wall being berated by this lady. She did become terribly fanatical although I remember earlier being very relaxed person and she may have become so again. But at that time she seemed to be extremely fanatical.

RF: She's certainly still a member of the general council but is less firy than she was 10 or 15 years ago.

RD: She really did go through a fierce period.

RF: I'm told she was Korda's secretary at one time.

RD: I don't remember her.

RF: How efficient do you think the ACTT staff has been in general.

RD: Very very varied. Sometimes in the past they tended to suffer from those character Charlie Wheeler he used to be rather nasty. Sometimes he was right but not always. Round the Wardour St pubs after meetings he would denegrate officials and allege they were taking bribes. And it did turn out on one occasion they were taking bribes and he got fired. He was even accusing poor old Percy Bolland of all sorts of things which was very unfair. So sometimes they had a bit of a thin time. But on the whole the main problem is, which you get with some areas of the civil service, they were there and unless they put their hands in the till and did something frightfully illegal. Some of them were good and some of them weren't and some of them drifted into that attitude of life which the worse civil servants adopt, others like the better civil servants who are very fine people took their jobs seriously and it worked very well. You can't generalise entirely on this. We did suffer, as I said earlier, from George perhaps taking a strong hand on the administration, he was the boss their's no question about that. This is why we brought in Alan Sapper as a sort of office manager in the first place, and he was very good and he was able to bring some kind of efficiency to the union. He then left and became general secretary to the Writers' Guild. He then came back as assistant or deputy to the general secretary of the time. Whether he proved to be as good as we'd hoped is another question. There is a view he left the administration of the office side. Bert Craik was an organiser who was universally liked and admired by members. I never heard anyone say a word against him. Paddy Leach we had who's now quite a big wheel in the one we're about to join up with, BETA.

RF: He was alright. He was a bit of a boozer. There's always been a bit of a problem with boozing at times which to be fair is very much part of the job. They're expected to not only work all day but attend meetings in the morning and then they tend to go out to the pubs. So the temptation

to booze a bit is quite a consideration, and there is quite a lot of pressure at times. They vary in what they've done for the union but a lot of them worked very hard in their time.

RD: We do own now two expensive pieces of property one of which turned out to be a marvellous investment. Did you have anything to do with the acquisition of 2 Soho Sq

RF: No that was before my time, it was while I was away. What I do remember is afterwards when I was going to meetings there we had the top floor put on, a nice pannelled room for meetings which in latter years got split up into various offices. That was a pleasant meeting room.

RF: Once you made it up the stairs.

RD: That was another thing. When it was being done up once there was a suggestion of putting a life in which was going to cost £2,000 and people like our old friend Alf said it's a disgusting waste of memeber's subscriptions. I remember poor old Ken Gordon who was a newsreel cameraman, a great big fat character, well known for his non alligned remarks at meetings who was one of the members of the communist party who must have weighed at least 20 stone was very disappointed about this lift not being put in. Another terrible thing, which again was blocked by the same narrow minded trade unionist offered the building directly behind opening into Dean St for peanuts, can you imagine the worth now, if we'd taken this offer which we could easily done. We wouldn't have had to move and it would have been worth the mind boggles.

RF: That of course is hindsight.

RD: It's hindsight yes but quite a lot of us wanted to do it. George wanted to do it.

RF: Certainly it would have been marvellous and it's indicative of that attitude oh no we can't do that. It's thinking small which I think we're still guilty of.

RD: I think Alan Sapper is someone the judgement of whom we'll leave to history because we're a bit close to it and also we're going through this transitional period.

I'll only say I think he was rather wrongly held up by employers and right wing members, there are many more right wing than left wing in the union, there probably are, as a kind of left wing communist menace. And to be fair to Alan I don't think he was ever that. Alan's fault is not that he's too committed but that he's not committed enough.

RF: An expedient person.

RD: Yes I think so. Also now promoted beyond his competence.

RF: Yes he hasn't grown.

RD: Perhaps that my be a better way of putting it.

RF: Again considering the likelihood that this tape is for the future not for the present it might be worth having a word about Roy Lockett because who know's where Roy will go from here.

RD: I've always had a lot of time for Roy. When he first came in and was the editor of the journal and research officer at the same time, I belonged to various subcommittees, I think the journal at the time, the technical committee. He was very shy. He had a tremendous problem with stuttering but he always seemed to have a good quality mind and I've always had a lot of time for him and still have.

RF: To me he's the one there, not the one, but two or three, I respect but Roy is the only person who keeps that place afloat right now.

RD: I think the problem with that is that he tends to take on or bit off more than possibly anyone could chew because of the situation.

RF: Perforce. I said recently to him what's it like being on the bridge and seeing the craft slowly sinking through the waves and he said what do you meant slowly.

RD: Things don't seem to be right.

RF: But at least they are being addressed, hopefully tackled.

RD: Perhaps there is one thing I should say from the past, considering we recently paid gentlemen to look into our efficiency,

RF: the Reg Race report

RD: Many years ago we had an efficiency committee of which I was a member and we worked extremely hard for a year or more meeting once or twice a week going into the whole question of the efficiency of the ACTT at the time and put in a long report and then eventually suppressed because the staff went on strike because of our efficiency report which was all very sad and until recently there were two people who were still there who were behind that strike but I can't prove that. It was very sad because if I say so I think it was a better report than the Race Report. I have a copy of it. It was printed in 10,000 at the time, properly printed not rolled off from a machine, it was all burnt presumably.

RF: I think there were efforts to noble the Reg Race report too but I think there was enough impetus to get it substantially through. It is being implemented bit by bit. But there's always areas chipped away.

RD: I did attend the amalgamation meeting in Brighton which didn't come to anything. I think partly because of mistakes made at head office and by the joint high table at that meeting which started by being too dictatorial about the rule book which we were there to discuss and eased off towards the end of the weekend but too late.

RF: It's one thing you can't do with ACTT members because they are sufficiently bloody minded that sooner or later they will react. The Trots found that out.

RD: The trouble was that the BBC people were so cowed and so used to taking what they got we only got them woken up by taking drinks with them in the bar and stirring them up because they sat there so passively and said yes to whatever they were told by the top table. Then there was all the cafuffle about the recount which was partly due to mistakes made by the head office, not just the right wing revolt which it was presented as. There was an element of that, but just a small element, it was

because of the way it had been presented that the recount had to be taken. I'm sad about that because despite the mistakes I was all for joining with the other union at the time and it's a pity we did not do so. That's a note to end on is it not.

RF: It is except for one thing we talked about very early on and I was wondering if we should cover it and that was your association with Eisenstein. You've written about this.

RD: I've written about it at some length.

RF: Either one must be assured that that document is on the record, the way you wrote it, on file.

RD: It's been published in Boulder, Colorado

RF: Which isn't the publishing capital of the world.

RD: Should I lodge it somewhere.

RF: I should think the BFI or if you've got another copy at the Museum at Bradford.

RD: I could lodge it with us.

RF: I think as a written record we could hand it on to a more suitable repository.

Thank you very much Robert, we'll end it there.

FINISH