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BECTU History Project
Interview no: 31
Interviewee: Kitty Marshall
Interviewer: Gloria Sachs, Alan Lawson
Duration: 01:32:04 & 00:31:04 (02:03:08)

[00:00:00]

The copyright of this recording is vested in the ACTT History Project. Kitty Marshall, documentary film producer. Interview, Gloria Sachs. Recorded on the first of February, 1988, side one.

Although it's considered to be impolite to ask a lady her age [laughter], tell me…

With great pleasure. I shall shortly be seventy-three.

Right, so tell me when you were born and where, and what kind of background you came from, sort of social background?

You want to know all those sort of things? Right. Well, I was born in April 1915 in Newcastle and it was during the First World War, as you gather, and we shortly moved out into the countryside of Northumberland to a place called Bengeham [ph] and then to Charlton, a place called High Carriages [ph], and we eventually landed up at Killingworth, but it was a little village before there was a new town as there is now there. My father was working for Armstrong-Whitworth's and he was on their experimental gun range and was therefore kept there rather than being able to go into the army. After it, I think he'd had enough of it, I don't know why. Anyway he decided to leave Armstrong-Whitworth's after the war, a year or two after the war and we came south, made a disastrous attempt at making furniture, which didn't succeed at all well because Maple's were the only people who were doing alright in that period after the war. And then he was very lucky to get a job with the University of Cambridge as, it was known as the Secretary of the Buildings Syndicate. And otherwise he was responsible for all the university buildings. And so we lived in Cambridge from then on. I had a free education at a posh school because my aunt was the headmistress of it. [laughter] It was an expensive school which I would never have gone to otherwise, so partly, my accent is partly a result of that.

Which school was that?

I had a very brilliant brother and I think that's partly… unfortunately at school, firstly I should say, I didn't do science and I should have done science because I think that would have interested me more than anything. But I had a brilliant brother and I wasn't going to compete intellectually. And so I opted to go in for art, which was… everyone was very keen about painting and art and my mother was very well read and was particularly interested in poetry, that sort of thing, it seemed alright. But I wasn't going to teach because all the family had taught: my mother taught, my uncle taught and my aunt was a headmistress, which was horrible, going to a school where your aunt's headmistress. Anyway, so I opted to go to art school and did that. Well that day and age, you see, thirties, early thirties, the only job you could get would be in commercial art, which was horrible, really horrible then. And so I was running around trying to do all sorts of different things, I was a housemaid for a bit, etc, etc. And the way I found the film industry was pure fluke insofar as I had an aunt who was an art critic and who knew a certain Professor Polanyi in Manchester, the father of the present Polanyi, who was a lovely man from Hungary I think, that's right isn't it? And he was a man who had first of all been a doctor, then he'd come over here and had gone in for physics and he was lecturing in physics at Manchester. And he'd got some money out of Rockefeller to make a film on the trade cycle, an animation film. I knew nothing about film at that stage, but he was an absolutely charming person, awfully nice, he treated me with absolute kindness and respect almost. I had a wonderful time talking to him and trying to work out ideas of how he could – because it had to be animated, obviously – how you could animate and picture this money trade cycle, the money cycle, trade cycle. And that was made, the film, by Diagram Films, Mary Field.

But did you know anything about animation?

[05:00]
No, nothing at all.

You sort of…

And Brian Salt photographed all my drawings that I did. And they were used as a basis, though not the same style at all, for their own work and they made the film. Then came the war, you see and I think I was a housemaid at that time when the war started, something of that sort. Anyway…

Did you have other jobs?

I did… I tried to work in an antique shop, but that was hopeless because I wasn't interested in any antiques, I was only interested in… but I liked the look of things. And what else did I do? Oh, I looked after old people and read to them and that sort of thing. I did all sorts of different odd things, you know, while I was trying to find proper work.

And were you still living at home at that point?

No, because some of these took me away, I mean like being a housemaid, took me away. So it varied. Anyway, where am I?

This is just coming up to the war years now.

Oh yes. Well, you see when the war started you may remember that there was a terrific boost to the animation industry because animation was needed for films for the forces explaining things. And Diagram Films expanded rapidly and they got in touch with me, they had my drawings, they said would I be interested to come along, which I was, obviously. [laughter] Rushed off! And so I joined Diagram Films.

That was from your housemaid's job was it?

I think I was actually as a housemaid at that point.

It's quite a jump.

Can you remember the people at Diagram Films?

Oh then, Jeffryes, and then of course Bruce Woolfe owned it and all that and Mina worked – one of his daughters – worked there and… Mina and Bruce Woolfe, and who worked there? Now, Luytjes [ph] who's dead, Jeffryes who's dead… now, what was his name? I can't give you that one.

What was his name you say?

Oh, Oriss [ph]. The other bloke I remember, and that more, but I would like to tell you about this one, was Finger [ph] and I can't remember what his Christian name was. And he was a marvellous artist, I remember him doing wonderful representations of aerial views of the countryside as you would see from an airplane, he was there. Sally Sedgwick I knew and I got her into the firm too, she came along. Now who else was there that I can remember? Ray Broadhouse. Oh dear. Oh, a person called Jean something who was the daughter of a doctor in Harpenden. We got moved out to Harpenden because the place was bombed in London. I used to have to go out to Harpenden from London. I eventually moved to Harpenden when the bombing ceased. [laughter] Then came back. Anyway, I'll try and remember more of those people later on if you'd like. I'll go on for the moment therefore and say, whilst I was there, I was there for a year or two and I worked of course, Brian Salt used to come down, we had animation cameras there and he used to come down and I saw him quite a lot and he was brilliant, Brian Salt. Have you interviewed him at all?

No.

Well, he was brilliant. I remember he'd done some animation films with Fairburn [Fairthorne] and a mathematician, I think he was. But anyway, they were on mathematical subjects and they were fascinating. And Brian did the things like working out how to do [incomp – 08:39] and to hit an aeroplane that was coming along and so on that we had to show, and that sort of thing. And at the same time the backgrounds were very often shot with a camera for the clouds and things at Technicolor, and there, I can't remember who the bloke was, but Di Berline [ph] was the assistant, because I became friendly with her, she was the assistant on the camera that did those background shots at Technicolor. So of course animation in those days you had – I don't know how they do it now – but you had the three separate colours, you had to shoot three frames on end, you know, the separate

colours. And we had two cameras as far as I can remember, rostrums. And I used to do an awful lot of the working out of how to work it under the camera, so I worked on a camera as well as doing the planning drawing. I didn't care very much for the style of art that was used there and actually you got much more interesting artwork suddenly coming with the war in certain places like, oh Bob… oh dear, I know it so well and I can't remember his name again. Can we switch off for a moment while I just think because I know that perfectly well?

[break in recording]

We'll remember his name later.

[10:00]
Yes. Anyway, I'll just say, I didn't particularly care for the kind of artwork that we were doing there, but I could do it, you know, but I was particularly interested in the general planning of how to do the things from the point of view of what you could do in the way of artwork and what you could do in the camera and the mixing of the two techniques together, you know, the two, [incomp – 10:23] together. So I used to do an awful lot of the planning really and the doping, as it was called, for the camera. Well, then Jeffryes I think wanted to get off on his own and away from Bruce Woolfe and he took away with him Luytjes [ph] and myself and Joan…

Whom he married.

Joan, who married Jeffryes, yes. That was his second wife. What was her name? I should know, I lived with her once or twice, had a room in her flat at one time. [laughter] Because she lived in Watford. But… oh God, how awful. Anyway, he took us away with him and I imagine he wanted to cream off a bit from the firm, but in any case it was marvellous for me because we went to, then, to Publicity Picture Productions, which were in Dean Street I think. No they weren't, we were in Darblay Street, sorry, in Darblay Street. And of course that meant one got to London and one met all sorts of people, you know, which was much better. [laughter] Anyway. So then we were a sort of little offshoot of Publicity Productions under Jeffryes, you see, and I did, as well as doing the doping and planning to a certain extent, but not so much of it because of course there were

so few of us and there was Jeffryes, I did the accounts and so on. [laughter] I was jack of all trades there and I was there for a bit, oh well several years I suppose, I can't remember. Ooh, perhaps I've written it down here, hold on.

Was this considered a reserved occupation during the war?

Oh yes, this was a reserved occupation, that's quite right, otherwise I would have…

You'd have been directed into a factory.

Diagram Films… not Diagram Films, Jeffryes. I don't know what happened exactly, why it happened, but between them, Publicity Pictures and Jeffryes decided to drop me and didn't tell me and I suddenly found that I wasn't being whats-its-named any more…

Reserved.

Reserved any more and by which time Cynthia was working at Pub… Cynthia Whitby was working at Publicity Pictures, and I made friends with her as well as a number of other people there and she took me along to ACTT, because by… oh yes, I'd become a member of ACTT by then because I was able to once I got to London. I couldn't in – that was interesting – I couldn't, or I was told by Brian Salt that I couldn't be a member of ACTT, although I knew about – ACT, sorry – although I knew about ACT because George Elvin's brother was friendly with my parents in Cambridge. [laughter] So I knew about it, but Brian Salt told me that we couldn't because we weren't a big enough shop. It was an absolute lie, I suspect.

It was.

It was indeed, yes. When abouts? This was during the war, what sort of...

This was during the war, at the beginning of the war, and so I didn't join ACT until '42 I think actually, you see.

And you joined it voluntarily, yes, yes.

Yes, I joined it when I got to London, I might have got to London in ’42, you see.

It was ’43 you joined the union.

Well according to my card it’s ’42.

You see Big Brother’s been checking on you. Or they’ve got their records wrong, they do. [laughter] Not for the first time!

I’ll show you my card if you like. I kept my old one when I got a permanent one, you know.

Anyway, you say June Whitby took you to ACT?

No. No, no.

Cynthia Whitby, Cynthia Whitby.

Cynthia Whitby, sorry, yes.

She took me to ACT and I met Bert Craik and he went up to the tribunal with me and said there was plenty of work that I could do, it was ridiculous. And in fact I got a job then with… oh gawd. I think they were called British… oh, here we are, I’ve probably written it out here. ’51… British Industrial Films. John Curtois [ph]. And they were making actually filmstrips, but of course as I’d started off at art school I was sort of capable of filmstrips as well as otherwise, I suppose.

[15:00]
That was the organisation that preceded BISFA wasn’t it? British Industrial Films joined up subsequently with the British Film Association and became British Industrial and Scientific Films.

No, I don’t think so. I think there was another British Industrial, or something rather like that. As far as I know, Curtois [ph] just collapsed. But… so I don’t know what happened

there. But anyway, I was there from ’44 to ’45 so I must have been… I was at – now for dates – from ’40 to ’42 I was at Diagram Films, from ’42 to ’44 I was in the Jeffryes unit at Publicity Picture Productions, and from ’44 to ’45 I was at British Industrial Films doing filmstrips. Now, people at these different places. Publicity Picture Productions then had Laurie Price, marvellous artist and Bob, which I can’t remember… I’ll have to ring John Sherman, he’ll tell me all. And Bob and… oh, a wonderful Chilean man, what was his name? I remember he used to say, ‘Oh Mama mia!’ when anything went wrong, he was lovely. Frank Dyede [ph], that’s it, he was in fact an ex-engraver and of course during the war you got all sorts of people with techniques behind them. And there were a whole lot of other people there. One of them went to Kay’s Filmstrip I think afterwards and I can’t remember his name, but I know him perfectly well, it’ll come back. So I got to know quite a lot of people through that and of course there was the Highlander and you went there and you met other documentary people because that was a club, the Highlander then, it really was, marvellous. Then, when I went – it was very interesting actually, the British Industrial Films which was making filmstrips – we had an eighty year old black and white artist there, we had Mrs Thrupp, I think her name was, who did those sort of paintings that you reproduced that you find in every lodging house or… and so on, place. And there was a young girl from art school who liked to burn incense, much to the fury of other people there. There were all sorts, I can’t tell you, it was fascinating. All sorts having to join together and work, and they did, they did very good work. Anyway, so that’s that. Then British Industrial Films came to an end for me between VE and VJ Day in ’45 because I got, through Cynthia Whitby, I got to know the… Rod Baxter and Kay Mander and I got offered a job there, to go – which I wanted to do desperately – to go into the straight side of the industry. I sort of halved my salary, becoming an assistant, you know, but it was well worthwhile.

What kind of an assistant?

Assistant director. And that day and age, now out of interest, in that day and age of course we were fighting for an apprenticeship scheme in the industry because there weren’t film schools. I did go to some classes but they were photographic classes, that’s all there were, there were photographic classes. There’s no film schools at all, so we were fighting with the union, the union was fighting with the employers to get an apprenticeship scheme going. The best units used to really do this sort of thing, that happened to me, that you

worked for sort of six months editing, six months behind the camera assisting, or roughly, and – as supernumerary obviously there – and for six months in production. So whatever you were going to end up in, that was the idea.

So can I just go back marginally? You had actually always nurtured this ambition to actually move over to the production side of the…

No.

… real films, as you call them.

No. I felt that it was something that would be… I didn't really enjoy the kind of drawing mostly that one had to do. I felt I was interested to do this and I didn't realise what was interesting me in it. Ah, I'll tell you what, I'll have to revert now and then this'll probably help. I had told you earlier that I didn't want to do teaching, because all my family were in teaching. That's one thing I could have done with an art training, you see, but I wouldn't take the exam. Then when I went into film at first I felt it was secondary compared with art, you know, of being one's own, doing the complete thing all oneself, you see, although I was a poor artist to be honest. [laughter] It had trained my eye. So there was that. But I disliked the kind - being in animation - I very much disliked the kind of artwork that was done mostly, and I don't like Disney for instance, that kind of slick artwork, and much nicer stuff has come out since. And this Bob was doing some very bright stuff during the war. But he was with… oh, that Hungarian man.

[20:24]
Halas and Batchelor's?

Halas and Batchelor during the war, and he did some very interesting, they did lots of cartoons, you know, for the COI I think and so on, and did very interesting work. And then after the war, I don't know if it started during the war, but immediately afterwards, certainly there were quite a lot of interesting companies that started up with much more interesting animation styles of work, I think. And then I was so desperately depressed when Halas and Batchelor did get the money to do a feature and they did that *Animal Farm*, which was sort of like a poor imitation of Disney, you know. I'm afraid that that's

my feelings about it, you know. So I think there was that side of it, but also on top of it was coming to the fore probably without my realising it, the fact that I really did like explaining things and that this sort of medium was a very good way of explaining things. And I think in my case it was probably through having had difficulties about being taught when I was at schooling age and so on, a lack of understanding of the teachers.

[break in recording]

I think that it's very interesting really how many people I do remember in the industry had come, I would call them manqué, we didn't, as I say, have film schools then. But for instance, Mary Field had a degree in history I think before she came into the industry and a lot of people had hoped to write and then they became filmmakers. And I think that quite a lot of people film was the thing that they found that they could do and they liked and they enjoyed it thoroughly, because they couldn't quite do something else, they'd started off thinking they were going to do something else, you know.

But often, I mean in that context they would find what they could do would be quite useful in the film context.

That's right, that too.

Like your aunt.

So there we are, anyway. We got to…

Well, you were starting, you'd started…

I'd started with Basic Films, yes. Well now Basic Films then of course were working with films for the Ministry of Education. If you remember the Ministry of Education made films, which was marvellous, so there were some interesting films there. Now, what else? Anyway, I enjoyed that thoroughly and it was during that time that I went from assistant directing to starting to direct, but also of course having this chance to do some editing I decided that I wanted to become an editor, and so I did become an editor at Basic and I was there for four years I think, until… until 1949, that's right, when there was a bust up

at Basic. It's interesting isn't it, that was – what do you call it – a company made up of… which was supposed to be, oh dear, everybody belonging to a company.

A co-operative?

A co-operative of a sort. So it was Data Films and they had troubles there at Data Films too. Anyway, Basic bust up and I went to British Transport Films.

I never realised that, Kitty.

Before your day, dear.

It must have been, yes.

I was there from '49 to '51. What took me there was Rod Baxter had gone there after the bust up and he was making some films there and he wanted me to come and edit them, and so I went and edited the films, which were the ones on the canals.

Lovely, lovely.

Oh dear. Anyway, McAllister was there and all, who was a beautiful editor, but oh dear, he was not a good person in a way to have in charge of the editing side because he was a procrastinator, very much so. And I remember, before I - I left them in '51 to get married, that was the only reason and Geoff was then in Cheltenham so I couldn't very well keep on with it.

How did you meet Geoffrey?

Oh, because he became secretary of the Scientific Film Association.

So it goes back a bit.

And I met him… actually that was the first time I met him, because Kay had been secretary I think, that's right, and I was with Rod Baxter in a pub, the Highlander of

course, waiting for Rod and Rod came back with Geoff. Or no, waiting for Ken, sorry, and Ken came back with Geoff. That's how I met him. [laughter]

[25:17]
A romantic meeting in the Highlander. [laughter]

And so, where were… Anyway, oh yes, and I remember they moved a farm from somewhere up north to somewhere down in Kent, or vice versa, I can't remember which it was now, and I was given these umpteen cans of film that had been shot on the moving of the farm, and I cut them down into a story – but rather loosely – into a story thing, in '51 and I came back over a year later or two years later and just completed it.

That was typical of Transport.

I mean it was not much different. I mean we merely tidied up and so on, but the same sort of storyline was there.

Before you go on, one thing that's surprising me as a woman who's had quite a tough time getting into the industry, you don't seem to have met with any prejudice.

Well, this is the thing you see, I don't understand. Well of course there was prejudice to a certain extent, but…

I mean initially you went in as an assistant director. Now I find that amazing actually, for that period.

Well you see, don't forget during the war there was a lack of people because everybody had gone off to the war, so in any case it was lack of people. But apart from that, there were people who were prejudiced about women, but somehow or other I didn't meet up with them, I was lucky, I don't think much. Every now and then you met them and…

So in a way the war was really a good thing from your career point of view?

From my point of view the war and then the fact that I got moved back to London, willy-nilly, I mean whether I wanted to or not. Well, I mean I just followed Geoffrey because I was told to, so it's because they said lie down and I said yes. And I got back to London, I was very, very lucky indeed, I found what I wanted to do. And Basic Film was the biggest bit of luck because I then really got into what I really liked doing which was using the visual medium to explain and make clear and so on, whoever it was, whoever the audience was, and been in that sort of thing ever since. And then I was terribly lucky later on to go to the Coal Board, because the Coal Board was an industry which had so many facets to it, I mean it was a complete… everything. I mean you could make films on computers, you made films on their use and computer logic, you made films on firefighting underground, you made films on safety, you made films on first aid, you made films on electrical and mechanical engineering and mining engineering, everything you can think of, you know. You had such a variety and I liked the industry anyway, I liked mining very much indeed. Couldn't bear the headquarters, but mining was fine and when you got out in the field it was excellent. And of course Donald Alexander, now that I'd like to talk quite a bit about.

When did you go to the Coal Board?

I went to the Coal Board, ah, I got married in '51 and we came… and went out of the industry because we were in Cheltenham, Geoff was then working with, funnily enough, the research station of the Coal Board as a scientific photographer. Geoff started off, was trained as still photographer and also did a bit of scientific research photography for Kodak actually, I think I'm right in saying, but you'll check that. Then of course we had the war, and then at the end of the war he was still out in Africa and he did some training films and one thing and another, he went on to film work there for the army. He then came back to England when he was demobbed, and then he went out for the British Council I think, something of that sort, photographically. That I think was still photography mostly. But he must have… what was the thing that Vic Revell [ph] was attached to, the colonial film thing. He must have had some association with the colonial… but you'll find that out. Anyway, and then when he came back to England again after that he went down to the National Coal Board research place near Cheltenham, Stoke Orchard, as a scientific film photographer there. And through that and his other things, that's how he got into the

Scientific Film Association. Anyway, we were in Cheltenham and so of course one was out of the industry, and then Geoff got moved back to London when the Coal Board opened Worton Hall and divided up their research between coal research and mining research, you see. So they opened another… and they'd left coal research at Stoke Orchard and mining research was started at Worton Hall, which I remember going to do some dubbing there and they were very [laughing – inaudible].
[30:09]
Anyway, that brought us back to London so I got back, then started going back. I first of all… I thought I was going to freelance then, I thought that would be fun, but the thing I did was, the only thing I did freelance – no, two things I did – I first of all did a film that Kay had shot out in Indonesia for Mary Field and the Children's Film Foundation called *Mardi and the Monkey*, a short film. I did that. Which was brilliant. It was a pity Kay didn't do more of those entertainment films, she was very good. And in fact *Mardi and the Monkey*, because I suppose it was undatable, it was about a little Indonesian boy and his exploits, lasted so many years and went on for so long that eventually it made enough money, or something happened, it made enough money that we were – even in the Children's Film Foundation, you know, sixpence a head or whatever – we were paid fee extras. [laughter] Because you remember in those days if it was under 3,000 feet, was the thing. Anyway, so I did that in '53. Oh, but before that in '52, sorry, when I first came back, I did a thirty-inch pipeline thing, which was a technical film that had been shot by an aerial photographer and the Film Centre became responsible for getting it made into a film. It was ghastly stuff because the aerial photographer would move his camera from one long shot to another long shot and move the camera about a yard, you know.

[laughter]

Eventually the only way I could make it, because his was in colour, was to dupe black and white material from the film that… now what was his name? Do you want to switch off again while I try and think?

[break in recording]

Mike made a film on the thirty-inch pipeline, the laying of a thirty-inch pipeline and he must have done that film I think for the film unit in Iraq, which was a unit run by, or came

under the Iraq government and the Iraq Petroleum Company and the - John Sherman was running that unit – and the idea was to start a unit, get it going on the films it could make out there and train up the Iraqi people to do the work, you know, which it did, that's what happened. And it was very successful I think, that unit. Anyway, I don't know whether Mike, Mike whoever he was, was one of them or just happened to do this through Film Centre, because I think Film Centre certainly… anyway, I had to dupe material from his film in order to [laughter] make this other film. It was the pet of an engineer who'd designed the pipeline or something of that sort. Anyway. Now what happened after that? Well then Geoff of course, being in the Coal Board, heard about the fact that the Coal Board was starting up a film unit, you see, under Donald Alexander, and so that's how I got into that, right near the beginning. Donald Alexander actually was a films officer at the Coal Board and he started the film unit for the Coal Board to make technical films for use within the industry towards the end of 1952 and I joined them in 1953 after they'd shot about two films, I can't remember how many anyway, in order to edit, and I'd do the editing. Donald started small to prove the need and use and it grew, and it grew, and it grew. And at that time, when he was starting that film unit, outside companies were being used to make the public relations films for the Coal Board, quite a lot of them being made by Basic Films as it had become then, and of course Data Films. Data Films had been very much involved in Coal Board filming because they were the people who made… oh God, what was it called? *The Coal*…

Review*?*

[35:00]
Coal Monthly, no *Coal Monthly*.

Review, *something* Review *wasn't it?*

Coal Review. No, *Mining Review*, *Mining Review*. I'm going mad. *Mining Review*. Now, *Mining Review*, I think the first few were made when it first started, which was some when during the war, I think, were made by, would it be the Crown Film Unit? I can probably find out, I can find that out for you, but anyway, and then they became made by Data Films and Data Films were still making them when the… and also doing other films, they had in fact been even doing technical films as well as public relation films I think, for

the Coal Board at the time when the unit was set up. And that, I've been with the coal industry ever since. I've been a temporary worker for thirty years.

[laughter]

I've been employed temporarily for thirty years, pretty good that, isn't it?

Wasn't in the end was it?

No, it wasn't in the end.

We'll get to that in a minute.

And I adored it. I liked the mining industry, as I said, I liked miners, it was quite marvellous. You went down a pit, you could talk to anybody and they knew what was going on, quite different from any industry when people wouldn't know what they were doing.

How did they feel about a woman going down the pit?

Oh, just as work, that's all, didn't mind. No, they treated me… I was treated so happily from that point of view. Alright, I'm in the business of, alright there wasn't a shower for me or anything, so alright. You went to the First Aid and you can use their shower, or on one occasion the manager said, oh well, you use my shower. Right, I used his.

So there was absolutely no prejudice about you being down the mine?

No.

From the miners?

The only prejudice would have been if I'd worked.

Oh yes, well I mean yes, that…

Because that was… but that, don't forget, was historic, going from the business of women and children being cheap labour in the mines originally, and that's understandable. And I think, I don't think people work in mines here, mind you, in Russia they did way back.

The Americans have lady miners.

Now they do, yes. But Russians did way back. I don't know what they did. I know I've seen a, on film I've seen a Russian female onsetter, that's at the top of the shaft. I don't know how much they did underground. But anyway, I like the industry very much and I liked all one did. And Donald was marvellous, Donald really was a very, I think brilliant person to start something of this sort. He started it off, he proved its worth, it grew and it proved itself. He was primarily interested in serving the industry, doing what the industry needed and therefore this was very important, he didn't bother about what he liked to do, he did what the industry needed. And I think this was very important and I think this is where he was so much better than Francis Gysin who was, I think, too sort of film mad and therefore he wouldn't have anything to do with… he wouldn't have anything to do with video and also, because he'd been producer of *Mining Review* since the year dot, you know, had got a bee in his bonnet about *Mining Review* long after it was ridiculous because it was ten-minuter and cinemas just didn't want ten-minuters, you know. I mean they did in the days when it started, but they didn't want them any more, so that it was, you know, I think a dead loss and unfortunately I don't think there were enough, during his time, enough public relations films made when they were needed and they would have been much more useful, spent the money on that than on the *Mining Review*. That's my own opinion. And I suspect that what would happen anyway would have been in any case that probably the unit, the Coal Board unit would have collapsed in perhaps the same way as the British Transport did, but British Transport did at least keep going, tape-slide, which again we should have been doing for the Coal Board, I tried to do some there, but we didn't do enough. Because tape-slide is excellent teaching medium because you can alter any little bit of it, so easy, you've just got one slide to alter, you know, alter or you can… Whereas film you've got… it's a much bigger effort and it's much more expensive, you've got to make a new film or remake it which would cost a lot of money. But tape-slide was an excellent medium.

[39:58]
And of course video was growing in use and of course, well, unfortunately the video therefore became done by the Coal Board themselves up north in Northumberland instead of being done by the Film Unit who knew much more about how to put things together, you know, present visual material, you know. But there. But Donald was a really brilliant person. He left because he, quite honestly I think that he felt once he'd got it going and it had become a real big going concern he left about fifty… no, sixty… about '64 I think, so he would have been there for about eleven years or so. And he wanted to do other things. And in fact he went then and started something else again, you see. He had a fallow time writing in Greek I think, the translating, yes. Because his subject, there you are you see, his subject were the Classics, I think. I think he did the Classics and Russian at Cambridge University before he came into films. And then he got… now did he go to do… Yes, then he got his job with Dunfermline University on their visual aids, a sort of visual aids director or whatever you would call it. And I remember him saying to me when he was going up to it, he said, I've got ten years, I think in ten years I can get that going. And he did. He was very good at that, you see, because he really did things for the purpose, as I say, he didn't have the bees in his bonnets that he had to do things for himself, he did them for what they wanted. And he certainly, the brilliant time of the Coal Board I think was his.

So what work did you do at the Coal Board – were you editing all the time?

I was an editor when I went there. No, not very long afterwards I became a producer. It must have been when Alan [ph] left, he was a producer, and so I became one.

Alan?

Alan Faulkner [ph].

He went to Australia didn't he?

No, no, no.

Or New Zealand was it?

No, he was from…

Is that where he was from?

Where was he from? Could have been from one of those, yes. Yes, he was from New Zealand, that's right, he was a friend of Marcus [?]. But he died of cancer. He went out to write and do more story filming, if you see what I mean, that's why he left the Coal Board. I can't remember exactly what he did, and he was an awfully nice bloke. But I think that's how I became a producer there. And it was very funny because it was the, I don't know whether it was the idea of a female administrative person we had, she was marvellous, best we ever had, Anne Russell, in the film unit, it was her idea, or not, I know that she was the one who talked to me and said would I be prepared to do it. I expect Donald really thought so too, I have a suspicion. But she was the one who talked to me about it, and then I decided I would be a producer. It's a horrible thing to do, to go from doing a job yourself to getting other people to do it.

Difficult.

It's very difficult.

[43:40 - end of side]

[46:19]
…put the idea forward to me, put it that way. I mean I would imagine in actual fact that Donald had it too, but that he asked her to talk to me, I don't know why.

Still going.

Oh, you heard that alright?

Yes, fine.

So that's all I know. And then I was a producer there till the bitter end.

What about the union…

I never, on the union thing, I always felt that I was too old and I thought that in the position I was in I shouldn't be shop steward. But I dearly would have loved to have been. I wasn't a shop steward there until the very end when things got very nasty and they needed somebody to spur them on a bit. And in fact to be honest with you, the reason they got, most of them got good hand-outs and things at the end was because I did step in, because I did get them going, because I did, you know…

Push for…

…push. Well, make them know that they've got to hang together. So they did alright. I didn't.

So you did alright for them but not for yourself? We'll go into that in a minute.

There's a certain person that I don't think is much good, quite honestly, in ACT.

Well, there's one that I don't think is much good in ACT, it's probably the same one!

Switch off a moment.

Right.

[break in recording]

Where had I left off before?

You were talking, actually what you said, you became the shop steward towards the end.

Ah yes, when things got bad. Francis went to pieces, I consider. This is again, this is all my own opinion, obviously, insofar as when things were fine and he could offer jobs – he loved offering people jobs, you know, come along, oh you're hungry, he's hungry, he'll

find them a job, you know, he loved it – but then of course when things got the other way round it wasn't so good and of course he buried his head in the sand and had ignored the fact of what was wanted for the industry and the change in media which should occur, you see. So that altogether he was left without much to stand on and he fought, fought, fought to keep *Mining Review* going, which was a mistake on his part, and so that when he suddenly had to get rid of people, was told, *wumph*, like that, you've got to face the facts and you've just got to get rid of people, he went around just saying, oh you've got to go, you've got to go old boy, like that, meeting people in the passage even like that. And got rid of first of all of course all the people who were on what they call rolling contracts. You know what I mean; three months, three months, three months? And he got rid of those in a very nasty way, I did my best on some. One person he wrote to and said you've got to go at the end of this month, and that person was in hospital, and in any case had a rolling contract that took him to the end of the following month. So, you know, that sort of thing. He was obviously just, you know, couldn't cope. I would have thought, wouldn't you? But anyway, so then it was also a matter that… I mean Francis had largely dealt with ACTT direct, old boy thing with all the people there who weren't, I didn't realise, how much he was pulling a smokescreen over their eyes until we had a really bad occasion when he took on people without having… which he shouldn't have taken on, you know, and ACT got on to it, one of the camera department got on to it, what he'd done and he was hauled over the coals, you know, or the whole thing. So that the shop stewards had just not really done anything much and anyway, so the only thing was when this was happening was obviously somebody had got to try and do something. So I got into it at that stage. I didn't mind. I mean I talked to Francis, I didn't mind what I said to Francis at all about [inaudible – 50:11], and I could stand up to him. I was older than him and at that age you feel like that.

[50:20]

So that's what happened and eventually, as I say, the union did nothing in my case and I was given less than a month's notice. But Francis just left the letter on my desk when I wasn't there and I came back and found it. And I'd been there thirty years, or just on thirty years, to be precise, twenty-nine and a half at that stage. Anyway, I went back saying that this was illegal anyway, that they had to give me more than a month's notice and this was under a month, and I think that I was due in any case three months' pay or something. And… even as a temporary person, which I had been of course, and as I say, the union did nothing for me whatsoever, I had to get my own solicitors and the union

didn't seem to think it mattered that I'd been there thirty years. And I got my own solicitor and eventually I went on working there because I never got an answer to my own letter back, you see, saying that they'd done things wrong. And I just went on working for no pay, which was a most peculiar situation. That was in June or July or something and I went on until December eventually, and then I got my three months and went. But meanwhile, my solicitor was very cunning; he said well, the only way to get the Coal Board going on this is to make them have to do something, so you are going to put in a… there's a claim, a tribunal thing which you can put in a claim through a tribunal. So I went and put my claim in, you see, for the tribunal and that immediately got them answering the solicitor. And eventually it all… so I got my three months eventually, but that's all I got.

That's all you got?

And I got six months in which to really try and tidy things up, which I had a hell of a lot to do. And I couldn't get anything from Francis about who was going to do what or how I'd got to hand it over or anything. I had to make up my own mind and persuade people – not through Francis – persuade people that they would take this over or that over, and so on.

Had you at any time been offered a permanent post while you were at the Coal Board?

No. Never. I'd in fact once enquired of somebody whether I couldn't become permanent and being told no, you can't. And that was by Kim Gay [ph].

So how come that the other people I presume were on the permanent staff, they got…

No, none of them were.

So how did they… you had to negotiate such…

Well you see, what happened is because I'd made a fuss, because I'd sort of got them going and so on, they didn't stick up for me. They were cowards, they were cowards you see, they wouldn't stick up for me, you see. If they'd stuck up for me as a unit, as a whole – I think a lot of them felt very guilty afterwards – they could have done something for me. But what they didn't know of course was that ACT wasn't doing anything for me. I

mean if the ACT, I think they felt just did things for you and you didn't have to do more, but ACT in fact wasn't doing anything for me. And the unit didn't, but when it came to the crunch on them, then they all hung together and they got together, all together, and with ACT of course, and ACT did do something and of course it was much more dramatic then. But the interesting thing is you see, the ACT got the best deals of the lot for the ones that are total liars. In fact, of course Robert Kruger – well, I shouldn't say – and Robert Kruger and Deh-Ta Hsiung were real freelancers. Robert used to go off to Holland and do work there and come back and so on, and they hadn't been solidly with the Coal Board by any means for anywhere near as long as myself and a lot of others, and they got the biggest hand-outs of the lot, and that was because Francis was also behind them because they worked on *Mining Review*. I'm sorry, this is all libellous so you'll probably want to…

[laughter]

That's alright, we'll just keep it and use it in evidence! [laughter] No, seriously, I mean this is marvellous stuff actually.

I am a bit bitter, truly, it is true, because I mean I know things would have been very different if Donald had still been there, and he wouldn't ever, ever have let that situation arise in any case. He would of course have been very interested in – in fact he was of course up in Dundee – he would have got on to the video, he would have seen the needs of the industry, what should have been done.

Yeah. Shame.

[54:57]
It's an awful shame. Because that unit was… it's done a lot of very useful work in its time.

It was the biggest unit wasn't it, the biggest documentary unit. I think it was bigger than Transport, which was considered to be a pretty big unit.

It's very sad, it was very sad. But anyway, who else worked there? Well, John Shaw-Jones was the cameraman. When I first went there, there was John Shaw-Jones, cameraman, who's dead now I should imagine. There was Lionel Griffiths there. No, John Shaw-Jones is a cameraman but he was acting then as a director, that's right, was a cameraman but acting as a director, yes, at that time. And Lionel Griffiths was doing the camerawork. Lionel Griffiths was a beautiful cameraman. You could send him away to film something and he would film it and tell you all about it, didn't need a script, you know, if it was just something like that. He was a beautiful cameraman, Lionel Griffiths, very sad about him. And the other person that worked with us for a time later was Ralph Elton, who was another superb director, because he just could talk on film, you know. And he was a perfect person to talk in film. Script-wise he got into trouble because he was nervous, I think, about his script so he would write it sort of three times over almost, we really had to cut about two-thirds of his script out and then you got it, you know, it was fine. [laughter] But, oh, and such a nice… well he was a very good friend of mine, I was very fond of him. He was like a brother, very funny sort of relationship. I've got a, funnily enough, looking through things, I've got a letter from Pat, his wife, saying about that, you know, about our relationship, Ralph's and mine. And she's a nice lady, Pat, marvellous. I haven't seen anything of her recently. Anyway, who else was there? In those early days… And then there was a man called Ken Little who could eat more than anybody I know at one sitting.

[laughter]

What did he do?

He was assistant directing I think, he went to Anglia. The set-up then was a very small unit, you see, of just really a director, cameraman and a camera assistant and an assistant director, and there was also somebody doing the library for the Coal Board, which in fact of course was a distribution library of the films that had been made for the Coal Board but by outside people. And then it gradually grew, in fact it rapidly grew as it proved itself, and eventually when it got really big they took on, they took *Mining Review* into the fold and took it away from Data Films, which killed Data Films I think, but I think Data Films were dying anyway. And that was before Donald left and he left in about, as I say, '64 with a thing that was a going concern and he'd just started a new idea, which Francis

carried on, a new idea, it was a very early thing this, presumably because it's the early sixties, they did a video van, they were called television vans, I think, and the idea was that they had telecine in them so that they could show films and they had a little interview place and they could put up stills or drawings and cover things of that sort. They could do a number of different things, or they could even go and film around in the location they went to and put that in on to their programme. And what they did is they went to a pit and then they set up monitors at all the important places like baths or canteens and so on, whatever it was, and they would make programmes to suit that pit and the problems in that pit. This was safety of course, sorry, I should have said that. But it was brilliant, that, I mean that was early on and in fact it was through hearing about these, John Shaw did the same sort of thing, or started doing the same sort of idea at British Transport. So you see that was Donald and how he was and I'm quite sure that if he'd stayed we would have very much changed our thing. You can see that I admired him very much indeed, I do. I was very fond of both of them, he and Budge, I was very sad about Budge, and their daughter I know well.

[1:00:10]

But there, anyway. Now, who else, can I think of other people there? Oh gawd. There were so many people that went through the Coal Board, it was a very good training ground and anybody said, that if you went through the Coal Board you got a good training in whatever you did. Now, early people. Sarah Erulkar was there, Kitty Wood had worked there and came back again, she came and went, so to speak and really became very much a Coal Board person. Laurel Gemmell, Ginger Gemmell's sister, she was an editor there. I think she's living out in Minorca now, as far as I know, her husband retired and went out there. Oh dear, there were so many people. Really what I ought to do is to look at the, if I could get hold of them, the credits list, and then I could remember the people. Can you stop again?

[break in recording]

That little interval has given me a chance to remember Bob Privett. No it wasn't, it was Gloria who told me.

It was when you mentioned Muriel, you mentioned her before, you see.

Bob Privett was the one I was trying to talk about before and the animator I had such a regard for because I think his work was really advanced for his time and actually was a real true artist too. And I remember, as I said earlier, the work he did when he was with Halas and Batchelor during the war, which was quite unlike anything else that was done by them, than later on. He became a teacher in fact and at the same time he also became a director of film didn't he?

He worked with British Transport, yes. Yes, because I edited films for him.

He became a teacher and I think he was a very good teacher, he used to teach down at Guildford certainly, and I think he also taught in Central School didn't he, of Arts and Crafts?

It's possible, yes.

I think so too. And so he's one of the people I admired and I said I admired Ralph Elton, that he was just a film person, he spoke in film. And Lionel Griffiths also, cameraman, he spoke in film. And Donald Alexander, ditto. I mean those are some of the names I really can pick out. Now Kay Mander also spoke in film and she is such a film person that although she had to go back to being – and she did suffer as a female, possibly partly because she wasn't good at sort of being easy with people, if you know what I mean, and that didn't help, but she suffered from being a female – anyway, she'd gone back to being continuity but she takes great pleasure in doing a job really absolutely professionally, you know, in every way and she was a very good one, I'm quite certain. But she also had, to my mind, she was good at doing the documentary films with Don but she was particularly good at doing films with people. And when she got out to Indonesia when Rod Batchelor became a Unesco technical adviser, I think they were called, and they went into the field there, he was sent to Indonesia. Kay made films in Indonesia for the Indonesians, apart from *Mardi and the Monkey* which she did for the CFF out there, which was a delightful little film and very human. And she made two films for them and there was one particularly, *The New Boat*, that I remember seeing, which was done out there in Indonesia using their laboratories which were not particularly good and opticals looked very funny and one thing and another, you know, but just the same she managed to do it out there, and it really was an excellent film, that. It was the story of the reactions of a village to a new

motorised boat for fishing as opposed to the kind of fishing boats they'd used before. And I think it's an awful pity she didn't do more directing because she was a very good director and certainly I mean I worked with her at Basic Films a lot, but you never felt anything but perfectly confident of the directing she would do, you know. And of course she was an extremely hard worker. And Rod was a very good producer. He was a quite remarkable person really because he was a terrific procrastinator and that sort of thing. But he would say, well you go and do it, and leave you to do it, he never breathed down your neck. [1:05:09]

And I remember once, [laughter] he said to me afterwards, I'd never laid a commentary in my life and I was laying a commentary, editing a film that he was responsible for, so he said well you take one, I'll take the other. We had to do it in the morning, we had a show in the afternoon you see, or something. And I thought oh my God, oh my God, what is happening, because I did it my way, which I invented then myself, which was to number up all the lines in a commentary. People used to use alphabets and one thing and another, but I did them in consecutive numbers throughout which was much the best then, so I was bringing it all up, my God, what's going to happen, you see. And then I had this old Hislop [ph] which was like – do you remember – it's the thing you'd write the names on, but you can do syncs, all sorts of syncs on it, it was marvellous, I made that reel in about twenty minutes. He said, my God, I was relieved you did it, I thought you weren't… but I never knew he'd been in a state about it at all. And he was like that and he gave people chances and I think he was a very good producer and I think many people did. I think the only trouble was he was a procrastinator and I think that frightened some people, the fact that he did procrastinate, or they felt he was too optimistic. I think he was a much better producer than he was a director. That's my opinion of him, but I mean he could direct, oh yes, but he tended to… everything was in long shot, but then Bob could see everything. He had the most extraordinary visual sort of acuity and he didn't to my mind sort of, it wasn't intimate enough, his filming, you know. But that's one of those things. It was very interesting seeing people develop. I had so many in the National Coal Board; young directors starting off, you know, when I became a producer, and seeing them develop and seeing the different problems some of them had. I mean one I remember for instance, when he started off at first, he'd always have empty sort of floor space, or I don't know what, in the bottom of his pictures [laughter] and I don't know what this was like, but one has to mention these things to people and try and get them to understand what was happening, you know, because if you're reporting on rushes. And another one was always,

his nervousness showed through, that he was always doing alternatives, you know, and so on.

Playing safe.

Yes. Alternative shots, and so on. But anyway, it was great fun there and it was such fun to see them developing and producing their own style and, you know, really becoming directors with a style and a competency and so on when they got going. It was lovely, I enjoyed that no end. And that was a great compensation because you do feel that you're doing something then, if you help people to get going and help people on editing, you know, that sort of thing. The only thing I wasn't any good at was the camera because I don't understand the photographic side. Well, I know what it should look like, what it should be like, but I don't know how it's done. Now, I was talking about George Seager wasn't I? He was the producer for Film Centre on this thirty-inch pipeline film I did, which had been shot by an aerial photographer for the engineer who had to do with the pipeline, and that's how I met George Seager from Film Centre. I think some other people that I knew may have worked through Film Centre, quite a number may have, I think. Oh! Do you remember, there was a thing called the Federation of Shorts and Documentary Units? Now, what was the name of the man who was the secretary of that? Basic belonged to it, Data belonged to it and I don't know what others, there were about half a dozen at the most of small documentary film units belonged to it. I think it was called Federation of Shorts and Documentaries.

Yes, that's right, it was, yes.

[1:09:37]
And what was the name of the man who was the secretary of it? I can't remember his name. I can remember vaguely what he looked like. And then I found this, for a very short time and I became a member on the seventh of January 1950, British Documentary. Do you remember? There was, we thought there was going to be the National Documentary and there was British Documentary and I remember the meeting – I only remember going to one meeting – at which… Jennings, Humphrey Jennings talked, it was the only time I remember him talking. I have to say that I've got a slight sort of thing there that I find his films so middle class that they rather…

A bit long-haired.

Well no, not long-haired, they're just middle class and looking down on the working class, I feel, you know.

I loved Listen to Britain *though, I really thought that was marvellous.*

Oh, some of his are good, yeah.

And I think that's largely due to McAllister's editing. I mean he gets a co-credit on that anyway.

That's it. And McAllister was a wonderful editor, he really was a super… That's another person, you see, I mean he had his difficulties, so to speak, as I say he was a procrastinator. I believe, saving your grace Alan, that men are more liable to procrastination than women.

I think you're probably right.

You wouldn't say that outside this room. [laughter]

Well mind you, I'm liable to get down to things too quickly without thinking enough beforehand I think.

Well, I go in feet first, always do.

You do?

Yes.

Well, then you're unusual.

[laughter]

But they procrastinated like, I don't know, extraordinary things. Do you know, early on when I first joined, not long after I joined the Coal Board as editor, I was handed something like 30,000 of 35mm material on the sinking of shafts for a certain pit, highly technical. I mean a lot of different technical processes going on. I had one sheet of paper from Donald telling me the sort of general story of it only and I remember on one occasion I was trying to work out, they were sinking freezing pipes into the ground because you put salt water through at freezing temperature for ordinary water, because it doesn't freeze, as you know salty water doesn't freeze so… And they were putting it down in sections and they were pulling them up and putting them down and you know how people shoot higgledy-piggledy, beautifully shot by Lionel Griffiths, and I was trying to work out what the exact process was and where they did a certain test and where they did this, you know, in what order it would come. Anyway, I thought I'd got it worked out and funnily enough, I was on the tube train and I met a Coal Board engineer by absolute fluke of luck, and I said to him, 'Does it go like this?' 'Yes', he said, 'you've got it right'. That's one of the most useful things that ever happened to me. Because you have to do these things, you have to work out how things were done and what happened, you had to find out yourself and do it, which was enormous fun.

I was going to say, that's part of the… that was fun.

Yes. Enormous fun. And as an editor, too.

Yes, much more interesting.

I didn't go as far as Terry Trench who seemed to think that an editor was film director and everything, you know. [laughter] I wasn't a film director, I didn't go as far as that. But I think the editor's job, I take it rather like a glassblower. A glassblower, because I knew somebody who used to design glass and he'd be doing designs, and a glassblower would blow them beautifully and he would have quite a bit of effect on that design, and he was an artist craftsman. And I think an editor's like that. But of course your most exciting times as an editor are when you get this material…

Just a heap of material and no story.

…hasn't been connected really. But of course when you see it's done by Lionel Griffiths, he really did cover so beautifully, you know, it was marvellous. And putting it together yourself, it's great fun. But there we are. So now, stories of sorts. Can you press 'off' a moment again?

[break in recording]

In talking about people, and be prepared with some more names and I'll see, I should say, I will say what I've just said to you off-air or whatever you call it, that I did enter the industry at a late age, in '45 I was thirty when I came into this great side of the industry as an assistant director at Basic. So probably my view of people was very different, particularly as I'd been in animation before that, remember, which these people, you didn't see these people in the same way. In animation you thought of Bruce Woolfe, Brian Salt, who was brilliant, Jeffryes, in that day and age. I can't remember who else, but I was very much in a backwater I suppose, and the names that I've mentioned, Lionel Pearce [ph] and Stringer were the two best artists I think in that place.
[1:15:02]
But then when coming in the straight side you did meet up with people. I just once saw Flaherty in the pub and I never can remember the name of the pub, but I think it was called the Duke of Wellington, something like that. And Grierson I met once or twice. I never worked with him but I did meet him once or twice. He always knew who I was and what I did, he was quite a fantastic person in that way. Of course one feels that his, in his position and what he did is immensely important I think in documentary, and I'm quite certain though that that's been dealt with by other people. Largely about his work, funnily enough, I felt that he was a curious person insofar as he made films in such an odd way to my mind and when I – was it *Moana*, was it, one of his films – I went to see again at a later date and I thought oh dear, why the hell did he use a white man to carry a fishing net who struggled with enormous muscles like this to carry one of these, they had long, long fishing nets with the net on the end of a long pole, I should say, and he was carrying this pole [incomp – 1:16:15] but it looked so silly. The little slender islanders could carry it balanced properly with the greatest of ease, you know. So he was rather, I thought peculiar, Flaherty. I'll tell you, oh yes, that reminds me about films and what I thought about films up until joining the film industry was that as a child and sort of later I enjoyed

the comic films like Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, those were the people that I enjoyed thoroughly, I loved those films. The other films, dramatic films I found a bit stupid as a child, you see. Then you grow up, and then the films that I remember that I would go and see were things like the René Clair films, you know, *À Nous la Liberté* and…

Sous les Toits.

Sous les Toits, yes. And those sort of films. I remember going to see… oh no, that's really a digression. And that sort of thing. But I do remember too that I saw two films that interested me and one was *Industrial Britain*, which was, that was Flaherty shooting wasn't it? Or was it… yes, or Cav shooting?

It was Cav, yeah. [NB: Cameraman was Robert Flaherty, not Cavalcante]

That's right, I'm getting muddled. And he really was, he really shot it as he shot it as he thought it was an investigation, but it was put together and they made a film out of it. I can't remember who was responsible for the editing [Edgar Anstey]. Edgar was it? I don't know. But anyway, I saw that in a cinema, you know, before I had anything to do with the film industry, and I thought it was lovely, I thought it was beautiful. That was to me an artistic film, you know what I mean? It was an artist seeing these things. The other thing – that must have been Cav then, because it was different from Flaherty, very different. Then the other thing that I saw was *Night Mail*, which I was fascinated by. I thought that was very good. But films otherwise, I wasn't particularly interested in. I mean I think I mostly felt that I wanted to be amused if I went to see… so I saw the French films that amused me. I don't think that English humour much amused me. Oh, Marx Brothers. Marx Brothers.

[laughter] Did you…

Now, I'm not a film buff. I just am not a film buff and when I came into film you see, I do like it to look lovely, but what I found that I liked about it, you see, was the fact that you could teach with it and you could explain things, the visual method of explaining things is so good.

It's what film could do.

Film could do. And of course why I also like doing filmstrips and tape-slides and those sort of things, you know. But that's how it went for me. Now then, I've got off people again, you want to go on to people don't you? Grierson, I told you I met, and how we met. Rotha, I never worked with, but I met him in the pub and I couldn't abide him and I used to have acrimonious conversations with him, I should think. Arthur Elton I didn't feel the sympathy with him that I… I was very, very fond of his brother, Ralph, and Arthur I found was a totally different sort of person and I had no sort of empathy or sympathy with him and I didn't feel that he had particular empathy or sympathy with film, not from my point of view anyway. Edgar I thought he was another, I think, great person, and I had immense regard for, Edgar Anstey. As I wrote to…

Daphne.

[1:20:08]
Daphne, I was the first shop steward there. I remember facing Edgar over a table, threatening a strike there on the recognition of ACT, you see.

That's interesting.

You said you liked detail. Dear Edgar. He was really delighted because it gave him power to his elbow to get the ACT, which he wanted, recognised you see. So he was, oh, he was a marvellous employer I think. To my mind he was interested in his people as employees and I liked him as a producer, in every way, I mean I think that he encouraged people to work and do things and so on. And he kept very much sort of in the background sort of in his organisation of it, you know, he didn't interfere but you felt that he was encouraged and pleased to hear of anything new or anything lively that was occurring, you know. And he certainly was, I mean he looked after his staff there because not only, he got them properly aligned, they could be permanent members if they wanted to be, he got them properly aligned with the gradings that they had, you know, in British Transport, which of course is an absolutely essential thing to do, he got all that going and the ACTT recognised – ACT as it was then – and so on.

Can I interject there? He didn't actually, the permanency was given to Transport when it was first set up for the nucleus of people there and it took a long time finally to get people on the permanent staff there after that.

Ah. Well, later on I know…

[both speaking together]

So that's really just a correction.

…that people told me that they were able to become permanent employees.

Yes, but that was actually very much later. That was very much later.

But that's not bad.

No. Oh no, no.

You can say that's [inaudible – 1:22:02].

That's just a sort of correction of fact, if you like.

Yes, but it did happen.

I mean if people worked there for a long time they were there temporary forever, as it were, so that may have given the impression that they were permanent.

Yes, but their conditions if they left and so on were really different. Oh and they… well, anyway. Hearing about what happened to them when that unit was disbanded, I think it was a very different matter. But to my mind he was a very good employer, he was a very encouraging person, I liked him, I think he had terrific interest in people and what they did and the use of film and what film should do. I admired him immensely. Now, who else do you want me to talk about?

Did you know Basil Wright at all?

Not really, I mean I've met Basil. It's funny, because he seemed to me to sink out of the scene completely. He seemed to me to sink out of the scene sort of much earlier than [incomp – 1:23:08].

And John Taylor, did you…

John Taylor, oh yes, John's a lovely person. I've never worked with him but I've always liked him as a person immensely and I know that people have enjoyed working with him very much indeed.

Did you know… did Terry work for the Coal Board?

Which Terry?

Terry Trench.

Terry, yes he did on one occasion, yes. Terry I knew. Well, Terry was a very, very good friend of Ralph from the Crown days, would you believe. And Terry, Terry was a lovely person and very good in ACT too, he was a very good ACT person too and so on. I think he overdid the importance of the editor, but that's, you know, a matter of opinion and he was very, very, very keen and enthusiastic on his work, extremely good. And a lovely person. Who else did I know? I don't know. Oh yes, Geoffrey Bell from way back. I've never worked with him have I? No. He was at Shell. I think he went to Worldwide for a bit didn't he, at one time. Geoffrey Bell I remember because he was friends, very much friends with Ralph Elton and Cynthia Whitby and myself and Ralph Elton and Geoffrey Bell I remember Cynthia Moody was a friend of Geoffrey Bell's then, way back. And I remember particularly Geoffrey Bell and Ralph because it meant that there was terrific conversation always, great fun, and I don't know about his filmmaking, you know, what he was like, because I never worked with him, but he was great fun as a person and talker and conversationalist, you know. And that was sort of young and inspiring things, you know, when you're talking about everything when you're fairly young. Which you didn't

always get with all the people you were working with, some of them were more inclined to it than others. You got it a lot actually, come to think of it, in documentary/

[1:25:26]
What about Rodney Giesler?

Rodney Giesler was my protégé at one time, so to speak. Well, that's not true, but he was my assistant when I was an editor at the Coal Board, and I know him. Nice boy. Well…

[laughter]

Slightly older than a boy.

Yes, and I think he's done very well really hasn't he? I don't know. He was on his own eventually, because he went out to Iraq in that film unit.

With John, yeah.

With John Sherman. John Sherman I know well. John Sherman was the producer of films I did at… was producer at…

At Transport.

British Transport, you see, and also he was at Basic for a short while too, so I knew him from way back then. Oh dear, who are the other names? Do you want to switch off a bit while we think of some names and then I'll…

[break in recording]

Yes, Sam Napier-Bell, he was at Basic and he was a director there. [laughter] He was a lazy old so-and-so.

[laughter]

Dear Sam. He had a lot of gifts but he never… he was lazy about really sort of finishing and completing and when you were editing a film for him it was absolutely diabolical. Eventually you wrote the commentary yourself and did most of it yourself to get it finished off properly. But he was a dear, Sam, in many ways, but a naughty man I think. Well, how shall I say? I feel that he was… I don't know, he was very left wing in his politics and yet I think he was very right wing in his behaviour. [laughter]

Reactionary in fact.

Funny mixture.

Had the enthusiasm to start but not to finish.

That's right, yes. That's exactly it, there was enthusiasm to start and a very enthusiastic person, extremely enthusiastic but he was not… he didn't like tidying up the ends, so to speak, you know. So the editing stage, which is where I came in… But I liked him nonetheless, he was great fun and he was a good person to talk with too. So he was a Basic bod, who were the others? I said about Kay was directing there, Sam was directing there, John Sherman came there for a bit to direct.

Did you know Jack Holmes?

Jack Holmes? Oh, I knew him when I went to British Transport, he was there. Nice bloke. He was doing *Berth 24* or something, he called it. And I knew his wife too, because we found ourselves together, originally, I think this was the first time I met her, Winifred, together representing ACTT, I don't know whether it was women…

Women's conference.

…in the Labour Party or women…

It was the women's conference, that's right, yes.

A woman's conference of some sort, yes. I can't remember, because I used to go to these, either the Labour Party sometimes you were sent to or the women's…

Trade union, yes.

TUC, yes.

Which really brings us round actually to your union activity.

Well, originally I did a lot of union activity once I got into Basic, presumably. I don't think I did… oh no, before that I met Bessie, Bond, when I decided… I'd become a member while I was at Publicity Picture Productions as soon as I got to London, and then I went to this one, industrial whatever it was called, British Industrial Films, it was [incomp – 1:29:08] place, John Curtois [ph], and there was nobody was a member there and I met Bessie through trying to get the thing going in there, you see, but then of course they were all, as I told you, sort of eighty year old black and white artists who done the pictures, they were all outside the industry originally, but I tried to get things going there. I can't remember what happened, but anyway, that's how I met Bessie, because she came down to [incomp – 1:29:30]. We did get it going, we must have. And then when later on, when I got into Basic I really became much more active because of course Kay and Rod were both very active in the union. Rod was the treasurer and Kay was on the…

General Council.

General Council, and they were both very good and active on the union, and I became secretary of the Westminster branch I think, something of that sort, and I think I did something on the shorts and documentary. You'll have to look up the file, I can't remember.

[laughter]

[1:30:06]
I've got a letter from George saying, when I got married, saying I was leaving the industry because I was getting married and going out of London, saying thank you and here's your

five pounds honorarium that should come at the end of the year, but have it now. I can't remember what it was for.

Yes, those were the days when they used to pay one an honorarium, that's right, yes.

I think it's called an honorarium, something of that sort.

Yes, that's right, yes.

[1:30:28 – end of side]

[00:15]
...you went to get married. You've just left the union activities, but you didn't leave the industry did you?

Well, in other words what happened was and up until when I got married, I did a lot for the union and I was a shop steward and I worked in the shorts and documentary section or whatever it was called…

Committee.

…and I also worked for the Westminster Branch, it was called. And so I did a lot and I was very keen on it. It so happened that at the end of the war, feeling that I wanted… I've never in fact belonged to any political party in my life, though I've been left wing and always voted Labour, my parents did. Just after the war I thought my God, we must do something, we must stop wars happening again, and I joined the Communist Party saying quite clearly that I disagreed with violent revolution and I didn't think that Russia was a good example of communism. But they took me in nonetheless.

They took you in just the same.

I was eventually… that didn't last very long, only about a year or two, because eventually, I remember the thing that really threw me at the end, had awful arguments with Sam Napier-Bell about this because he was just intellectually one, because I was sort of more

worried about the practicalities really, and I, eventually I remember hearing the Russian scientists delivering speeches which were just sycophantic political speeches and I couldn't bear it any longer and I said no, I'm leaving. So that was that. But I think that, I mean I've always been, my family were sort of left, my grandmother, my father's mother, was a very early member of the Labour Party, she always read *The Daily Herald*, at the end of her life as well as doing 'Torquemada' in *The Observer*. It's a funny mixture.

[laughter]

But she worked in women's clubs and things, you know, for the clinics and things that, you know, voluntary work and so on, in her day and age. She was a member of the Labour Party and she was a – now, which was suffragettes and which was suffragists? Anyway, the non-violent ones of the suffragism. And my mother was too, she was that. My mother was also involved in the early days of birth control clinics, but that was owing to the fact that she had the second child much too soon, because she believed the adage that if she was breastfeeding one she wouldn't have another. So she was a very… and she knew – what's her name?

Marie Stopes?

Marie Stopes. She didn't like her but she knew her. [laughter] But I think people that get things done like Marie Stopes are very often not…

Very nice people.

…likeable characters. But she knew very well indeed Pyke, Margaret Pyke was an old friend of hers who was a big lady in the Family Planning Association. But anyway, that's a digression on my mother.

Tells us something about you as well.

You can see that in my background there was a left-wing feeling and, you know, and so on. So I was very pleased to do all those things, I felt very strongly about unions and so on. I hate them these days because to my mind they've become hierarchical and, what do

you call it? They're just part of the sort of way everything's organised. Oh, what do you call it?

The establishment.

The establishment, that's it, yes, and so on. And I hate this, I don't feel they represent the people within the unions properly, but I don't know. But of course I was very very sad about what happened with Arthur Scargill who was very stupid indeed. He should have realised with Thatcher putting in MacGregor that he was going to have a difficult problem. He should have had, if he'd had a ballot right at the beginning, he would have had everybody behind him and then he could have made everybody… strike, and he didn't have that ballot. That was because not long before that, soon after he became president or whatever he is, the Coal Board had made an offer which was a good offer in the way of wages, but at the same time there was still this nagging worry, quite rightly, about the closure of pits and Scargill put together the closure of pits and this new offer by the Coal Board and asked if members would be prepared to strike about these problems. Well, of course they would have about the closure, but they wouldn't about the good offer, but they wanted the good offer, they were quite happy about it. So he lost that ballot, you see. But like a fool he didn't ballot when it comes to this occasion and in fact you can tell he should have, because what did the Coal Board do, they never forced him to ballot because they knew they could have lost it, you know. So, oh dear, it's such a pity because it's divided the whole thing up, such a pity.

[05:24]
It's gone backwards.

Everything's gone backwards now.

You see, before MacGregor, not long before, the Coal Board itself always were fighting the governments of the day and protecting their own industry, you see, so that the NUM felt much more understanding between the two, and the Coal Board always understood too that it had to work at local level about most things. And after all, it wasn't until the seventies that we got the same agreement for all people working at the coalface, before that it had been different agreements in different places, different parts. The industry after

all was a coming together of lots of different areas that had worked totally differently, you know. In fact, one of the early things they had to do was make a film on standardisation, we had to do, was make a film on standardisation because they were trying to standardise things so's they didn't have to have so many different kinds of tracks and tubs and one thing and another, you see, and be more economic. Do you want to cut off and say hello to Geoff properly?

[break in recording]

When you were a shop steward did you actually find it difficult to get people to join ACT or was it a sort of closed shop situation?

It was a closed shop situation, but I never failed I think, as far as I can remember. I remember one girl who said, well why should I - this was in later days - everything's all fine and dandy for me, it's all there. I said, well how do you suppose it got like that? And made her join eventually, she never realised that she… I said, if you don't look after it now you'll lose it all again, you see, so you have to join. And I said if you don't like anything the union's doing you need to belong and then you can perhaps do something about it.

I mean could you employ people if they weren't members of the union? I mean would you have employed people?

Not in those days, no, never. I don't know what I feel about it nowadays because I don't think much of the union nowadays, quite honestly.

So apart from, well, you've told us about the positions you've held in ACTT, so you don't think much about the union but what do you think the future of it is?

Ah, this is very difficult because I don't know enough about it, but I know that when I left the industry, which was at the end of '62… '82, sorry.

I was going to say, can't be…

’82, that I felt that the union would… it suffered from Parkinson’s law. And you would ring up to get an organiser and you would get a lady who would tell you what to do and you said, well I’m quite certain you’re wrong about that, but I’m not sure about what it should be. And you’re almost certainly an assistant, you know, and you very rarely could get your organiser, it was absolutely ghastly trying to get the organiser. And certainly when I first went to them about the things that were happening at the Coal Board, not about myself, that they just sweetly said, well, there’s nothing really we can do, I mean it’s the law. But maybe it’s the law, but there’s moral principles here too and they could have fought a bit and I would have liked to have, and I’m quite sure the union would have been prepared to if they’d had some good advice about how to. The union is the organisation that should be able to advise you on how you do things. You can’t, you know, this is their expertise. And so I felt bad about that and I don’t, I don’t know, I felt that when I went up to that office there were too many people. They could quite well have fitted into their office if they got rid of half the people they didn’t need. And I mean if you think of back in the old days when I knew it was busy there, admittedly there were many fewer members, but the staff was minute compared with what it is now. I don’t know, this is my own impression and as I say, I found that as a shop steward you got very little service. And…

Has it always been like that for you though, or was this a changing situation?

[09:43]
No, I mean for instance, way back when I was shop steward at British Transport Films and we threatened to strike, well before I did that, I mean Bessie of course I think was the person I would link it to, but when it came to a question of that sort one went and talked to George Elvin about it before you did it and you got his agreement and his, not just his agreement, but also his…

Back-up.

Back-up and…

Support, yes.

...and you wanted his advice about it, you see. It was very different and you see one of the things that happened then, I think that, personally, is that the trouble here is that George would know what everybody was doing. He didn't interfere with what they were doing, but he would know and he would be kept in the know and everybody knew they could chat with him and sort of keep him in the know and so on. But Alan, I don't think really knows enough and doesn't keep an eye on his organisers at all or interest in what they're doing, I don't think. He only pops in when there's something that's going to be good.

This is, in a way, the typical of an organisation that starts off small and then grows. I mean I'm not excusing it because I've suffered from it in the same way, but I mean this is usually what happens, when it grows, the personal bit…

I think that this is true Gloria, but I think that also what has happened, it also is very much dependent, as something like that, on the person who's leading it.

Oh yes.

Any organisation, it's still a comparatively small organisation, therefore the leader of it is a very important person at the top. And this is so with documentary film units which are small too, that the person who's leading it makes a lot of difference. And I don't know, but you see I feel about all unions now that there's something… I mean, do you see, look what happens with them, do they look after the weak and the poor unions? No. They only really sort of deal with the strong and the unions that are okay and don't need help.

Yeah, the equivalent of the multi-nationals.

Yes.

And I just feel it's all changed. I mean in the old days, what the union was there, was looking to the conditions of work and the pay for your work and this was the important thing and in so doing of course it was obviously interested in the work you did, but it had to be. But I feel that this has sort of gone.

So how relevant do you think the ACT is to films?

I think it's getting less and less so and I think this is the dire thing. I think you'll find there are many, many important people working outside the union, I mean without bothering about it. When I know and hear of pictures that have been started – features, these are – which are going abroad and a certain gentleman goes along and on one occasion he merely met with the producers and so on of the film and agreed things with them, he didn't see any of the people who were going to work on the film. Well, that's ridiculous isn't it? And, you know, the union is conniving at bad practices in other words, by doing this. So I have [incomp – 13:03] for it at the moment I think, you know.

That's how it is now. How do…

It deserves to lose its membership if it's like that. I think the union is stupid with… that people within the… I mean the membership is stupid too insofar as they should take much more interest in who's representing them and what they're doing.

That's always been a problem, hasn't it, apathy within the union.

To a certain extent, it wasn't so in earlier days. At one time it was very keen, well I was amongst those who took a lot of interest and there were plenty of people who did take an interest. I think because it was more or less… it was much closer to the time, you see when the union first started way back, people were working what? Sixteen hours a day, seven days a week for so many months, shall we say, or for six weeks or something and then, out they were, they got no overtime and conditions were dreadful and the union was very necessary. Well, this sort of business of a need for a union and need for that organisation of the people to get their rights, so to speak, in the way of conditions and pay, lasted on for a certain amount of time, you see, but after a bit when it's gone, and quite honestly people are very well paid indeed in large parts of the industry, if you compare it with what documentary rates were up until recently, specially if you worked for a nationalised industry or something of that sort, which…

Basic rate, yeah.

And paid the rates, you know, they were minimum. I think that as a producer I got less than an assistant editor at the COI.

But do you think overall that ACT played a useful role in the shaping of the industry? I'm not talking about it now, in the past?

[14:58]
Well, I don't think that that's ACT's job really. I don't know what you mean by the shaping of the industry.

No, that question has actually puzzled me. [laughter]

Well, I simply don't know what that means and I don't think it's…

It's not relevant.

Insofar as I can only interpret it, I don't think it's the union's job, I think the union's job is to see that with whatever shape the industry takes that the people who work within the industry whom they represent are treated fairly. I don't see that… how do you feel about that?

Well, I think the shaping of the industry to a certain extent, you know the support, if you like, of the film schools and that has helped to shape the industry a bit, wouldn't you think?

Ah, yes. Well, I'm not too sure about that…

No, I'm not sure about that.

I'm not too sure about, you see, the support of the film schools because I think that this has become lopsided, insofar as I mean *the* Film School has got too much of a predominance there and there are other film schools. And I think certainly there was a time, I know, during the latter years just before I stopped at the end of '82, when I felt that we were getting very badly equipped people coming in to work who thought they could do

anything. And… I think that film schools are okay, this is fine and this is useful, but I don't think that you should have one in a position of the major one, what do you call it?

The National Film School.

The National Film School. Because I think it's, again it's producing a hierarchy amongst students. Not everybody's going to be able to get there and I don't think that necessarily because – you've got to have had a degree haven't you, to get to…

No, no.

Well, you have to have some qualifications, you have to have something, I know.

I think you have to have some A levels or be able to sort of show that you're not a complete dummy.

I think you have to have a little bit more than you think. And the point is this, I don't see that you necessarily need those sort of qualifications to be…

No, I would agree with you there. I would agree with you there.

…film. And so I just… I think that it's too, they've defined it too clearly without being sure of what should be defined.

I think possibly – I mean I don't know how you feel about this – but I feel the best training ground was always the small documentary film company.

They were very good training grounds.

Those are the things that have gone.

Certainly when it was known that anybody had been through the Coal Board, there was a time, I don't say it was always so, but it was in the beginning indeed, certainly in the first half of its life, that you could say they had a jolly good training. The principle there was,

Donald Alexander certainly had this, that you were coming in perhaps to work on camera or help crew or editing or directing, but in any way you got your time doing all the different things and going around and seeing what it was all about.

That was on Transport a fact, yes.

And I think it's very sad that they've dropped all ideas of apprenticeship schemes, I think that was really a much better idea.

That was just an idea for so many years that never seemed to become a concrete fact.

Well, you see, there you are. I can quote now, Kay told me, has described on occasions what she's found when she's gone off to make films, you know, as the continuity, and she's been horrified at the lack of knowledge. And at how expensive the films turn out because they don't even know the techniques to use to do things, you know. And it's quite appalling really, but there you are. And therefore I don't think that you're helping if you're saying – what was your term, what was your sentence?

Shaping.

I don't think it's very good shaping if you're sending ill-equipped people in to do jobs that they're not equipped to do, you know. They'll learn eventually but they'll make some bloomers and they'll cost a lot of money, which is a bad thing.

Unfortunately it's the sort of industry where those sort of things can be hidden from the people who ought to know about it.

Probably.

You had some other names.

Have you got any more questions, first?

Well, that's the winding up.

That's the winding up, I see. Alright. Well, then I was only going to say that the hierarchy of Bruce Woolfe, that he was GBI [Gaumont British Instructional], Diagram Films, then Scientific Films and his brother, Willy Woolfe, had something to do with Scientific Films. And somebody who was in Diagram Films eventually landed up on, I think in Scientific Films, and I think it was somewhere down in Bramley [?] that he operated, and I did hear from him and I can't remember what his name is now. I might be able to search it out and find it for you. Now, on names otherwise, oh dear. We'd got as far as Basic Films, I think I told you about, Sam Napier-Bell and all the people I can really… Oh yes, of course, the man I mentioned, the cameraman was there.

[20:39]
Lionel Griffiths?

No, no, no, that was at… the Coal Board.

Tubby?

Tubby Englander [AA Englander] was the cameraman at Basic. Have you got that? And at one time Peter Brown was his assistant, I remember. Deb Cheshire [ph] was a production manager there and she went on to Rediffusion afterwards, you know, after the break up. Who were the other assistant directors? Oh, Pam Geary was there for a bit. What's her name? Oh, the lady who ran the library, what's it called, that big film library, called? Index. What's her name?

Don't know.

Oh God. Geoff! Peggy, Peggy, Peggy… Geoff!

Geoff Hermges: Yes?

What's Peggy's surname, the one who ran Index?

GH: Who ran what?

Index.

GH: Oh, Peggy Dowling.

Peggy Dowling, that's right. Peggy Dowling, who also ran the library at Film Centre for a time. She then started up Index. Well, before Film Centre, way back, she ran the cutting rooms at Basic Films, that's right. Now who else was at Basic Films? Oh, there was a bloke called… I can't remember, he went to Rediffusion, I can't remember what his name was. There were a number of people. [laughter] Oh, Adam Dawson was there for a bit at Basic Films, that's right, Adam, dear Adam, who's become a religious maniac I believe. Has he or not?

Probably through working for the BBC I expect. [laughter]

Is that what happens if you work at the BBC?

No! Anyway, he was there. Gosh, who else? Oh dear. Dear, then there was another boy I mentioned, I can't remember what his name is and I remember this at the Coal Board he was an assistant camera I think and went down underground for the first time, and when he came up – John Shaw-Jones told me this – when he came up they were all having a shower and he said, 'Gosh', to this boy, 'You have got a hairy back'. And he discovered half his hair had fallen out. He was alright, it all grew again, but it had fallen out. He didn't know he was nervous or anything, but his hair fell out through the effect of being underground, I suppose. It's a very odd thing going underground, because I myself am claustrophobic really. For instance, I was terrified of the undergrounds of London when I first came to London, but when I went underground at the pit I wasn't frightened at all. It's very interesting and you've got no feeling of being limited. So that was interesting. Oh dear, people, people, there's so many people. I wonder where I could find names. Why don't you have a chat with Geoff while I…

[break in recording]

Are there any particular films or programmes that you did that gave you more satisfaction than any other one?

No, I can't choose one. That's quite certain.

You loved them all.

Well, not all of them, no. I mean there are obviously some that you were sorry about, but there's so many that one enjoyed and felt happy about and I think that on every occasion there's a little something you wished you'd done or something, you know, but the satisfaction is there and as I say, I enjoyed this so much, seeing people – as a producer – seeing people grow and produce their style and do interesting work and it was very satisfactory. And getting people to work together, the crewing was very important, finding directors and editors, for instance, that worked together, directors and cameramen who worked well together, and a good crew that… Because it doesn't matter how good they are as technicians, you need to have the rapport between them that they can understand each other and work well together, it's a good thing. I think that's it.
[24:56]
On some names therefore, I just remembered two more at the Coal Board, there's John Fitzgerald who had an interesting career insofar as he went to Australia when he was quite young and worked in some mining there and came back to England and therefore got a job at the Coal Board, and from that he migrated into the Coal Board Film Unit, and he eventually became a director. And then he eventually went back to Australia, so he'd been there for a long time. We had Bob Kingsbury from New Zealand we had over here a long time ago, and he went back to, I think he's working in Australia now. There was David Pitt, was with us for many years, he was a director of some very good, I think he's done some very good work. I remember him from when he was starting to direct, you know. I've told you about a good many of the editors I think.

Did Bob Allen work for you? Bob Allen, sound recordist?

I don't remember, no. No, we never had sound. Oh, we might have on *a* picture. We had electricians of course always because they had to be able to cope with the underground

special lights, underground. But there were so many. And then in later days there was Gerry Bryant and there was… oh gosh. Oh dear.

We didn't talk about Cyril either did we?

Oh Cyril Arapoff, yes, Cyril Arapoff was there for a long time. He was another, oh beautiful photographer, I think. I remember once he did a lovely shot of some people running for some situation underground and just cap lamps bobbing until they came right up into shot, you know. He was, I remember on one occasion taking one of the other camera blokes down to do some awkward filming of – at Wharton Hall – of some model chocks that were being automatically worked, a new idea, you see, and they had to do lights coming on them and one thing and another and this other bloke couldn't do it all and I took Cyril down and he did it, he lit it and we got it all, you know. He's a very old friend of mine, Cyril, anyway for a long time. He remained till the end of his life youthful in attitude and enjoying things and liking everything.

Because he was still working underground until he died wasn't he, he was quite old.

No, during the last year or two he didn't go underground at all, I can't remember.

But I mean he was quite… how old was he, when he died?

He was seventy-eight when he died. But we thought he was older because he always pretended, kept quiet about his age, so we all thought he was older than he was. Dear Cyril. I don't know. I think we'd better leave it now because if I remember other names I can give you a little patch perhaps after we've had a little rest and a drink or something, don't you?

So if you could start your career again, would you change course?

Oh I think I've been terribly lucky, I really have. If you think of the things that I told you in the way of chance that have happened and have led me to something willy-nilly, I mean after all I tried to keep away from the teaching aura, so to speak, and found myself back in it. Although I was a poor artist, I've got an eye for things, you know, and was trained

through my art training and so I don't think I could have found anything that would have suited me better and I'm thankful that I got into documentary and not features.

And do you think luck actually plays a large part in it?

Oh yes, didn't it, I mean after all, the thing with Polanyi, I mean you know, and Diagram Films, therefore the link with Diagram Films and then being, I suppose luck and to a certain extent the fact of interest, because I obviously got on further through contact with people after I got to London and meeting people like Kay Mander, Rod Baxter and so on and people who were, seemed to think I was worthwhile trying out, you see. So I was, that was… I suppose two things worked together, but it was all through luck wasn't it? And then the Coal Board happened, working at the Coal Board and knowing that that job was coming up.

[29:45 - end of recording]

Queries

p.1 – Bengeham – spelling?
p.1 – High Carriages?
p.4 – Luytjes? Person who worked at Diagram Films
p.4 – Oriss/Orriss – spelling? Les Oriss who worked at Diagram Films?
p.4 – Finger? Worked at Diagram Films - artist
p.4 – incomp – talking about animating flak?
p.4 – Di Berline – spelling? Assistant at Technicolor
p.5 – [incomp] talking about mixing two techniques
p.5 – Luytjes – spelling?
p.7 – John Curtois x 2 – spelling? British Industrial Films
p.8 – Frank Dyede – spelling? Chilean artist at Publicity Picture Productions
p.13 – Vic Revell? Person attached to Colonial Film Unit?
p.14 – inaudible – talking about going to Worton Hall
p.18 – Alan Faulkner x 2 – spelling? Producer at Coal Board Film Unit
p.19 – Marcus? Friend of Alan Faulkner [ph]
p.21 – [inaudible] Talking about standing up to Francis Gysin when shop steward

p.22 – Kim Gay – spelling? At Coal Board Film Unit

p.27 – Hislop? Piece of equipment

p.31 – Lionel Pearce – spelling? Artist

p.31 – [incomp] talking about man carrying pole with fishing net

p.34 – [inaudible] talking about union matters

p.35 – [incomp] talking about Basil Wright

p.38 – [incomp] talking about British Industrial Films – address?

p.38 – John Curtois – spelling?

p.38 – [incomp] talking about meeting Bessie Bond – address?

p.45 – [incomp] talking about current attitude towards the union

p.49 – Bramley? Name of place where Scientific Films was?

p.49 – Deb Cheshire – spelling? Production manager at Basic Films