#55

CHRISTOPHER CHALLIS

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

KGY: Can I ask you some details about your early life.

CC: I was born on 18th March 1919 in Kensington. I had a French mother and an English father.

KGY: You went to Wimbledon College,

CC: King's College Wimbledon.

KGY: Where were you living at that point

CC: We were living in Wimbledon, Parkside Wimbledon College. In a house which doesnt' exist any longer. It was hit by a flying bomb during the war. I don't think there was anything particularly of note during my school career. I always liked films. I wanted to get into films. From an early age I liked the cinema. I was interested in photography. My father was interested in photography, just straight forward still photography. He had a close friend an American who came to Europe every year for the grand prix motor racing which he loved and he filmed it in 16mm which was quite a thing in those days. I'm talking about 1934 or something like that, maybe 33. I got terrible interested in that and he gave me one of his old cameras, a 16mm Bell and Howell and that's how I started to be interested in cinematography. I made a sort of school newsreel. I talked the headmaster into paying for the film and we made a school newsreel which we showed on speech day a couple of times. It sort of went down rather well and became quite popular.

KGY: Silent of course.

CC: Oh yes. And black and white although colour did exist but it was the old Kodacolor, a lenticular process which wasn't particularly good.

KGY: Did they use a lenticular process.

CC: Yes for 16mm but not a professionally.

KGY: It was reversal.

CC: Yes. That's how it all started As you know there was no formal way of getting into the film industry then. There were no photographic schools or schools for the cinema as there are now. It was finding some way of starting, finding someone who would give you a job. And I determined that was what I wanted to do. I don't think my parents were all that keen. They thought my education was all rather wasted. During the course of business my father met Castleton Knight who was the head of Gaumont British News, quite a character, an extraordinary chap. He did a lot of extraordinary publicity stunts at a time when newsreels were in enormous competition with each other and they would buy the rights and other companies would pinch it and they had newsreel theatres in London which showed nothing else and they would sometimes bring out two or three issues a day - tt was like a newspaper - if something big was on. I went to see him when I left school and he said bring up that film you shot.

I went to Film House in Wardour St. I don't think I'll ever forget it with my 16mm projector, they took me down into the basement into the big theatre there and I had to set it up to show them this wretched newsreel thing I did at school. I think I was just lucky because they didn't have

camera assistants on the newsreel. There was no such thing. The cameraman did everything. But live sound was just beginning and they had the couple camera, the Vinton camera with the British Acoustic sound system on the back which meant they were much bulkier which meant they had to have a sound recordist. They already had a two men crew and they had to have a truck to get it all in.

KGY: What year are we talking about.

CC: I suppose it would be 1935. They obviously needed more help and I started as a general dogs body humping and helping with all this extra gear which they got. They also at that time were getting great long focu lenses like the Dolmeyer lens, huge great things, 150" lenses so they needed someone to pull the focus because the cameraman used to do it himself, very often looking through the film, because the cameras in those days had open back gates, the Debries and the Eckerts. But they couldn't do that when they went to backed stock, sound. So I was very lucky. These two things created a job for me.

KGY: Do you remember the hours you worked.

CC: One never knew. Normally the newsreel operated from Filmhouse, Wardour St., they had a camera
room in the basement there and unless you were on a job you came in around 8.30 in the morning. But you never knew what was going to happen during the day. You might suddenly be off to Liverpool so you always had an overnight bag ready. And the hours could be fairly long but they weren't long on a regular basis. If there wasn't any work you worked 9. to 5.30, something like that and then you went home. But someone always took a camera home. One or more of the cameramen always had a camera at home so if anything happened they could phone him and he could go straight away in the night. They were simple little hand cameras, Newman Sinclairs or Debries or Imos so there was always someone who could do the coverage.

KGY: What sort of wages did you get in those days.

CC: I started on £1 a week. It sounds pretty ridiculous now but it was worth a little more then. But you also got expenses. And the expenses were a kind of recognised addition to your salary. I was quickly versed by them all in what one could claim and what one couldn't claim. And one could claim for things you didn't spend. It wasn't a fiddle - it was a fiddle in a way - but it was accepted by the management. If you went to Ascot for instance, you could claim the cost of a very good lunch. We couldn't have it so everyone took sandwiches and made a £1. You could claim - whenever you went anywhere with film you could go by taxi because it was illegal to carry nitrate based film on public transport but of course everybody did it because it was quicker. The labs were at Shepherds Bush. You went by train and charged for a taxi. So you supplemented your earnings in that way.

KGY: £1 a week was extremely low even then.

CC: It was. I don't know. Yes, it was. When I went to Technicolor which was much later as a trainee technician I only earned about £3/10sh which was about the right rate.

KGY: You went from that to becoming assistant cameraman

CC: Yes. I enjoyed the newsreel and it was an enormous experience because it was right at the tail end of the period at which they were at war with each other. It reached such a peak that they virtually had to put a stop to it because it virtually brought the test match and things like that to a standstill because people were all watching the efforts of the newsreelmen to steal the rights and they weren't watching the cricket. Eventually they got together and decided at major events they would pool it and not be in competition with each other. Things like the Grand National and the Cup Final they covered in a rota system. I never wanted to carry on doing that. I liked it. But I wanted to work on feature films above all.

I heard that Technicolor was coming in to make Wings of the Morning but only one film but they were bringing practically everyone with them. I went to Denham with a lot of cheek and no experience and asked to see a man named George Kay, head of the camera department in Hollywood, who set the thing up and I told I was very keen to come on the feature side of things and was very keen to work with colour and was their any chance of a job on Wings of the Morning. He said he'd write to me and he did. They gave me a job as a trainee technician. I wasn't allowed to do anything to begin except generally look around and load magazines and do things like that. That's where I met Jack Cardiff because Jack operated on the picture. He was a sort of London Films operator. He worked for Denham. I wasn't a sort of first assistant. I was much lower down the scale. They called me a trainee technician. They didn't call their first assistants first assistants, they called them technicians. In fact they were very much more than what we know as first assistant cameraman. They had to know an awful lot about the camera and be able to do a lot of mechanical work.

KGY: This is about 1936.

CC: Yes I think it must be 1936 because when they completed Wings of the Morning there was such a lot of interest in colour, there was a lot of interest in Europe and they decided to build a plant in England.

KGY: Korda had a hand in that.

CC: Did he. I don't know. I man called Ken Harrison was at the head of it and it was owned by Sir Adrian Baillie. He put up a lot of money for the English side of it although he had nothing to do with films and they kept me on. I was there when they built the laboratory and I worked through every department. When they brought the cameras in and set them up here - all the optics of the camera were British made - they were all Taylor Hobson the lenses and prisms and things like that and the cameras were set up over here so they brought over all their staff to set the laboratory up and they had English people as trainees learning how to do it and I went straight on to that.

KFY: Where was Jack Cardiff at this point.

CC: Jack was not there at all. I was the only Englishman there. Jack was working as an operator on another film.

KGY: Were all the rest American.

CC: Yes to begin with they were all American. I was absolutely the only one. Then the first of bit of filming that we did which would date it was a film abaout the coronation of Edward VII which was 37. Bill Score was

the cameraman and Henry Imerson the technician, again American. I worked on that as an assistant technician. It was all location stuff around and showing the countryside of England and finishing up with the actual Coronation. That was the first thing I worked on. Then I went straight from that to India on the Drum.

KGY: Were you still living at home at that time.

CC: Yes I was living in Wimbledon.

KGY: How did you get to work.

CC: I had a car, I had a little old Morris Minor

KGY: On £3/10 sh a week. Amazing.

CC: Petrol was 1/6d a gallon and you could get quite a good meal in the canteen of Technicolor for a shilling as far as I remember.

KGY: Then you went onto the Drum.

CC: Yes. I didn't work on the whole picture, just the location. We were in India a long time, it took a long time to get there. Osmond Borradaile was the cameraman. Geoffrery Boothby was the director. That was the whole unit. We didn't take sound or any actors. We went there to shoot all the battle scenes. They were big scale and to do a lot of stuff with doubles. The people who went from this country were Geoffrey Boothby, the director, Osmond Borradaile, Henry Imouth and myself. And we went right up into the mountains of . It took two weeks to get there on pony and foot. We worked all over India. It took two weeks to get there. That was the crew. Boothby had an audience with the Viceroy who read the script and then gave his blessing to the whole idea. Then we automatically got cooperation from the Indian army. Then Geoff Boothby got about half a dozen retired majors, who acted as our assistants since most of our work was with the army and they dressed half of them as and the other half of them as soldiers and we did all the battle sequences. And that was the whole unit, the camera crew was nothing. We used local people to help carry the gear around and hump it around on mules.

KGY: How long were you out there.

CC: I should think five months.

KGY: Where was this stuff processed.

CC: We had to kept it with us. You can believe this. Technicolor had never done a big location abroad at that timeand they did a lot of research into the stability of the stock under various conditions of temperature and humidity and they decided the way to transport it, they handmade a circular metal drum, each of which took two groups. In a group was 3 1,000 ft linear tins, so each of these drums took the equivalent of 2,000 screen footage and the film was put in them with a sillica gel, in other words a dehumidfier, and then they were soldered and covered with tape and challac and they were shipped out there. And there was no way of getting it back because where we were there were no railroads, no roads, we couldn't sent it off on a mule and hope it would get to England. So we kept it all with us. This was absolutely, ghastly, a nightmare because I inherited it because they produced a list

of their findings of the expected lifes of film at various temperatures when the latent image filled up and everywhere I had all this stock and when we reached civilization I searched for cold stores and hotel refrigeration rooms and when we got up country there was nothing. We had a base control and dug a great pit in the ground and we used to get the coolies to go up into the hills and bring back blocks of snow ice which we used to pack around the film and cover it with branches and stuff like that. I used to ride back from where we were working at night and reload the magazines in the tent and then take them back again next morning to where we were shooting. But we kept them all with us the whole time.

KGY: It was some months.

CC: Yes about five months altogether. It was all perfectly alright. Unbelievably.

KGY: Were you there when they showed the rushes the first time.

CC: No I didn't rate being invited. I was too low down the scale. Technicolor were quite different to - if you were working on a production you went as member of the production crew. The rushes at Technicolor were still a much higher level operation, just heads of department and people like that. They were very cagey about rushes. They didn't print in colour. It was very expensive to start with and took a very long time so they made black and white rush prints and then they did colour pilots. You shot a pilot at the end of every scene with a neutral grey scale and three white cards, one at right angles to the axis of the camera and one of either side at 45^{0}. Then a test footage of 20 ft of the scene and that what they did their printing tests on. They tried to get neutral light across the scale and whites on the card and shadow detail and everything like that, and that's what the producer saw together with his black and white rush prints for checking action.

KGY: Where you ever aware of all the criticism, especially coming from the ACT of the number of foreigners employed.

CC: Not really. I joined the ACT, I don't know when, but when I was on the newsreel because we had a chap there who was very in on it. He was a sound recordist of the name Prike. He later came into Denham. I think he was one of the chaps responsible for forming the ACT. He joined me. I was a member from then to the War and then my membership lapsed. I forgot all about it when the war was on and I joined again immediately after.

KGY: Did you meet any important cameramen at this time.

CC: Ray Rennahan who was a famous Technicolor cameraman who did Wings of the Morning. I met Bill Score, another American, of course, Georges Perinal and people like that who were all at Denham. But in my capacity one did not mix with them like one would now. You didn't speak unless spoken to. It was quite a different world.

KGY: Would you say at this stage of your career you learned from them

CC: A lot. Perhaps not at that very early stage. But when I was in a position where I could ask them things, I found them all extremely helpful and very kind and glad someone was interested. Technicolor did give you an incredible grounding which I don't think you'd even get in a film school today because you went right through everything down to the

scaling of the lenses and they put you right through the laboratory too, and soyou went right through the processing, you worked in each department so you knew how it all worked which was a wonderful training really. They didn't let anyone out to be the equivalent of a first assistant until they'd done a lot of work in the laboratory and knew a bit about it.

KGY: Were you able to discriminate between the work of one cameraman and another if you saw there work.

CC: I think so. There weren't very many top English cameramen working here. I suppose Freddy Young was about the only one and Desmond Dickinson, a few odd people like that, but mostly they were foreign cameramen, particularly the American ones, people like Jimmy Wong Howe I was very interested in. I always wonderful the low key sequences he did in Tom Sawyer which is a very early Technicolor picture. They always said you couldn't shoot low key and they low key sequences in the caves proved that you could. I eventually met him many years later. Yes I was interested in the work of other cameramen.

KGY: I know Powell says when he saw the way things looked like when Perinal shot them he couldn't believe it and he thought he was the best there was.

CC: He was wonderful with women, Pery, marvellous. He was an artist. I think there were others, Gregg Toland was a legend, he was marvellous.

KGY: You said you were at Technicolor, and the only Englishman there, did this help your career do you think.

CC: I think it did. I think it helped me a lot. After the war. I didn't start life until after the war and I was very lucky to start so young with such a small period as an operator, I didn't serve a long apprenticeship as an operator. It did help me a lot because nearly all pictures were in colour then. I had this basic training in the process and I knew what it would do and what it wouldn't do.

KGY: Do you know if Technicolor were concerned with any competitors.

CC: No. I never heard them talk about that. Not at the level I mixed with in the company. They were very keen to produce a monopack system, a single film system. And they had it available and it was actually used beofre the war but it was virtually Kodachrome, reversal, it was not a negative positive process. They tried all sorts of things. They tried a two colour process too. In fact the original Technicolor was a two colour process and they actually cemented the two colours together in register. That wasn't very successful, I don't think, obviously.

KGY: Then you worked on Whirlwind Travellogues. What were they.

CC: They really were rather unusual. Kay Harrison, I think he was the managing director, he hadn't any technical knowledge or anything like that, he socially met this expatriot German Count von Keller who got out of German because of Hitler, he wasn't a Jew but he didn't approve of Hitler. He met and married an extremely wealthy woman and he was a great traveller. Harrison met him and he told of his proposed travels. And Harrison said if you're going to do all these extraordinary travels in the Middle East, why don't you make films and you must make them in colour because there is a big market in travellogues. He thought this

was rather good idea and he teamed up in Italy with this chap called John Hanau and they jointly decided to make three test films in Italy. One was about zoos, one was about Rome called Rome the Eternal City and the third one was a pack of fox hounds which was called the Rome Hunt and these were the only fox hounds in Italy. He did these three films and Jack Cardiff got the job of operator cameraman and I was his technician. I was then a fully pledged technician. And that was when Jack and I really started to work together, apart from me knowing him on Wings of the Morning. And then it went on right up to the war. They were hugely successfully because they were quite different from the Fitzpatrick travellogues. They were much more interesting and they were well made. They had proper strips. We did a whole series in the Middle East, Syria, Petra. And we had special trucks built. Then we did a whole series in India and then war came and that was the end of it.

KGY: When you were on these trips did you send the stock back to England.

CC: We did when possible. It was always tricky. There weren't any really flights, what there was was pretty unreliable. And so it meant sending by boat and you couldn't put in cold store because that was too cold.

KGY: Did these get theatre showed.

CC: They were purely for theatrical showing and they did very well financially. They made quite an impact.

KGY: They had some narrative.

CC: They had a spoken narrative.

KGY: Can you say something about the Technicolor camera of this time.

CC: There was only the one camera which was 3 strip. It was large. It hadn't got a turret. It had single interchangeable lenses, a single lens mount and magazines had 3,000 ft and so were jolly heavy to cart around. It was a difficult camera to take on location because the heart of the Technicolor process which is still an engineering miracle to me, it had two gates in the camera which were at right angles to each other and one was a single film and the other was a bi-pack. Two films running together emulsion to emulsion and the image coming through the lens was split intensity allowing a third of light to the single film and two thirds to the back and this was done by means of a prism which had a spotted surface across the middle which allowed part transmission and part reflection of the image. The rotation of this prism was unbelievable critical. The images had to exactly coincide in the register so when finally it was printed they were so accurate you could enlarge it up on a cinema screen and you could get reasonable definition. There was a degree of adjustment in the printing but it had to be as right as one could have it in the camera and it was adjustable, by means of moving the prism. A jolly difficult thing to do on location. The reading of register when you were working in England - the camera was sent to the laboratory every night and they went in to the mechanical department and the registered was checked and then you did a photographic check of register every morning on the floor before you began to shoot and you photographed a chart which was read that evening under a toolmakers microscope so they could check the image size and the spread in tolerance to get the kind of definition they wanted in the final print. When you

were a long way from home you couldn't have a microscopic check because nobody could do that so you had to do it visually. And of course you were into all sorts of problems if you were out in hot countries. You had a jig in which you put two pieces of film and you drilled with this special jigs five holes, one in the middle and one in each corner of the actual packager. These were 12/1000" in diameter these holes. Then you put the film into the camera, the strip of film you drilled. You put the down in register so you actually used the claws to pull into the right position and the register would pin the holes in just as the film would come down when the camera was being used. You took the pressure gauge out of the gates and you put lamps so you were shining lights through the back of the film and then you put the prism in and then you looked through the lens to the telescope and you could see these five holes one at a time and they didn't exactly coincide. And if they coincide, the filters on the prism they were right, if they didn't you had a magenta or green fringe around it and you then had to adjust the print on a rocker until you got the best distribution of error over the whole area. It was never absolutely perfect. You had to get it as right as you could get it. It was an awful business doing this. We had to do it every night when you were away from home.

KGY: On a film like The Drum, the bulk of the camera you had that problem.

CC: It was a nightmare. Thank goodness on The Drum that was not my pigeon, we had an American Henry Imeson and thank god although I was supposed to be learning he let me do it and then he would check me. He was like a school master actually. He was absolutely wonderful. There was no jeolousy or anything like that.

KGY: How did the equipment change over the years.

CC: Very little. It was incredibly advanced compared to any other camera when it came out. The lens mounts were just magnificent. They were on roller barings, the actual mounts, and they had motor focus so the assistant could stand away with a motor and follow focus on it. It had a parallex reflective finder at a time when many other cameras the old Mitchells even had the image upside down, it was a very advanced camera indeed for its time and it never really changed. The blimp was enormous. It had to be to house all this and make it quiet. It had wonderful geared heads which have now become universal although they had them when nobody else had them. The geared heads were by Moy - of England which is interesting - they went onto the studio dolly which was wonderful because although it that this enormous weight, it was really easy to operate. At first not many people knew how to use it and then it caught on and it was the only head anyone ever wanted.

KGY: What was the speed of the film.

CC: It wasn't rated but I can give you an idea of light levels. In the studio on Wings of the Morning you had to use 700ft candles, wide open on the lens, you had to shoot wide open, I think that now you can work at 125ft candles or even less. It had to be arc because the process was balanced to white light, daylight, because there was no coating which was compatible with incandescent light so anything you used you had to balance to day light or white light. So anthing you used you had to balance, so arc was alright, slightly blue so you used a very pale straw colour filter.

The biggest inkey in those days was 1 kilowatt. By the time you got a filter in, you got an internal filter in those days you cut the light by 35% so you only got a 5 watt anyway so to get 700ft candles you could just about light a head and shoulders.

KGY: What was the situation with black and white in the studios.

CC: At the time black and white was very haphazard because Technicolor were the only people who used any photometers. A lot of cameramen didn't use meters at all and some of them, I forget who it was now, he had a system of a white card with a light on it and measured all his high lights in relation to that and didn't use a meter at all. They just didn't have meters. Then when they started to get meters, they did use them but never quite in the same way. Technicolor had very accurate meters which read input candles and virtually because they had to light things to a lower level of contrast, you needed a lot of filler light, they had to try and keep a careful control over it. You took three readings. You took a direct light reading and then you took one at 45% either side which coincided with the charts which you used to photograph. Then they used to add the there together and divided them by three and that was the way you got your basic exposure. If it was a 1,400 ft candle you shot at stop 3 or 2.

They weren't T stops as we knew then, they were S stops, they were Technicolor stops, which is very much like T stops. The stops were a measurement of the light transmitted by them, they weren't a mathmatical calculation.

KGY: You've worked also on black and white films. What difference would you say is in the lighting for black and white.

CC: The basic difference is that with black and white you're trying to create the illusion of depth. In that all you have to help you is tone separation, so you're trying to get your separation by tones. It was complicated by the fact that the emulsions didn't respond the same to different colours, before panchromatic you were in terrible trouble with reds. That's why you had coloured viewing glasses which gave you an idea of separation you could actually get. I think white lighting is subtle and much more difficult. I think the problem with colour is the contrast in the system. You need a lot more filler light and shadows are underexposed areas and highlights are overexposed areas. Correctly exposed areas are the only areas on the negative which in theory give you colour rendition and the degradation in both the highlights and It's vastly improved now. It still happens. Sometimes it still looks burnt up. It's alright if you want that effect but if you don't and you want to have as near perfect colour rendition then you have to have perfect exposure and the original technicolor system, as opposed to colour as we know it know, had an advantage, its main disadvantage was the lack of definition because of the mechanics of the actual process. Its great advantage was that the negative was black and white and you could even force one record in processing if you were in trouble. Then when you came to the matrices you had enormous control over how you printed it. You could also superimpose a paint black and white image which could vary in intensity. They did it originally to help definition, they took it off the blue record which was the sharpest of the three negatives and they put a light, a black and white key which helped draw the definition on the prints. It all helped the contrast. They

could with the Technicolor print desaturise the colour until it was black and white. You had infinite control. You can't do any of that with modern process.

KGY: You yourself came to black and white, did you find it a difficult transformation

CC: Not really because I photographed in black and white. Although I worked for Technicolor, my opportunities for lighting were first in black and white. During the war it was all black and white. Then my first film that I photographed as a lighting cameraman was a black and white picture, the first two.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

KGY: Did you meet people like Ed Mann.

CC: I never got to work with him but he was around with Korda a lot, The Shape of things to Come. I sort of saw him round in the later days at Shepperton. Korda brought him back for various odd things. He was an incredible man in the sphere of special effects.

KGY: In terms of the work you were doing you didn't come into contact with things like that.

CC: No, never.

KGY: This takes us nearly to the War, can you tell us something about that. I believe you jointed up in 1939.

CC: I joined in a wave of patriotism. During the Munich crises 1938 I joined the Territorial Army, then didn't do much about it because I couldn't go to a camp because I was away on location. So when war broke out I was mobilised with all other Territorials and I hadn't any training at all. The whole of the battalion, I joined the Middlesex Battalion, was the same and they took what arms and transport we had away to give to trained troops and we were relegated to guarding the East India Docks without any weapons without any weapons without anything and it was really very frustrating and I was fed up with it. I was really lucky because I applied to be transferred to the RAF and they wouldn't let you. They had this extraordinary idea that you couldn't transfer to a junior service.

KGY: Were you actually conscripted.

CC: No I volunteered.

KGY: You could have stayed as a reserve occupation.

CC: Yes. A lot of people did . Most of them did at Technicolor, Jack Cardiff, Geoff Unsworth, all of them, they none of them joined up. I eventually transferred to the RAF early in 1940. I was in the army a short time because my father came back into the RAF and there was a means of claiming a relative - I went into the RAF. And eventually they formed a film production unit with Derek Twist who was the commanding officer and Teddy Baird the adjutant and they promulgated a notice throughout the RAF asking for anyone, regardless of what department they were in, if they had any experience of the film industry, some of them they knew about, to make themselves known and eventually we were all transferred together as the RAF Film Unit to Pinewood Studios.

KGY: Did you travel at all while in the RAF?

CC: A lot

KGY: Can you say something about this.

CC: I went to the Azores which was quite interesting and I filmed the whole of that alone. I was able to help the Imperial War Museum which was one of the thing I could do, nobody else was there because I went alone and I didn't know where I was going and they built this airbase on the island of . We were granted permission to do it under this

oldest military treaty which was in existence in the world which we had with Portugal. And it was absolutely vital to the War because there was this area in the mid Atlantic which couldn't effectively be controlled from either side by air and that was where all the U Boats operated because they really couldn't be touched. And this airbase virtually sealed that gap. A huge convoy went out from Liverpool, the Franconia was the main ship carrying most of the people and the transports, they virtually built the airfield within 48 hours of the convoy arriving and there was no harbour, there was nothing, they had to lay out at sea, and fairly close inshorere and everything had to be brought inshore by lighters and they made this temporary runway and it was literally operating within 48 hours and they operated Liberators, Coastal Command Liberators and that made all the difference in the Atlantic War.

KGY: What sort of film were you making there.

CC: It was an extraordinary thing. One had total carte blanche. I didn't know where I was going. I had no idea I was going on something which I had to cover. And I didn't know what it was about till were had failed from Liverpool when I was then briefed by the senior RAF officer who said this is what is happening. What I did and what filmed was left entirely up to me. None of the other units, - the other services had film units - but none of them were on this although there were a lot of army and navy personnel involved. Basically it was an RAF thing. I covered that and I went to North Africa and I went to France just after D Day and stayed there till the end of the War and finished up in Germany.

KGY: Were you shooting actuality footage or were you creating it.

CC: We did a bit of absolutely everything. We had our own aircraft in the end. The film Unit , they became so conscious of it's worth the Air Ministry that we had our own flight of aircraft. We had one of everything, we had a Lancaster and a Hudson and a Mosquito so we could operate wherever we were. In Normandy we had a Boston which we used for filming all sorts of strikes around the time of , it could operate with the other Bostons, it was a low level bomber.

We made hundreds of aircraft recognition films. Funny enough it was developed by Technicolor by George Gunn, didn't he get an OBE for it, he did this trainer, they built one at Technicolor. It was entirely a Technicolor invention, Happe and Gunn and someone else did it. The idea was that you had a gunner's turret in a dome which was like a screen, like the thing that they project all the stars on, a small edition of that. The idea was to project a film of any type of aircraft you like diving on the gunner and he would have to fire on it and it would automatically work out the lay off and if he would have hit it at the speed he was travelling at. We shot a certain amount of film for that, the various training films but not the things they projected on the gun tower but the trainer films so they could get a good idea of what the aircraft looked like from its out line. We filmed the real aircraft. The images of the diving aircraft were models which Technicolor photographed frame by frame and they had an animation analysis machine so that they could control all the movements exactly correctly whatever speed of approach it was making, and it was filmed frame by frame.

KGY: When you were filming, you were filming to a brief but did you know what the material you were shooting was going to be used finally.

CC: Sometimes and sometimes not. There were millions of feet shot of

anything that might happen that was interesting. That went back without any report sheets. There were no crew, thre were no continuity girls. It was of interest. The Azore stuff, I don't know how much I shot but there was an awful lot of film. The Ministry of Information released some of that which was in all the newsreels about our forces in the Azores. That was about 1/500th of what I shot. It was all in black and white.

KGY: What sort of camera did you have.

CC: Mostly Newman Sinclairs. Then we did get involved in things which they couldn't put war correspondents on because of conditions of secrecy. Don't ask me why but the RAF filmed all the experiments of the finally laying of Pluto, the pipeline. The first pipeline they made was like a telephone cable. It was rolls of copper wire covered with a bitumastic thing. It was like a vast hollow telephone cable. Then someone conceived the idea of welding together lengths of ordinary steel pipe and wrapping it on these cotton reel things which they then towed with a couple of tugs and unwound. That went on for a long time and we photographed that from beginning to end. A lot of stuff from the air and at sea. Nothing was ever shown of that till after the war.

KGY: What rank did you go in.

CC: I went in as a ordinary airman and I finished as a flight lieutenant.

KGY: When did you come out.

CC: After D Day. The funny thing was that from Normandy onwards we were split up and we had our own little sections and we operated as little individual units photographing whatever we thought of interest. I went right into the Ruhr because they were very anxious to film the results of the bombing. They didn't really know what it was like and they wanted it on film as well as stills. My section was attached - I had two sergeant cameramen, transport and aircraft - we were attached to a group called T force. They were scientists in uniform with a commando group to protect us. The idea was to get into all these places in the Ruhr as early as possible, even ahead of our own troops if we could because these chaps wanted to look at things which they knew about and they hoped they could get before the Germans could destroy them or our own troops vandalise them, or whatever happens in the course of war. So we went along with them which meant we got in terribly early in all sorts of places in the Ruhr and we were able to photograph Krupps, in fact George Brown, who was a Rank producer and in the RAF Film Unit and his group were present when the Americans arrested Krupps at his house and they filmed that. Again nothing to do with the RAF but we just happened to be there.

We were constantly looking for stories. We were like correspondents in uniform and the BBC had a habit, we used to get news from them before anyone else and it was wildly inaccurate sometimes. They announced the fall of Holland. They said the Hague had fallen and Amsterdam. So I set out to go to the Hague in the Oyster because we were dropping food to the Dutch. They were in a terrible state, they suffered more than anyone else, they were all starving and we were dropping food. We got about half way and we realised, the pilot and myself that there were no sign of any of our troops and there were still German sentries on the bridges across all the canals and things and although they didn't attempt to fire on us we hadn't got enough fuel to go back so we had to carry on and we flew

right at N and got to the suburbs of the the Hague. And there was a football filed and some cows and little house all around. We decided we could land there. And we landed with these cows going in every direction. Hundreds of Dutch people swarmed out of these houses and said what at you doing. They spoke English. We said we've come to film you. They said the Germans are still here and they surrounded us and took us to a house and a German half track appeared at the edge of the crowd which numbered several hundred people and they just stood and watched, they did nothing and went away. The Dutch resistance people turned up by then and said you've got to get out of here because although the war is virtually over for us it's not and the Germans are still here. No doubt they will think twice about doing anything now because they know the writings on the wall, it's not a good idea for you to stay here. We said we hadn't got any fuel. They said we'll get you some. The Osyter flew on ordinary 80 octane and they duly did. They got some fuel. Meanwhile the Germans had come back with reinforcements. We took off in the midst of all these cows and people and they had signed their name of the fusillage of the O and we came back. While we were there our Lancasters came over and dropped food which I filmed. It was wonderful. They used film of it. There was a terrible uproar because the Canadian general who was commanding the forces who were waiting to enter the Hague, he wanted all the glory. An RAF Oyster with a flight lieutenant in it rather pipped him at the post. He apparently objected very strongly to it to the higher ups but I never got into any trouble over it. I think they thought it was giggle. They probably pacified the character and said I would be repremanded but I certainly wasn't.

KGY: You came straight out.

CC: I was demobbed and went onto the set of 'A Matter of Life and Death'. Jack Cardiff who was filming it wanted me to come onto it. I had known Micky before. I'd worked as a technician on part of Thief of Baghdad before the war at Denham which Micky was directing. That was when I first met him. But I doubt whether Micky would have remembered me. So in a way you can say that Jack introduced me to Micky and persuaded him to let me photograph this second unit of 'A Matter of Life and Death'

KGY: What was the second unit stuff in A Matter Of Life and Death.

CC: It was comparatively small, it was the sequence where the doctor kills himself on a motorbike.

KGY: There are two sequences on the bike aren't there. Yes and we did that and other odds and ends. it was an odds and sods unit.

KGY: Did you photograph the stuff on the beach at the beginning of the film

CC: No that was the first unit.

KGY: This was your first contact with Powell was it.

CC: I worked with him as an assistant on Thief of Baghdad but I don't think he would have been terribly conscious of my presence. Anyway I was introduced to him by Jack you could say. Then Jack Unsworth who was operating, he had got an offer to photograph a film, it was his first film as a cameraman, it was a mucisical of some sort over at Elstree. He left. Micky agreed he ought to go, it was a good opportunity and I took

over from him as operator for not a big proportion of the film, just a bit at the end.

From that I went on to Black Narcissus as a camera operator, with Jack again lighting. The Derek Twist, who knew Micky and Emeric quite well as an editor, he knew Micky quite well, he wanted to direct, he got this story End of the River and Powell and Pressburger produced it. Derek wanted me to light it which I did.

KGY: Derek Twist edited Edge of the World.

CC: That's right. He was a very good editor.

KGY: This was a way of saying thank you.

CC: I didn't know that but it's probably true.

KGY: Why was a film like that not made in colour.

CC: I should think expense largely. It was a very difficult location. I would certainly have cost a great deal more if it had been done in colour.

KGY: I believe Powell and Pressburger had very little to do with it is that right.

CC: Yes. Nothing, they gave their name, it was produced by the Archers, I think they had a bit to do with it in the later stages in the editing, they weren't particularly happy with the first cut and we shot a bit of extra material.

KGY: I remember discussing it with Powell and he said its all coming back like a bad dream.

CC: It wasn't a very good picture. No they didn't really have anything to do with it at all.

KGY: Did you feel at this stage in your career your Technicolor experience had been a great advantage to you in getting onto A Matter of Life and Death and Black Narcissus.

CC: Yes I did because I think I was very lucky. It was marvellous training of a very high calibre which was not available anywhere else, certainly in England, you didn't get it if you went into the camera department of one of the studios. You were kicked around. You got the tea and you were a general dogsbody and nobody bothered to teach you anything. You just picked up what you could. At Technicolor, it was just like going to a school, pretty well. All the chaps who came over initially to set it up, they were nearly all graduates and scientists and they were all of a high calibre and they were all without exception extremely nice people who were very glad to help and teach.

KGY: Were you aware when you were working with Jack Cardiff you were working with a great artist.

CC: Yes Jack was a great friend of mine as well as me working for him. Jack was a highly original person. I don't know quite how to describe him. You could if you wanted to be unkind say that Jack is a Jack of all trades and a master of none. But that's putting it in a very unkind way.

Jack has a great ability to master the rudimentary esentials of something he might be interested in without having a deep knowledge of it and put it to extremely good use. He always had a passionate interest in painting and art and in fact he paints incredibly well. He's never had a lesson. He taught himself by copying. He tried to learn from painters about lighting which is a jolly good way of learning about the source of light and the key light and I've always, possibly because of having worked with Jack, I've always felt exactly the same way, I think that lighting to me, I cannot abominate hundreds of shadows which I think destroy the tidyness of the image. Logically you can say it's absolutely wrong. If you have two people sitting in a restaurant there are lights all round them and if you look at it they have things hitting them from every direction. It might be true in fact but you light it that way and it looks dreadful. Apart from the fact that the people look awful which they mustn't do. You can't have awful looking people in films. It just doesn't look right. If somebody walks up a huge spiral staircase, followed by 18 shadows up a wall it isn't as good or clean or neat or as dramatic as if followed by one. I may be wrong about this. Certainly the Dutch painters painted exactly like that. They eliminated unnecessary light. They went from one strong source and they did exactly what you do in films, if you have one deep shadow on a face they would hilight the wall behind it to throw it up in relief, exactly what you do in film, the best way to do it in a film, not to pile on a lot of back lights so you can see the outline, to have the balance right.

KGY: That's what Hitchcock did

CC: Exactly right.

KGY: You weren't simply working with an important director and important cameraman. You were also working for key designers.

CC: Yes. Junge. A real old German martinet, a wonderful designer, Hein Heckroth who did the costumes. He was also German but totally different from Alfred Junge.

KGY: Can you say something about their styles.

CC: They couldn't be more opposite really, because Alfred Junge was a film designer and had been an art director on a lot of films in Germany for UFA and things like that. He knew all about cinema, every trick of the trade. Hein knew nothing about cinema or the tricks of the trade. He was a very good painter. He was a stage designer, really, opera

KGY: Opera and ballet.

CC: and when he came into films he always thought in terms of the way you would do it on the stage which is very much why the Red Shoes classical ballet was filmed so much in the camera and then Hoffman which I photographed was totally that way. It was wonderful to work on because it was all done with theatrical effects, that was a very interesting film to work on.

KGY: But Junge knew about things like lenses, how would he know.

CC: Yes. I suppose he was designing for a screen format and he knew exactly one could get in at a given distance with a certain lens. He drew everything up that way. He always marked, it was an accepted thing in those days, when you went on an impressive set there was always the

longshot which you did to show off the set before you did anything else and Alfred always put a cross on the floor and he said this is the camera position for this shot.

KGY: Then he put a lens number on it.

CC: That's right. Of course it wouldn't happen now. But for that type of film it was right . He was a very good art director.

KGY: But say when Heckroth worked on the Small Back Room, do you think there's a kind of similarity of design.

CC: I wouldn't have thought so. I think Hein was not at his best on The Small Back Room. It was largely a location picture, all the Chesle Beach sequences. i think the interiors were inconsequential from the art direction point of view and he had a very good, they didn't call it that then but now there are production designers and art directors. Then they were art directors and head draughtsmen. His head draughtsman was somebody who's nobody alive, Arthur Lawson who had worked with Alfred Junge and he took a lot of the burden of that sterreotype stuff off Hein's shoulders.

KGY: Lawson didn't have a great creative imagination.

CC: No he didn't. He was very much rule of thumb.

KGY: British craftsman.

CC: Yes. He was not highly imaginative.

KGY: Were you aware of working on an important film on those two.

CC: I was on Red Shoes. I had photographed End of the River by then. I had one picture behind me and I asked to come back and operate on The Red Shoes because I desperately wanted to work on the picture. I liked ballet and loved the story and the whole idea of it so I came back of my own volition. I wanted to come back and do it. The picture was terrific to work on, the ballet particular because it was different to anything else and it was shot as an entity, the ballet. It wasn't mixed up in the schedule with anything else, because of problems of stage place. We shot the whole of the picture and the whole unit went on holiday for two or three weeks while they built the sets for the ballet which occupied pretty much all the stage place we had and then we came back and shot the ballet as an entity. Hein had done some very good, they were more than sketches, they were paintings of every shot in the ballet. Micky had them all photographed and they were cut to the length of the score. In fact we had the ballet in colour in terms of static paintings and as we filmed it every couple of days they cut in the live action in place of the static stuff. Gradually this film the ballet came to life. It was the most wonderful experience I've ever had.

KGY: The Heckroth drawings became a film in their own right.

CC: Yes that's right and all that stuff is in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

KGY: Yes.

CC: It was absolutely terrific. I'd never experienced anything like it.

It was jnot ust myself who was interested or affected by it. Rushes which we always had at lunch time, everyone hates because it means you give up part of your lunch hour only those who have to go go. It was like a first night every day. All the sparks and the chivies from the offices all came from the rushes, sort of 50 or 60 people standing, they were absolutely fascinated by it.

KGY: This was all done to playback, how would it have been done, was it on record.

CC: Yes it would have been on record then I suppose at the time of The Red Shoes.

KGY: What did you feel it was like working with Powell.

CC: I loved it. People
are sharply divided between the ones who like him and the ones who don't. I think with Micky there comes a moment of truth, usually sooner or later. Is bully the right word. He doesn't suffer fools lightly. He can be very unkind to people. And he gets on top of them, you just want to leave and give up. If you don't let him do that, if you stand up to him, he likes to have people who stand up to him around him. He doesn't like everybody to say yes If you fight him, not just for the sake of it but because you have something to say, then I think you get on ith him very, very well. I certainly did. I like working with him. There are so many good things about him that people don't know. He doesn't look unlike him, he's a sort of General Montgomery, actually the stories of his kindnesses to his people and his loyalties to people aren't know. Esmond Knight thought very dearly of him. Esmond worked with him before the War and he was terribly injured, he was blinded. Micky was the first one to offer him work. He said I couldn't. Micky said of course you could. We'll be your eyes. He supported him. He stood by lots of people like that. He was very loyal to the people he liked but he could be terribly unkind. He was a great visual director, he had been a photographer and a good one in his own right. That's fairly right. There are a lot of directors who are very good but are not visual at all. Micky was very much a visual director. He knows how to use the camera He could visualise it all. Some haven't any idea what it's like until they see it on film.

KGY: How did he work with actors.

CC: He's less good with actors than he is with cameramen. He prefers the crew to actors. He can be very hard with actors. Micky is a good director with good actors and a very bad director with bad actors or mediocre actors because I don't think he has the patience. What I'm trying to say is Carol Reed was also a good director in a completely different way. Carol could get a performance out of a child or a bad actor in a strange way which they weren't capable of giving. He would extract it if necessary line by line knowing he could plane the other line off on somebody else. He had the patience. Probably he hated them more than Micky hated them. But he would never show it. In that sense he wasn't such a good director. Another director exactly like Micky who I worked with a lot was Stanley Donen. Stanley can't cope with people he doesn't like or is irritable with or it cross with. I think this is the one thing as a director you can't afford to do. Because if you have to work with an actor for one reason or another and you can't get rid of him, if you can get rid of him all right but if you can't, which can easily happen because of the casting then you just have to be able to go

along with it and bear with it.

KGY: I think you'r right. He does recognise people who will stand up to him. Marius Goring tells a story, Micky said if you're an actor what do you want to rehearse for.

CC: That's a typical Micky remark. A moment of truth came to me almost immediately. I'd worked on the second unit and I didn't really have a lot to do with him and he like the material. When I took over from Geoff Unsworth, operating, I think about the second day, it was on that enormous ampitheatre set which was the high court in heaven and it was a crain shot and it started on the aurora borealis, it came down, it finished up with a two shot with Kathleen Byron sitting in the audience, the camera started off with the camera right up and it was a very long and complicated track shot and it ended up, its last position was eye height, low down on the crane and you could look through it and Micky came across and looked through the finder and said that's not the way you finished is it. I said yes Micky, why. He said I can't think why you finished like that. I said because I think its a jolly good composition. He said don't give me your washed out theories. I said if you don't like it you bloody get on and do it yourself because I think it alright. He looked at me and there was a long silence and he said alright print it. That was my moment of truth. We were fine. If I'd said I'm sorry how would you like it, because there was nothing wrong, he did it deliberately to see what would happen.

KGY: Can I ask you to go back a bit. When you were on Black Narcissus were any of the sequences prerecorded. Powell says they were. Bits of movement where the sound was already laid. Eastdale said it can't be true. I don't remember it. Those sequences where Kathleen Byron was going mad and running down the corridor.

CC: I don't think so.

KGY: Those bits towarads the end where Kathleen Bryon goes mad and is running along the corridor.

CC: I don't think so. You mean we shot it to play back. No, I certainly don't remember that..

KGY: One other film I wanted to ask you about. There was a film called The Laughing Lady, where does that come in. Paul Stein directed that.

CC: I've got it down.

KGY: I don't recall Paul Stein.

CC: I have no recollection of it at all. I worked on a matter of life and death and then I took over as operator from Geoff Unsworth. I left Technicolor and went to work for Independent Producers. I never made a film with Paul Stein as director. The only thing I can think of I may have gone out as a Technicolor technician for two days work on it, a short period I went back to Technicolor before I went onto a matter of Life and Death. Otherwise my names's been put on it and it shouldn't be there.

KGY: Can I ask you about colour stock. Had that changed during the war.

CC: No it hadn't really, not at all. They had made considerable advances

in their monopack as they called it, but it was still not a negative positive process, it was still a reversal film, it was Kodachrome really. It was made for them by Kodak. It wasn't made by Technicolor. Then they broke it down into three negatives and then used their own printing process. It wasn't very good. It was very slow but it was a way of using an ordinary camera which could be smaller if you had to.

KGY: Had Technicolor lenses changed in the period of time.

CC: No they hadn't changed at all.

KGY: So shooting for you was no different.

CC: No, the cameras were unchanged. The first change that took place, cameras and lenses not at all, was they bought in the incandescant stock. They brought in a film stock which was balanced to incandescent light and therefore was considerably faster and they produced, well didn't Morgan and other people did, produced carbons you could use in arc lamps which burnt at a temperature roughly the same as an incandescent light. The only trouble was they smoked very badly. Other than that you had a great advantage in the amount of light you needed. That was the first thing which happened of any significance that I can remember.

KGY: There's one more question I want to ask you about A Matter of Life and Death. Did you every see Powell improvising dialogue or anything of that kind on the set.

CC: No.

KGY: I'll tell you why I ask. I have a script of A Matter of Life and Death which Powell gave me. There is considerably more in the film than there is in the script.

CC: No but I wasn't there for a great deal of the shooting of the picture. I only operated on a very small section of it towards the end. The rest of the time I was nothing to do with the first unit. The rest of the time I was nothing to do with the first unit. I was still in the RAF when they began it and then I did the second unit. I can quite believe it was so because Michael had a system of working. He always had a secretary on the floor at a triangular desk which went everywhere with him and he had this secretary, she was with him on the floor all the time and Micky, his way of rehearsing, he would rehearse a scene right the way through. Then he would listen to any suggestions either from the technicians as to how we might shoot it or from the actors about any problems including ones they might have with dialogue. The he would say alright, let me think about it. In the meantime, we'll start with this shot. I or whoever was lighting would have something to do, he would go and sit at his desk and write out a complete list of every shot in the sequence including any revision in dialogue, this is where your point comes in, he would bring in all the suggestions various people had made, and he'd have it roneod and everyone who needed a copy would have a copy.

KGY: So it would be for that stage, his cameraman knew what combination of shots.

CC: We didn't stagger around saying what do we do next, they went out that way, no every seqeuence he worked out on the floor. You would have a list of shots you were doing so you could shoot them in the best order. He was very good about them going out of continuity if necessary.

Sometimes he wouldn't if it was a very difficult dramatic sequence from an actors point of view he would say no we have to do it in continuity which makes sense. Otherwise you'd say to if if we're going to do a long shot from over here obviously if we could do these other four shots which are all this way instead of having to come back and rewrite the backing four times it's going to save a lot of time, he would say fine.

KGY: He wasn't known for master shots.

CC: No

KGY: Because he really planned it very clearly.

CC: Yes he had this very good visual sense. He didn't cover endless in case it didn't work which is the case with some directors.

KGY: He wasn't like William Wyler who would make take after take.

CC: He was more like Billy Wilder who was quite different as a person because Billy's a writer primarily, he has no visual sense at all. I don't think Billy

SIDE 3, TAPE 2

CC: Although he had no visual sense he never took onr unnecessary shot. He didn't cover the thinG in a master shot and a closer master shot and then a two shot, then over the shoulder and then big heads and then very big heads. Billy, because he was a master of the spoken and written word, he knew what value any line had in the overall pattern and he would play lines of dialogue on the shoulders of somebody's back looking out of the window. Most other directors would do a reverse through the window, he never did anything like that. He covered in the absolutely minimum of shots. He once said to me he couldn't stand all this business of a lot of big heads. I think a lot of it has come from television. And people were using it in film. He said you should treat a close up as a jewel and only use it very infrequently, if you do more than that it has no impact. Up to a point Michael was like that. He thinks in term of film, althouth in his case he was visually motivated and the other one isn't but somehow they were both going towards the same end.

KGY: How did you distinguish between Powell and Pressburger, not so much as people but the roles they played in production.

CC: They were perfect foils to each other in every sense of the word as human beings. Emeric, who was Hungarian who persisted to speak to the end of his life with a very heavy accent but nevertheless had a great mastery of English, had a sense of humour, a totally original way of looking at things, incredibly lazy, mentally. I think it was quite an effort for him to get down to work and write yet all his original stories are their best films, the adaptations aren't as good. I think all the original things are so wonderful. A Matter of Life and Death is as unique to the cinema as Walt Disney. You couldn't do it in any other medium. It had to be that way. They virtually wrote that script in four days on a boat from America. They hadn't got a final script when they got off the boat but they got something they could sell

KGY: They incorporated it with MOI ideas about Anglo American relations.

CC: It was wonderful the idea of heaven in black and white and using Technicolor to be able to change from one to the other. It was a great bit of filmmaking. As writers you need a great deal of technical knowledge to know you can do that before you start writing the script. They were good foils. Emeric had the originality to write those sort of stories. Micky used to jokingly say Emeric wrote the scripts and then he translated them into English. Emeric was a writer. That's what he did at Ufa and that's what he was. He wasn't interested in the technicalities of filmmaking. He wanted it to look nice. He was very musical. They were a very good partnership. Emeric was very quiet, very sensitive with a rye sense of humour. Underneath his gentle exterior he was terribly strong.

Michael Powell was a boy scout at heart and an extrovert but Emeric was able to restrain him without ever it becoming unpleasant or nasty.

KGY: You never found Pressburger difficult.

CC: I never found either of them difficult. I never heard them quarrelled.

KGY: Eventually they both quarrelled.

CC: I don't think they did. They went their different ways. They both lived frugally. They both had various domestic problems. Emeric's wife left him. Increasingly since Micky was on the floor directing although they took joint credit for writing, producing, directing, Emeric tended have to deal with all the mundane unpleasantnesses of money, schedules and all that sort of thing and as that became increasingly nasty with the changes in filmmaking, he got very disenchanted with that and Micky equally became more interested in the theatre and wanted to produce things in theatre and Emeric wanted to write.

KGY: I suppose it wasn't very pleasant for Emeric to have to deal with John Davis.

CC: Exactly. Although Micky was very good and very tough with people like John Davis, it naturally had to be Emeric because Micky was on the floor.

KGY: What about Theirs is the Glory.

CC: I can't think. Again another one I don't know. How I got a credit on that I can't imagine.

KGY: There are three Powell films which are interesting partly because two of them were very unsuccessful, Gone to Earth and The Elusive Pimpernel. Gone to Earth looks extremely beautiful, but it doesn't work as a film, do you know why.

CC: That was very much a Micky rather than an Emeric picture. Micky is a countryman at heart. He loves the country. He likes Mary Webb and she's very much part of Shropshire and he liked the story. It somehow - it was made in the wrong way. Because of financial reasons it had to be made in partnership with David Selznick and because of that we had to use Jennifer. I like both Jennifer and David Selznick very much indeed but I don't think they were right for the movie. I think it would have been a much better picture if it had been made with different artists and in a different way, the way that sort of film has been made since by other people, in a much more naturalistic way. It was contrived.

KGY: The novel itself is very mannered.

CC: Yes it is. It would be better done on television than film.

KGY: How were the sets done, were they properly constructed sets.

CC: Yes.

KGY: The sense I have watching it is that there are no corners in the room, there's a whole set of flats.

CC: Actually I don't remember that particularly. Heim was the art director and I'm sure he applied some of his stage techniques to it. Micky had a period when he said he hated conventional sets and most art directors built houses to live in and not sets to photograph. Of course there's a great deal of truth in that. It stems with a lot of art directors from working with unknows directors, or known directors, who don't know what they're doing and the art director has to cover himself from every conceivably possible angle. If he works with a director who

says I'm only going to shoot from this way and that way and I don't give two hoots what I can see out of a window, and he really means that and you can rely on him, you can do that sort of thing, build bits of things and let the rest of the thing go away to nothing. But then if suddenly the director says I'm going to have a reversal you're sitting there thinking what am I going to shoot in. I think Micky did have this period when he was preaching the philosophy you only want the essentials of something and you don't want the reality of it in making a film. I do seem to remember now on Gone to Earth there was a lot of discussion about that and we did do that up to a point. It was all candle lit and you could let it go to darkness, firelight and the house in London, the house in London is what I think you've got in mind, the squire' house was very much like that.

KGY: There was an extraordinary shot through a fire which is absolutely what I wouldn't have expected him to do.

CC: Terrible idea really.

KGY: I suppose what I feel about it is that it's a film where there should be lot of passion and its completely sexless.

CC: I think there is probably not one reason why the film was not successful, there were a number of things, there was the cast, it was not that they were good actors but just that they were miscast, similarly later when they cast Glenda Jackson as Sarah Bernhardt. Very often such casting is because of financial reasons.

Selznick was very unhappy with the picture and he reshot part of it. Selznick was a nice man. He wanted Micky to go over and do it and Micky wouldn't. Mamoulian directed it. Selznick asked for me. I was under contract to the Archers. They could have refused to let me go but they didn't

KGY: It isn't just Jennifer Jones who didn't perform very well was it, David Farrar didn't perform well.

CC: The only one who was good was Griffiths and he was excellent.

KGY: Yet its still got some of Powell's touch which is of interest

CC: Great scenes of the countryside, again it's the visuals, perhaps it would be fair to say that Micky was obsessed with the visual side of the story.

KGY: What about the Elusive Pimpernel.

CC: That was a sort of disaster. That was another Korda Goldwyn mix up and because of some contractual obligation, Micky should never have done it, it was never their choice, it was never their picture. He wanted to make a remake of the Scarlet Pimpernels which was a poisonous idea to begin with, so it would never have been as good as the Leslie Howard, so why they agreed to do it I'll never know They then tried to make it tongue in cheek which didn't work. It was disastrous from the word go. The film was finished and the word got around that Korda decided to reshoot a large section of it, quite significant reshooting and the press got hold of that. Alex before we started had a party and invited all the critics to announce the intention of shooting on The Elusive Pimpernel. One critic said to Alex these retakes are very extensive, Alex said yes

they are, the reply was how much are they going to cost, Alex said about 30% of the original. It was then asked what was the original cost. Alex said 100%. He got absolutely no where.

KGY: A film I admired admired a great deal is Tales of Hoffman, I wonder if you could tell me your experiences on that

CC: I loved making it. You could almost say it was the first serious attempt at filmed opera and it was an original way of doing it because it was almost entirely filmed to play back. Not the singing, we didn't shoot it was mostly dancing, we did it on the movieola and he dragged it into synch without any clapperboards or anything. It was hot entirely on the silent stage. It came from Isleworth , this huge stage built for The Shape of Things to Come and when they close Isleworth they decided to move to Shepperton. It was a sort of steel structure in corrugated in asbestos so it wasn't sound proofed but it was the largest stage in Europe and we didn't need to record live sound we did 99% of Hoffman on the stage. We had one interesting thing Beacham conducted it. After a great deal of persuasion he agreed to conduct. He recorded the whole score on the piano, singing excerpts from most of the songs but he couldn't sing in tune and he played this score and sang these various songs and gave his comments as he played as to how various things should be and what could be done and what couldn't be done. Whether it was preserved or not I don't know. A great piece of film history.

KGY: I've never heard of it before.

CC: It was done and I heard it a number of times. Hein did the sets and they were operatic sets. He wanted to do it the stage way. We used gauzes a lot which become solid and transparent as they do in the theatre, in other words if you wanted to have something painted on gauze in front light with solid backing then if you take the front light off and you light what's behind it's transparent. We did a lot of that. All the way through. It was intensely interested from that point of view and stylised and wonderful sets. I don't think there has been anything like it before or since.

KGY: Did you use filters

CC: We used filters, gauzes, split screens, masks, we did absolutely everything.

KGY: Where did you get the filters from.

CC: There were these two old ladies who made the filters, I can't remember their names now. They weren't English, they used to paint them by hand. They made graduated filters and colour filters and Their name was Geiger.

KGY: All hand made.

CC: You went along and told them I want that sort of colour and they did it. They made the filters.

KGY: Were they German.

CC: They had a German name but did not appear to be German.

KGY: The only reason I ask is that so many of these photographic

techniques seemed to come out of Germany.

CC: They oculd have been, I don't know. Pretty well everyone at that time used them.

KGY: The end of Hoffman, there's a sequence where Pamela Brown is painted all in gold and that's been removed. Powell said it's been completely lost.

CC: Why's that.

KGY: The story is that Korda and Pressburger insisted on removing it when the film was shown at Venice. They thought the film was too long. If you see the film now it's not there. I've never seen that. Powell said't it's now proably completely lost.

CC: I didn't know that. The only time I saw it, apart from in the offices after it was made, the only time I ever saw it was at the premiere. No I ran it once for Stanley Donen as a point of fact when we were making The Little Prince. We were talking about how we were going to do the aircraft in the desert and we were in front projection and back projection and every other sort of projection and I said to Stanley a lot of it I think I can do for real
and I got Hoffman over for him and ran it for him and I don't remember that was in there or not.

KGY: I want to make a comparison between Hoffman and The Red Shoes, did you alter any of the dance speeds in the way you altered in Red Shoes.

CC: No. Now wait a minute, we did it in one sequence and that was in Act II when she lures him to her boudoir and they dance in front of a mirror and you see their reflections, she steals men's reflections and therefore their hearts. You see them dancing in the foreground and in the mirror in the background and they turn slightly faster but and his reflection disappears and just leaves hers in the mirror although they're both there in the foreground. There was no mirror there, it was split screen. They danced both parts and they did it so well that they could do it in synch. So we photographed them in front with the plain and the we photographed the reflection part and I lit the set behind with a slightly blue card to make it look more like a reflection and we photographed the two of them dancing in the background and to duplicate her and then we photographed her dancing in the background and then we dissolved in and put the two splits together, it was all done in the camera.

KGY: You didn't use any slow motion camera.

KGY: Can you describe the motor which was used on The Red Shoes which altered the speed.

CC: It was the ordinary DC location motor which was capable of running the camera which was capable of running the camera from six frames up to

KGY: Variable speed.

CC: Yes

KGY: There's an article by Jack Cardiff that makes it sound as if it was done differently.

CC: Dear old Jack's a good artist but not much of a technician.

KGY: Your work has always been admired for its technical excellence, what do you think this means.

CC: I don't really know. I think that in my experience the cameraman play an important part in how the film is. Often he works in a total vacuum. He gets no lead how the director or producer want it to look. You're told Lana Turner is 48 and you've got to make her look x. Only two directors have told me in my experience how they wanted a film to look. Micky was one and Stanley Donen another and Joe Losey certainly. Some of them always appreciate the importance. The cameraman can be an individualist and can photograph every thing in the same style or he can alter his style and do what the director wants tells him to do. This is terribly apparent with Zeffirelli. All his films, regardless of whom they photographed by look exactly the same. He knows and tells them exactly what he wants. I find that quite interesting.

KGY: Do you have a style of your own.

CC: I try to have a style which is not he same in every picture. I had a purist approach to lighting. I liked to light things with the minimal of light. I like directional source light which of course now gone out of the window, it's all reflected light and zoom shots and flat, it all looks commercial style which is all glossy and pretty but it's not good for a film. It's terribly effective on commercials and very easy to do. If you come in on a long focus lens and wide open it looks very attractive, it makes people quite attractive. A cameraman in feature films, there are so many conflicting things he was trying to do, he's trying to tell a story, he's trying to make it dramatic, realistic but he still has to photograph the artists, they have so much power and earn so much money and they all wanted to look taller than they were and younger than they were and this is very easy, it is very often the case that to achieve this you have to sacrifice a lot of other things, you have to light them a long way, you get into terrible trouble. I remember a discussion with Stanley Donen when we were making Arabesque, somewhere in the Midlands sitting on top of a roof waiting for it to stop raining waiting for a shot looking down onto the unit and Stanley said I have all this hanging round my neck, I can't do what I wanted. The next movie I'm going to do is going to be dead simple. It's a great story it's about two people making four journeys across France at different parts of their life in four motorcars. It's a lovely story and we're going to shoot for real, a tiny little unit, a handful of people. I said who's going to be in it, Audrey Hepburn, I said Stanley if you have Audrey, you're going to have a unit of 180, a pyrotechnic and her clothes, I'm not talking against her, she's super person but she's that sort of star. Anyway you couldn't photograph her in direct sunlight because she looked - it's a very unkind light for anyone unless you're making that sort of picture with a 16 year old girl who's very pretty and anyway doesn't care how she looks and is in no position to insist, you can shoot it how you like with a hand camera and get a beautiful picture. You can get some beautiful effects. You can't do it with Audrey Hepburn. You have to shoot everything in backlight, so you have to have brutes which means you have to have generators, electricians and they want a meal break and hot lunches. It all falls apart and that's how it ended up. We had a huge unit and couldn't do the journey across France, we had to do it in a day's location in Paris and it was too unreal.

KGY: You worked on Genevieve. What was that like as an experience.

CC: It was terrific. It was the first film made on location in all weather. Up until around that time if you had sunlight and everything was matching you couldn't shoot, if the light went yellow at four o'clock you couldn't shoot. Henry Cornelius had no money, it was a super script but nobody would give him any money to shoot the script and eventually he raised most of it from the Rank Organisation, he had the raise the completion guarantee from mortguaging his house, the whole picture only cost about £90,000. George Gunn, the head of the camera department at Technicolor rang me up, I was on holiday, and said could I could back, Henry Cornelius had this wonderful script and he wanted to know if I was willing to do it. I met Henry and read it. The thing was I got £90,000 to play with. We had to shoot it on exteriors in England in October and in order to have a hope of making it we had got to shoot every day irrespective of weather, we can't rely on whether there's enough light to get an exposure and I rely on you to be honest and tell me that. Are you willing to take it on. I thought it was quite a challenge and it was quite interesting. I had a bit of a gag. I had an old exposure meter and a stuck a bit of red tape on it, Corny instead of you asking me every ten minutes if it's alright to shoot, here you take your own light meter and if the meter is above the red line we can shoot. Corny in return said fine, that's the way we're going to make the picture and I promise you in return if there's a halfpenny left in the budget and there's anything you're desperately unhappy about we'll redo it. It was a photographic horror from the academic view of things but it was a successful picture and so it got a good write up for the photography.

KGY: Photographically it's not remarkable.

CC: No, it's a documentary in weather which was totally out of continuity, nothing matches. But we had fun doing it and it was a marvellous script.

KGY: Of all the directors you've worked with which ones made the greatest impression on you

CC: I would like to total four, Michael, Stanley Donen, Joe Losey and Stanley Donen. They're all completely different. They've all made terrible films and wonderful films

KGY: What about working with Losey, is he easy or difficult

CC: He's very demanding but I liked him enormously. I must add another one, Carol Reed. They were all different, they were all real crafts-men. They were all real filmmaker in every sense of the word and I liked them all very much indeed.

KGY: You only worked once with Losey.

CC: Twice. I did his last film which was a terrible film really, Steaming. I also made Blind Date. He was a man who knew what he wanted. He went through the script with me over a period of three days telling me how he wanted everything to look. He's about the only director I ever worked with who's done that

KGY: What were the qualities you looked for in a director.

CC: A director, you can only make a successful film one way and that's

the director's way. You can have a film directed by a panel, although it might be with the best of intentions it doesn't work out at all. If you work with a strong director who is open to suggestions and criticisms but knows what he wants it the way to make a good film, that is what I would look for I would look for a director who really knows his business. I have no faith in young genius. I don't mean it doesn't exist. In order to make it of any value you have to serve an apprenticeship in some form of art, it's no good saying I have it in me, I'm a great sculptor, I have something burning inside me, I can do it. Unless you know how to handle the hammer and chistle you can't be. Equally you have to serve an apprenticeship in film. You have to learn all the rules in order to know how to break them. First of all learn to be a draughtsman and then you can disregard the rules and break them but until you're a master of the rules you don't know how to break them. I think it's very true of directors

KGY: What would you say are the most important films you've worked on.

CC: Hoffman, in a way Arabesque, I think that was quite interesting. Stanley he asked me if I would do it. He said I've a terrible problem. I've inherited this script, I've got to make this picture for various financial reasons, Columbia have got Peck and Sophia contracted for a picture and we've got to use them. It's not my metier but I'm stuck with it. The only think I can think of is to make it so visually interested that people won't know what's it about and so fast and that's what we did. That was a terrific challenge. It was very varied. We did reflections and in Panavision and hefty equipment. We had quite a thing for Two for the Road, We learnt quite a bit from Arabesque which was mostly studio work but we did quite a bit in cars and we did longshots through windscreens. It was all studio back projection and highly complicated. I loved shooting through windscreens. There had been this sort of theory which had gone on up till then that if you were shooting in a car or train and there was dialogue you couldn't be outside the window because it wasn't logical you could here. We did some shots on Arabesque in the studio like that and stanley loved them and when we came to do Two for the Road which was done on location, half the picture was done like that. We were going to do it the same way. We were going to be in studios in Paris and bring all the equipment from England, a trainload of it. We were sitting on location in the rain one day and Stanley was grumbling away about all these people - he didn't like special effects people and would do anything in the world not to have to have anything to do with them. I said Stanley why don't you try lashing up something and doing it on a real car. He said what do you mean. I said we could mount a camera on a car and I could stick some sun guns and a battery and a tape recorder in the back and we could let them drive off down the road we could get on and make the picture. We did that and he loved the test. With all their reflections, quite often their faces were quite wiped out by the reflection of the sky. He said that's it. He got on the phone and cancelled at the back projection equipment. That was the sort of person he was. That's the way we did it. We did quite a lot of sophisticated fittings but there weren't the lights there are today, the cameras are heavier and the sun guns aren't so good and the batteries didn't last so long so we had to conserve the light to the last second. You could line the shot up and try and balance it but you didn't know what it was like in it's length if they were driving through woods you never knew precisely what was going to be reflected.

SIDE 4, TAPE 2

CC: Albert Finney would be in this car with four or five sun lamps beaming through the window a thing built out with gauze on it to cut out some of the reflection from the sun and a tape recorder in the back seat and three cameras at different angles and he had to work the lot, because nobody else could, he had to turn the camera over and turn the recorder over, then switch the lights on and drive the car and play the scene. He used to put some wonderfully amusing dialogue saying Challis and Donen are sitting there like a couple of schmucks back there having coffee and I'm doing everything for the whole bloody crew and then he'd go straight into the scene.

KGY: By this time of course you were using different stock.

CC: This wasn't Technicolor, it was Eastman colour. It was not quite up to date but it was a fast stock. There was no trouble with film speed.

KGY: When you shot Oh Rosalinda that was in CinemaScope. Did it cause any problems for you.

CC: Yes it did then, CinemaScope then was not very good. The choice of lenses was very limited. There were no zooms or anything like that to help you. You had to use a higher light level.

KGY: Quite a lot of it isn't quite in focus.

CC: They were just bad lenses. They were lacking in definition.

KGY: How do you feel about using Panavision.

CC: It was a vast improvement. Whereas CinemaScope was just a supplementary lens that you stuck on the front of the camera, heavy bulky slow, Panavision almost from its inception was a photographic system. They produced absolutely everything and I think for almost the first time ever the people producing the camera listened to the cameramen, I don't think any of the others did, Mitchell certainly never did, they were alright but they weren't guided by what cameramen said they wanted. Whereas Panavision equipment was marvellous, enormous step forward, they then made them small and lighter, then they had zooms, it was a great step forward the Panavision camera.

KGY: The CinemaScope was just an add on lens

CC: Yes. They eventually did make what they called combined lenses but the original invention, it was quite an old on, it was years and years before CinemaScope came out. It was invented by a Frenchman originally. It was a lens you put on the front of the projector and so it was a supplementary lens.

KGY: Why did you shoot it in CinemaScope.

CC: I suppose it was the fashion.

KGY: You think Powell was made to do it as well.

CC: I don't know if he chose to do it. I think he may well have chosen to do it because Battle of the River Platte was going to be in Cineamscope and it was changed at the last minute because John Davis fell

out with them and they went over to America and did this deal with Paramount and we had Vistavision .

KGY: What about Vistavision.

CC: It was chronic. Terrible cameras to work with. Ungainly and awkward. The whole idea of it was just lousy. It wasn't to bad if you saw it project the same way with Lazy 8 but how many people saw that. It was premiered like that and otherwise it was an optical reduction print so you ended up with something which wasn't any better in quality than if it was shot straight. The original Vistavision negative was an eight perforations, like a negative running sideways, then when they twisted it and put it within a conventional frame lost part of it and it was a reduction print and they quality of it was lousy and it was also more contrasty and because of the size of the negative and you got wider lenses and so you had to have much more light with it in order to get the same depth of focus. A 50mm lens on Vistavision roughtly had the same angle of view as a 28 on a conventional frame and you got twice the depth of focus on a 28 than you had on a 50 and in order to get it if you wanted to hold a two people shot you had to hold more light. It was an awful process and awful equipment.

KGY: Did you work with any other high definition systems.

CC: I worked with Todd AO. I worked with Ultrapanavision which were both 60mm systems. Todd AO was straightforward, it wasn't anamorphic. It was 70mm projection whereas Ultrapanavision was 70mm projection but with an anamorphic squeeze. The Todd AO equipment was a bit lacking, there wasn't much of it, it never got very far because the same thing happened. It was alright when it was projected with a 70mm print but that wasn't very often because not many theatres would put in 70mm machinery so you ended up with an optical reduction. The same went with Panavision. It was magnificent if you saw it with a 70mm print.

KGY: What was your favourite camera to work with.

CC: I think Panaflex. Reflex cameras are a great advantage to start with. It was light and easy to handle. Everything about it was good. It came fairly late. Before that the studio camera was the Mitchell but it had a lot of disadvantages and it was rather big and you had to rack it over. It was the staple diet for many years because the old Bell and Howell camera was virtually rendered absolute with the advent of sound because they couldn't silence it effective. We had the Vinten camera which was made in England which was alright, it was not a bad camera but it never really was as good as the Mitchell. Nothing much happened in the world of cameras until in the war the Ariflex appeared and it was designed as a combat camera for the German forces and it was developed after the war and became a very sophisticated studio and hand cameras and it was a big step forward in cameras.

KGY: The Mitchell weighed about 150 lb.

CC: It was a very heavy camera. And none of them were reflexes which is a great advantage from the operator's point of view. Then the real significant thing was with Panavision because they did produce as I say a photographic system. Lots of other people have tried to follow along and produce a poor man's Panavision where they've cannibalised other cameras and some of them aren't bad but none of them are as good as Panavision.

It's beautiful equipment really.

KGY: When you went on location did you take the same camera all the time as you used in t he studio.

CC: With Technicolor yes, you only really had one camera. For many years there were only four cameras in this country and then they brought over more. But there was certainly no thing such as a hand camera, so you just had the one camera really.

KGY: When you were filming in those days did you use tracks very much.

CC: Yes. We did. Technicolor had, the fearless dolly came over from America and the Technicolor adapted it and called it the oscillator. That would only track straight but the up and down movement was operated electrically so it was like a little crane really. That did give you movement up and down but other than that they were simple dollies that people made which you could steer and if you had a flat floor you could push them around on that. They were the earliest forms of dollies I suppose..

KGY: Did you use curved tracks.

CC: We used curved tracks quite a lot. The Arimax dolly which was virtually a pedestal and they made it more and more sophisticated and that now goes on tracks as well as on wheels and it will also go on curves and you can put a crane arm on it.

KGY: Did you always use a light meter.

CC: All through my career I did. Technicolor used to supply light meters - I mean they leant them to you - and they were very good ones. They were Western meters. They had a location one and a studio one which was like a great big box. They were very accurate. They were scientific photometers. They measured incident light very accurately. When it became more and more necessary for accurate exposure which modern processing needed. Initially, I suppose, cameramen would go to the lab with their negative and say do a test on it and if it doesn't look too good give it another two minutes. Of course obviously with the advent of sound and controlled processing you had to get the exposure side of it right which isn't always that easy and photelectric meters were the answer. They had the old extinction meters which I never used. You had a sort of comparison thing and you stopped it down till you got the same density on two things. It gave you some sort of idea but it wasn't very good. I've always used a meter.

KGY: In the 30s it was a bit of a rag bad and there were very few technically minded people. You described the gentleman who had a white card and held it up to the room.

CC: That's true. I suppose cameramen as a race a descended from the Bioscope fellows who were travelling showmen and went around showing them in tents. They weren't technical orientated and most people were self taught. Certainly there weren't any schools they could go to.

KGY: That was why it was important there were expert technicians from abroad who were training others.

CC: France has had a film school for a long time I don't know when it

started but much much before ours. In the States they've had degree courses at Cal Tech and other universities.

KGY: Do you think those film schools give you the same kind of background and apprenticeship really as you had.

CC: No I don't. But I think in combination with training, sabatical periods they're very good. I don't think they're very good if you only do that and they come out only wanting to be directors and discussing Battleship Potempkin when they're working on Charlie's Aunt. They're so far removed from the reality of what they're going to have to do that that isn't a very good thing but in combination it's obviously a good idea. That's why I said earlier on that Technicolor did provide the only equivalent to that sort of training that I know of. No studio did it I believe Gaumont British had an apprenticeship scheme but I think you had to pay to go on it like any other sort of apprenticeship. Whehter anyone ever did it or whether it ever worked I don't really know.

KGY: Did you ever make any commercials.

CC: Not many. I made some for J Walter Thomson. I had a strange contract with them when James Archibald left Rank and went to JWT as head, I don't know what he was, I suppose head of their film department, he put quite a lot of freelance people under a sort partial contract and I happened to be one of them. I did a few of them. I never did a lot. I never really cared for them, quite frankly, didn't like them. A few of them I worked with were film people, film directors who were hard up and needed the money. They were alright. Then there were the new sort, although I think they make them terribly well, I think they're a precious sort of people. They drive you up the wall. I couldn't stand them. They waste an enormous amount of money. I think you could do it for a fraction of the costs really and truly.

KGY: Did you feel there was a difference in the shooting of a commercial apart from the sheer extravagance of it.

CC: There was a difference but an unwarranted one. For instance, a packshot as they call it, the piece de resistance of the whole think where there is a pot of cold cream or a packet of peas. In a film we call them an insert and we knock them off afterwards a dozen at a time in half an hour and they all have to match and go in with lighting and key in with scenes. We take no time at all. But you do the same thing in a commercial and that's all it is and you have about 15 people looking into the camera, all fiddling it about, moving it about who really don't know what they're doing, just trying to justify themselves. It's a joke really.

KGY: What years were you making commercials.

CC: I never did them persistantly. I had a period when there was nothing else happening. Rank had hardly any production at all and I'd been with them. I'd only been under contract once in my life apart I was under contract with Micky and Emeric but it wasn't a contract, it was a sort of gentlemen's agreement and it never bothered me. I never wanted to be under contract and I signed a contract with the Rank Organisation against my better judgement, I was persuaded to by dear John Bryan who I like very much. He was a producer who had been an art director and John promised me that I would only have to work with him. 8 months later he had a row with them and left and I was left with a three year contract

which was dreadful. I'd made quite nice pictures, I'd made Spanish Gardener with him, Windon's Way, I'd quite enjoyed that so when that all folded up and there wasn't much round I did this period most with J Walter Thompson. That wasn't too bad I quite enjoyed those they were quite amusing. Then I did the odd one here and there and then I did a few more with James Garrick set up as producers. I didn't like them or what I did with them. By then commercials had become and I'm talking now of what 8 years ago, a bit more, they'd started to become very expensive and very precious and they started to go to the Bahamas to do shots of footsteps in the sand sort of thing, and I don't know I shouldn't say if it's justifiable or not, I don't think it is.

KGY: I just want to finish up with some questions on the ACTT. Can you remember who your nominees were.

CC: No I can't it was a long time ago. I should think almost certainly Crike was one of them. It would have been one of the Gaumont British newsreel cameramen someone like Edmunds. It would be one of them.

KGY: Can you recall the period from the union point of view.

CC: I can only remember and it was an awful long time ago, it wasn't a union in the sense that the union is today. It was the sort of a guild. I remember it talked about as a professional guild. I remember going to meetings in and around Wardour St, mostly in pubs and The Sudbury Dairy was one place they used to meet which had a sort of a cafe. There were one or two people on Movietone news who were quite keen on it. I think because it was one of the Gibbles, Jock, was quite a keen ACT bloke. But I don't remember then much about the ACT although I remained a member I never had much contact with it after I left the newsreel business because I was abroad much of the time on a very small unit and it didn't have much of an impact. People at Technicolor didn't have much membership there, they may have done in the laboratory.

KGY: You yourself wouldn't have recruited members.

CC: I can't claim to have been an active trade unionist. I supported the idea. I remember during the war although my membership just lapsed. I didn't pay any dues or anything like that. During the War we did discuss and were interested in all that was going on with this attempt to get better condition and working hours which was going on during the war and just after it and I very much supported the idea of having a rational working week. It was proved pretty conclusively you could make films like that. But that now has been totally eroded. That's the sort of thing I'd get rather angry about because there is this terribly division of aims. I feel, as i say I'm not a trade unionist in that sense, but I never thought it was a good idea there were so many unions, because everybody had different ideas and payscales and structures. The deals that they negotiated, they got reasonable working hours but there were so many escape clauses, except in the case, I forget the word, problems with exceptional circumstances. You can always make up an exceptional circumstance. If it doesn't cost any money to the producer he'll always try and do it, say he has schedule problems, or this or that sometimes they're true sometimes they aren't true. i don't think working excessive hours is a very good thing. Sometimes it's necessary and you have to do it i's that sort of job and if you don't like it you shouldn't join. But more often than not you end up working excessive hours through just sheer bad administration and it doesn't cost very much or it didn't cost very much here in terms of overtime and they got away with it. The American

system I applaud because there they don't get involve d in politics, they just say if you work you have to pay and you have to pay prohibitively and if you go into the golden hours, and everyone gets golden hours and the overtime becomes colossal. So it regulates itself because nobody does it unless it's necessary. Where here it was done very often when it wasn't necessary. It could have been avoided you worked terribly long hours and didn't get anything for it. I used to get very angry and fight many battles. I had some awful problems like we did as a unit involve the ACTT, although to be fair they didn't do very much to help us, for a thing I did called Sink the Titanic, as opposed the Titanic. We had the most ridiculous schedule and I knew it was a ridiculous schedule and said so. A lot of it was all round London, using hotels as ship interiors and things like that. It was for television and a very tight budget and we were never going to do this by a mile. But they still went ahead and scheduled it on that basis knowing they weren't going to do it. They signed a lot of people, don't think necessarily ACTT members on deals, all in deals saying they wouldn't be working more than 10 hours a day at the most. In the end everyone was working about 18 hours and half of them were getting paid for it and the other half weren't and some wanted 6to work and others didn't. Its all chaos really and truly and I had a terrible row with the producer over that. I said it was unfair and unjustified and you knew it before you started and I'm not prepared to work 18 hours a day and not only am I not prepared, physically I can't do it. I can't do the work properly. You wouldn't be doing it back in the states, you'd be paying golden hours, He said if we pay you - the thing was if I din't work nobody else could so he knew he had to get to work on me - if we agree to pay you something like America rates will you do it. I said I don't want the money. I've signed the contract, I'll stick by my contract. My contract is according to the ACTT agreement because I wouldn't sign anything which wasn't. That was the one strong union thing I had. I said i'm a party to it and I'm not going to sign an all in deal, when you work out what you're going to offer me you offer it to me on a five day week and an 8 hour day and if you want me to work longer or Saturday or Sunday you have to pay me according to the agreement.

KGY: You feel the terms and conditions of work the ACTT tried to negotiate were correct.

CC: Yes I do because it has to be regulated. The only thing was that there were so many loopholes because we weren't the only union. And the ACTT - where they would announce an emergency and say they wanted to work three weekends in a row they would put it to a vote. Most ACTT members would vote against it because they were in that sort of salary structure, they would just rather have the time off than the money. The other blokes who were all on time and a half and double time, all voted for it so then you had a split unit and then it caused animosity and they'd say we need the money and it's all right for you because you earn three times as much as we do and you've turned it down and we're going to lose the money. And it somehow isn't right. It causes a lot of trouble and leaves a lot of loopholes.

KGY: The ACTT played an important role during the War when it structured people coming into the industry.

CC: That's when it mostly took place during the war. Before then it was just a guild. It became a fully fledged union after the war

KGY: So a short period at least it played an important part.

CC: I think tremendous change around in working practices which took place, I wasn't a party to when it happened because I wasn't here. I think that was the greatest thing they did to get a five day working week and reasonable hours and everybody held up their hands in horror and said you can't make films that way, you're not making baked beans there must be flexibility - well there was always flexibility into it. I think that was absolutely right, it should be a five day week. It should be a reasonable working day of 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week is fair and right. If for any valid reason and there is a good reason for working more than that, I think it should be paid for and it should be a penalty, like a chap to contracts to build a road and doesn't do it in time. Then it would regulate itself. But there were so many loopholes. Now it's all fallen apart. It has done so over the years and I don't think there's anything the ACTT could do. I felt also the production side of the ACTT, film production, when I was finishing my career and the 10 or 12 years preceeding it were so small that i always felt the union wasn't that interested in us, their strength was in the labs and in television and we were out on out own and we were all freelance and difficult to contract and none of us were union minded and none of us went to union meetings, which was our fault I agree, but we happened to be like that so we were really neglected to a great deal and we felt we fought our own battles and didn't get very much help from the union. Equally on their side they could say you weren't very good union members which would be a fair comment. But there was a valid reason for it in that we were mostly freelance and worked away from home an awful lot and just weren't in a position - the last few films I made, half the crew were Italian and half American and perhaps a handful of ACTT members. You'd have a chat with the producer before you went abroad and you'd say you wanted an ACTT agreement which you did but what chance did you have of enforcing it if you were abroad and 80% of the unit were something else altogether.

KGY: You established your own production company to make films about the sea and sailing.

CC: I had an idea. I moved down here 18 years ago and it co-incided with my children growing up, getting married and leaving home. I've always liked the sea. It's always been my first love. I thought that there was a great opportunity with the advent of video to make little films on navigation and all sort of things and all these hundred of people who want to sail could learn very much better for a video than from a book. I tried to set this up but never got anywhere at all. I formed a company and I contacted a lot of people who were interested but none of them wanted to put any money whatsoever. The boat building side of it has very little money, they're all very small units. They all thought it was a great idea. Cole's the publishers who publish a lot of navigational books and textbooks also thought it was a great idea and came near to doing a couple on navigation and got cold feet. Now it's all taken off. I think I was just - I'm not a business man so probably didn't go about it the right way and I did it only for fun. I did it too early. Now it's all going on. You've got cassettes on everything to do with sailing on VHF radio, navigation, I did it much to early. The company, I'm still a director of it but my son has it and uses it in conjunction with his and he does that sort of thing. He has Worldmark. They have the world cup films. And they did the lat Whitbread Race.

KGY: What was your company called.

CC: Solent Films.

KGY: Your son's company is

CC: Worldmark but he still has Solent Films. He has just done a film for the Royal Yachting Association on sail boards.

KGY: I think that's it, thank you very much.