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Monty Berman, lighting cameraman, director and producer. Interviewer Alan Lawson.  
Recorded on 21 June 1995.

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

Alan Lawson: Where and when were you born

Monty Berman: I was born on August 16th, 1913 in Whitechapel

Alan Lawson: And schooling

Monty Berman: I went to UCS

Alan Lawson: In Hampstead

Monty Berman: Because we moved to Hampstead and I went to the local school

Alan Lawson: It was a very good school. My cousins were there. Did you matriculated

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: What then

Monty Berman: I didn't go to university. I started in the business

Alan Lawson: How come

Monty Berman: Because I had an uncle who was in the business and I was very keen on the cinema and he got me a job at Twickenham Film Studios as it was then with Julius Hagen

Alan Lawson: In what department

Monty Berman: In the camera department

Alan Lawson: And who was there then

Monty Berman: The lighting cameraman was Sydney Blythe and the operator was Billy Luff. There was a Reg **Cavender** and I think they were the camera, there was another cameraman there, Basil Emmott, so as far as I remember they were the camera people there.

Alan Lawson: Were you encouraged by them

Monty Berman: Well, not exactly encouraged. I worked there. I started the usual nonsense, sweeping the floor and getting the tea. Then doing the clappers and eventually I became a focus puller.

Alan Lawson: To whom

Monty Berman: I think Billy Luff, I think

Alan Lawson: Can you remember any of the films. They were quota quickies, weren't they

Monty Berman: Yes, they were, they must have been quota quickies

Alan Lawson: What was the turn round

Monty Berman: About 10 days, would it be about 10 days

Alan Lawson: Probably. Did you have any dealings at all with Hagen himself

Monty Berman: Not really no

Alan Lawson: No recollections of him

Monty Berman: Not really

Alan Lawson: Were you there the night of the fire

Monty Berman: I don't know

Alan Lawson: Because I remember it was alleged there was a film was being made called A Fire Has Been Arranged

Month Per Month: That's a good line. I was there until about 1934, by which time Basil Emmott had moved to Warner Brothers, Teddington. And he got me a job there, I think as a camera operator. And that's funnily enough where I first met Peter Newbrook. And he was a runner there. And I was at Warner Brothers until I suppose I went into the army.

Alan Lawson: Can you talk about Basil, because not many people remember him at all. I think I met him once at the Bush, but I can't put a face.

Monty Berman: He was quite an amusing fellow. He was mad about cars. And I think he either had a Mercedes or an Aston Martin, which in those days were very upmarket cars. And he was very keen on Spain, so much so that he built himself a Spanish villa in Surrey or Sussex

Alan Lawson: That isn't the one **Randall Tyreneau** took over, is it.

Monty Berman: What was it called

Alan Lawson: I don't know, but Randall Tyreneau had a kind of Spanish villa.

Monty Berman: It may have been

Alan Lawson: Did you rate him as a good cameraman

Monty Berman: Basil. Oh yes. They were amazing in those days because they didn't have light meters. I think Basil had a light meter but Sydney Blythe didn't

Alan Lawson: Light meters didn't really come in until the end of the Thirties really. You used to wet your finger and hold it up

Monty Berman: Yes. Irving Asher ran the studios at Teddington. And the studio manager was a little chap called Doc Salomon. He got killed in the war. I think he was in the studios when they were bombed.

Alan Lawson: He was an American, wasn't he

Monty Berman: Yes it he worked for Warners in America and they sent him over here to run the studios on the administration side.

Alan Lawson the: It seems to have been quite a happy studio, from what one hears

Monty Berman: Yes. One of the things about it was that every Friday night we had a film show of one of the new Warner Brothers films. Another thing about that was when I worked at Twickenham you worked all sorts of hours but at Warner Brothers they had strict hours. And you worked from about 8.30 till six every night

Alan Lawson: What about Saturdays

Monty Berman: I can't remember

Alan Lawson: Probably if required I imagine

Monty Berman: Probably if required

Alan Lawson: Can you remember what you were earning on those

Monty Berman: I started off earning a £1 a week

Alan Lawson: We all did

Monty Berman: But I think there as camera operator I was getting about £7 a week

Alan Lawson: That was good money, wasn't it. In those days you could do a lot with £7. Did you run a car

Monty Berman: Yes. I bought my first car while I was at Warner Brothers. I bought a second hand Rover and I ran that for a while until I was involved in an accident. Was I involved in an accident with that car. No, no I'm mistaken, the accident came later. No I had the Rover

But Alan Lawson: Where were you living at that time

Monty Berman: At that time I was living still in Hampstead, or maybe my parents had moved to Golders Green

Alan Lawson: That was a trip

Monty Berman: Yes. I'm trying to think

Alan Lawson: If you didn't have your car you went presumably to Waterloo.

Monty Berman: No, I went to Richmond, the train to Richmond. I don't know if it still exists, a line called the North London

Alan Lawson: Yes, oh yes. I see you changed there and went through onto

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: Do you remember how long that took in those days

Monty Berman: It must have taken an hour

Alan Lawson I suppose so. And then from Warners what, then there was the outbreak of war was it

Monty Berman I think so. I know, maybe I moved to, no, Warners had two complete units and if I remember right they closed one of the units down, and I was on the unit they closed down, so I got a job at Ealing. And I was at Ealing for a short time and then of course the war came and I joined the army

Alan Lawson: Who did you work with at Ealing

Monty Berman: The only person I can remember at Ealing was Jeff Seaholme

Alan Lawson: A spectacular operator, so you went into the army, straight in as

Monty Berman: I joined the artillery, because they had a department in there in those days called surveyors. The guns were surveyed in on the map and you never knew what you were firing at. You just had a direction from the surveyor who would plot where the guns went. Then after I was there for some time, somebody got to know I was there, anyway I got transferred to the army film photographic unit with David Macdonald

Alan Lawson: Where did you go to, straight out to Egypt

Monty Berman: First of all I think I was at Pinewood

Alan Lawson: There, you came into Pinewood, you came in fairly late then into the Army Film Unit

Monty Berman: I don't know if you would call it late, I was certainly out in, I went out to the Middle-East I think in 1942

Alan Lawson: With Number Two

Monty Berman Number One. I went to the desert, I was in the Western Desert. I was there before Alamein, and Alamein of course. I was attached to a South African Brigade and then an Australian bunch. In fact you can see all my pictures now in the Imperial War Museum. They've got quite a collection of mine

Alan Lawson: Were you doing cine and stills

Monty Berman: I was doing cine and stills, yes xxx

Alan Lawson: And the equipment you were using. What did you have as a cine camera

Monty Berman: An Eyemo I think, Eyemo. Yes

Alan Lawson: And the still camera was Super **Icontra** was it

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: Which we liberated somewhere, I don't know where. You went right through with a Number One did you

Monty Berman: No, no, no, after Alamein I was sent back to Cairo and I think after that I was attached to a bunch of Royal Engineers who were making a journey across Saudi Arabia, poisoning locusts. So that was quite an interesting trip to travel from one side of

Saudi Arabia to the other, killing these bloody locus. And when I got to the other side, what was the other side of Saudi Arabia, would it be Bahrain.

Alan Lawson: Yes. Bahrain and Oman

Monty Berman: Yes, The **Truthful** Coast, I did a film about the Truthful Coast, where there were odd British troops, I'd sort of shoot them. And then I think they send me up to Palestine as it was then. I think we had an office in Jerusalem, I'm not sure. Anyway I was there and then they sent me up to Beirut to do it a film about a rest camp. The army had a rest camp in Beirut so I was there, made a film there. And then I was sent to Tehran to do a film of British and Russian troops liasing in Tehran. So I spent quite some time in Tehran. What happened after Tehran

Alan Lawson: Did you see any of your rushes at all, was the stuff processed in Cairo, do you remember

Monty Berman: I can't remember

Alan Lawson I doubt if you saw any rushes ever

Monty Berman: No, probably not

Alan Lawson: You relied on reports. Were they helpful, those reports. I know I had to write some, they were terribly difficult. Sitting in Whitehall or wherever the theatre was saying why the hell is he doing this for

Monty Berman: I don't remember any reports

Alan Lawson: After Tehran what

Monty Berman: I think I was posted back to the War Office

Alan Lawson: Were you shipped out to Donington and demobbed from there. I know that's what happened to a lot of the boys

Monty Berman: I can't remember. I was stationed at the War Office. We had an office in Eton Square with Sean Fielding, Sean Fielding was in charge, well it was a PR. Sean Fielding and, I can't think the old chap's name. He was the colonel and there was a major there. And the interesting thing is several years after I came out of the army and Bob and I had already started up our partnership, we had an idea about making a film about the long range Desert group and we got Sean Fielding to write the story. He wrote the story, and Robert Westerby wrote the script from his original story and that's how we made Sea Of Sand.

Alan Lawson: And anyway demobbed when.

Monty Berman: Well I suppose '44 would it be

Alan Lawson: Oh no later than that Monty

Monty Berman: Anyway I was demobbed. I've just remembered that when I was at Warners, I think it was at Warners, I got a job with Mickey Powell. I got time off from Warners to go and make this film with Mickey Powell, The Edge Of The World on Foola.

Alan Lawson: Who was the cameraman on that

Monty Berman: Well I started it and Ernie Palmer took over. Anyway when I came out of the army I couldn't get a job and I met Mickey or wrote to Mickey. Anyway Mickey was making a film called The End of the River and he was fully crewed up except for a stills man .He said I'll give you a job as a stills man. And of course I grabbed it and I went on this film The End Of The River which is quite fun. We went right up the Amazon to **Mxxx**

Alan Lawson: Was it fictional

Monty Berman: Yes and we boarded this boat and cruised all the way down from **Mxxx** to the mouth of the Amazon. That was quite

Alan Lawson: Who was the cameraman on that

Monty Berman: Chris Challis. I'm trying to think who the director was, it wasn't Mickey, Mickey was here. I can't think the name of the director. Then when we moved into Pinewood to do the studio side, that was that. When did I get another job. I don't know, maybe I met Bob Baker. I knew Bob Baker of course from the Army Film Unit

Alan Lawson: That's right, I kept on thinking I know that name, he was an officer was wasn't he

Monty Berman: No, he was the same as me, we were both sergeants. And we said, we decided to try and make own film. So we borrowed money and made our first film together which was of course Date With A Dream

Alan Lawson: Had Tempean come into existence

Monty Berman That was Tempean, and we got Dicky Leeman, I knew him as an assistant director, we got him to direct it. We had a very good cast in it really. It had Terry-Thomas and Norman Wisdom. That was his first of film, I'm not sure it wasn't Terry Thomas's first film. And we had this girl Jeannie Carson who went to over to America and made a series, a television series in America, called Just Jeannie, I think it was called

We showed this film *Date With A Dream* to, we had a contact with Eros, Eros Films. And they said maybe you would like to make a film with us. So we made our second film for Eros which was called *Melody Club* and that also had Terry-Thomas in it.

Alan Lawson: And directed by

Monty Berman: I think Bob directed it

Alan Lawson: You were lighting.

Monty Berman: Yes I lit both pictures, in fact, *Data With A Dream* was the first film I actually lit

Alan Lawson: Had you got rusty by this time do you think. When one hasn't used lights for some time.

Monty Berman: All I can say is that whatever it was came out on the screen. It wasn't Gregg Toland. Then, of course, we made a whole lot of films for Eros, Bob and I. In all about 50, you've got the list, they were all made for Eros. No, wait a minute, how did we make *Sea Of Sand*. I don't know, we must have thought of the idea, we always thought the long range Desert Group was a really romantic bunch of people, we came across them from time to time in the desert. So we got Sean to write and the story Robert Westerby to write the script and then finance. Eventually after touting it around we got Rank to finance it. And it cost £125,000 pounds

Alan Lawson: It must have been as beginners quite difficult to raise finance

Monty Berman: We had made a few films by then but nothing of that scale. And of course it was a very patriotic film and it came at the right time. And then I think we went back to making more films for Eros. Did we go back to making more films for Eros, I can't really remember. Anyway we made our first colour film I think for Eros, I think the first colour one we made for Eros was called *Blood Of The Vampire*. *Blood Of The Vampire*, that's right.

Alan Lawson: On the BFI list it looks as if it might have been in two parts, it wasn't obviously

Monty Berman: No, well there may have been two parts because there might have been a continental version, with nudity in it and all that nonsense. I think *Blood Of The Vampire* had Andrew Fawlds in it

Alan Lawson: The MP



Monty Berman: Yes. The Member. Then we switched to another distributor called Regal International and we made about six films with them. Jack The Ripper, The Siege Of Sidney Street, what's on the list, that will remind me

Alan Lawson: Blood Of The Vampire, Stormy Crossing, Trollenberg Terror, XXX Irish Rose, Jack The Ripper, Home Is The Hero, Flesh And The Fiend

Monty Berman: Flesh And The Fiend, that's the Burke and Hare film, that was with Peter Cushing

Alan Lawson: That's the beginning of him going to Hammer presumably is it

Monty Berman: I'm not sure if he'd already been. No I think he'd been at Hammer. What else did I do after

Alan Lawson: Then after Flesh And The Fiend, there was Treasure of Monte Cristo, Hellfire Club. You're directing

Monty Berman: No, no

Alan Lawson: Well you're listed as the director of Treasure of Monte Cristo

Monty Berman: That's wrong. I wasn't I was cameraman on all the pictures and producer, co-producer with Bob. And I think Bob directed some of them

Alan Lawson: Did the business of being both producer and cameraman, is there any tension between the two halves of you

Monty Berman: No, because getting the pictures through on schedule and on budget is the priority. And a cameraman is in a very good position to influence that, particularly if you have a director who has the same feeling. If both director and cameraman are the producer then the priority is to get it through on budget and on schedule

Alan Lawson: And then Hellfire Club and What A Carve Up. And that was still for cinema

Monty Berman: Yes, I think that was the last film we made

Alan Lawson: Yes because the next comes The Saint which is obviously the breakthrough for you into television

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: How did that come about

Monty Berman: I suppose just talking, let's get into television or something, and we thought we would do a subject which might appeal and the idea of The Saint Of came up

Alan Lawson: Can you remember who your contact was with television to make that

Monty Berman: Well I'll tell you. To get the rights, we got an introduction to Leslie Charteris from Paddy Carstairs, because Paddy knew Leslie. So we got an introduction to Charteris and twisted his arm. And then we offered it to the BBC, The Saint, and of course they turned it down

Alan Lawson: What was the reason, do you know

Monty Berman: No idea, well what is the reason why these television companies turn down things today. Anyway we met, Bob and I went to a cocktail party at Stanley Blacks. Because Stanley used to do all the music for our films and Lew was there and we were talking to Lew. He was then ATV and we said Lew we would like to make a series about The Saint . Oh, he said, I like that, I used to read The Saint, good idea, come in and see me. And if you do any business with Lew you know, you see him and its either yes or no and you know exactly where you stand. No going to consult people and all that rubbish.

Alan Lawson: That really was the beginning of a new horizon

Monty Berman: Yes, so then we had the problem of finding a lead and I'm not prepared to tell you who we wanted. But Lew eventually introduced us to Roger and that was the start of a beautiful friendship

Alan Lawson: That was a great success, enormous success

Monty Berman: Yes, as you know I made the first hundred odd Saints. Then Bob and I parted company and he formed a new company with Roger and I went off on my own. And did all the other series that were left over

Alan Lawson: Gideon's Way

Monty Berman: Gideon's Way and all those

Alan Lawson: Were you sorry partnership broke up

Monty Berman: Well, I was sorry at the time but it turned out to be for the best

Alan Lawson: Surely one of your big problems is to make sure you have scripts which stand up

Monty Berman: I was very fortunate that I was associated with Dennis Spooner who was a marvellous script writer and really he knew all the angles on making films for

television. He got the right writers, he was a story editor, and he got the right writers. And one of the other things I did with Dennis was, I never interfered with him. I'd say Dennis we need a film to fit in here, an episode to fit in there and he'd just, marvellous, he would just work it out. We had no problems at all with his scripts, and the scripts he had written for him, because he didn't write them all, obviously. No, that was a marvellous break, working with Dennis

Alan Lawson: After the Saint is Gideon's Way,

Monty Berman: And after that comes what

Alan Lawson: That's comes in 1964 - it's Big Fish according to this

Monty Berman: Big Fish, that was an episode of it.

Alan Lawson: Yes, an episode.

Monty Berman: What was the series after that.

Alan Lawson: After that,

Monty Berman: It was The Champions, wasn't it.

Alan Lawson: The Baron

Alan Lawson: Where did that comes from, whose idea was that

Monty Berman: I think The Baron, wasn't there a book, yes there was a book, I'm trying to think who the hell wrote it, it was the same writer I think who wrote Gideon's Way. I can't remember who the author was. Anyway we bought this book and Dennis did the series

Alan Lawson: And after the Baron comes Department S

Monty Berman: That was an original idea of, I think Dennis and I thought that idea up.

Alan Lawson: That was an original.

Monty Berman: That was an original. And after Department S came Jason King. Jason King was a spin off from department S. And then The Champions. The Champions is running now on the BBC, isn't it. And then Randall and Hopkirk, that was Dennis's original. The Champions is an original Dennis and I thought up, the same as Department S but Randall and Hopkirk was Dennis' own. And that was the last show I made, Randall and Hopkirk.

Alan Lawson: You can't just have sat back and said that's it

Monty Berman: Well I don't know. I might not have wanted it to happen, but maybe that's what did happen.

Alan Lawson: Because it is a different ball game altogether now isn't it

And Monty Berman: It's completely different

Alan Lawson: You've lost the contact, well you've not lost the contact with Lew because he's not that kind of a person.

Monty Berman: No funnily enough I saw Lew a couple of weeks ago to discuss something with him but of course Dennis died two or three years ago. No, I just sort of drifted out of it. I mean I look after the Old Eros films. And that's about it

Alan Lawson: Is there still a market for the old black and white TV series

Monty Berman: Yes: The Champions is in black and white

Alan Lawson: I was thinking of The Saints

Monty Berman: I don't know because when Bob and I parted, he took over The Saints, so they belong to his company. When I say belong to his company, they probably belong to ATV, the same as these series all belong to ATV. Maybe there is some arrangement whereby they can't be shown, or the residuals are too high it's not worth showing them

Alan Lawson: That is one of the points too, residuals, so you're still getting residuals, you're bound to be

Monty Berman: No, I don't get residuals.

Alan Lawson: Only performers

Monty Berman: Only performers and writers

Alan Lawson: I gather, according to Cyril, there is a new thing coming in where even directors

Monty Berman: Directors yes but not producers though. But in the two series that Dennis and I wrote together like The Champions and Jason King and Department S, as we are the originators of it we might get some thing there

Alan Lawson: In the long term. You've been a director, cameraman, producer. Which one has given you the satisfaction.

Monty Berman: The most satisfaction is cameraman.

Alan Lawson: I suppose in a way, ignoring the time you were producer, the tension isn't there.

Monty Berman: I suppose if you're the cameraman and you're the producer, you don't get much tension as a producer

Alan Lawson: Have you tried your hand at writing yourself

Monty Berman: No, I just haven't got that touch.

Alan Lawson: But you've had the ideas though ,

Monty Berman: Ah yes, but that's all ideas one talks about. Xxx too and fro. And an idea comes out of it

Alan Lawson: If you could restart would you like to change

Monty Berman: No, I enjoyed my time in the business. I had a very happy association with the Hyams, Eros. And a happy association with Lew. And as practically all of the product was made for one or the other I suppose I was fortunate.

Alan Lawson: Because Lew has a very good reputation, once he's a friend he's a friend

Monty Berman: That's right. Oh yes

Alan Lawson And is there any thing you're particularly proud off

Monty Berman: I'm proud of Sea Of Sand.. Otherwise it's all work. I don't think that any of my films have messages. They're not that kind of film, not that kind of a product. Coming back to Lew, he's 88

Alan Lawson: I thought he was more than that

Monty Berman: No, he's 88. And Phil Hyams, he's 101

Alan Lawson: So there must be something in this business of ours that keeps us young.

Monty Berman: Well Lew's marvellous, so's Phil for that matter. He wasn't too well recently but he seems to have bucked up.

Alan Lawson: He had a cinema chain didn't he

Monty Berman: That's right. He had a cinema chain.

Alan Lawson: Your parents had nothing to do with film business at all

Monty Berman: No. My father was in the theatre.

Alan Lawson: What as

Monty Berman: He was a musical director. In those days they used to have these touring company's and they had all used to take their own musical director. They had the local orchestra but they had their musical director.

Alan Lawson: Did he work for Willey at all

Monty Berman: I think he worked for somebody called Lew Lake. And he worked at Collins Music Hall, that is where we shot locations for our first film, in Collins Music Hall. And we made it at that studio in St Mary Abbots, did you know there was a studio in St Mary Abbots.

Alan Lawson: Yes. Tiny little place

Monty Berman: Tiny little film

Alan Lawson: What was your first film

Monty Berman: Date With A Dream

Another film I worked on, second unit was The Third Man. How the hell did I get a job there.

Alan Lawson: Because Dick was the cameraman, Desmond Dickinson was the cameraman on The Third Man

Monty Berman: No, he wasn't, Bob Krasker.

Alan Lawson: Yes.

Monty Berman: I worked on the second unit and the cameraman was Stan Palley. I know how I'd got it, because Stan knew I was looking for a job and he said do you want to come and work on the film. I didn't know much about it. Xxx. I had a marvellous time on that, because we were on the second unit and the second unit worked during the day. So we had all our nights free in Vienna, and Vienna in those days was a, it probably still is, I know it still is, is a marvellous place. And we had to shoot all the sewer stuff as you know

Alan Lawson: Do you remember who was the second unit director

Monty Berman: No I don't, but I tell you what else we shot, we shot with Carol the big wheel sequences with Orson and [Joseph Cotton]. He was a marvellous man to work with, that Carol

Alan Lawson: Carol Reed. Yes, I worked with Carol during the war and I worked with him before the war, yes

Monty Berman: And of course another chap I worked with a lot, or I did in the early days was Mickey Powell. He was a great friend of mine.

Alan Lawson: And a still man to start with

Monty Berman: That's right. He had this hotel in the south of France, his father had anyway.

Alan Lawson: That was a great loss when he died

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

Alan Lawson: When you were doing series, did you wait until you had all the scripts before starting shooting

Monty Berman: No

Alan Lawson: How many scripts did you bank up before you started shooting

Monty Berman: Between four and six

Alan Lawson: So you always had a flow going

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: Was there much revision when you got onto the floor, I don't suppose there was really time

Monty Berman: No

Alan Lawson: What was the schedule

Monty Berman: One every two weeks. Yes that was the schedule, 10 days

Alan Lawson: 10 day schedule. How many crews did you have

Monty Berman: We usually had two crews, one first crew and one second crew

Alan Lawson: What do you mean

Monty Berman: Second unit.

Alan Lawson: Really, you had second unit.

Monty Berman: We had one main crew and a second unit

Alan Lawson: That was for exteriors

Monty Berman: And pick up shots

At this Alan Lawson: What studios were you using then

Monty Berman: ABC, Elstree

Alan Lawson: What about facilities there.



Monty Berman: What do you mean by facilities

Alan Lawson: Was it a good studio to work in

Monty Berman: We found it, we managed to do our series there. It was adequate

Alan Lawson: You're not excited by it

Monty Berman: When you're making a television series, you're just going there to shoot the material, you don't have to get excited about it. You know what you're going to shoot and that's it

Alan Lawson: Did ABPC have a regular crew

Monty Berman: I had a regular crew

Alan Lawson: But did the studio have a regular crew like chippies and sparks

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: So there was a continuity on the floor, which is a great help I'm sure

Monty Berman: I had a regular crew. In fact as far as I know most of my crew were with me the whole time

Alan Lawson: The cameraman mostly

Monty Berman: Let's see, who did we have as cameraman. Latterly of course for the last few series was Frankie Watts. But Frankie originally was an operator and for want of a better word I gave him a break as lighting cameraman. Now who preceded him

Alan Lawson: It wasn't Lionel

Monty Berman: Lionel did some. The one that did most of them was another bloke, a marvellous cameraman, lovely chap, fancy forgetting

Alan Lawson: Well it will be on the credits. As you were doing one series, did you have another in the pipeline

Monty Berman: Usually, we always worked one series ahead. In fact when we made Randall and Hopkirk, we also made, I think it was The Champions, I think we made them both at the same time. I had one series going on one stage and one series going on another stage.

Alan Lawson: And you were the producer of both those

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: How could you keep an eye on two

Monty Berman: You can keep an eye on two. You see the way Dennis and I used to work would be that he would look after the writing and the scripts and I would look after the actual getting onto the screen. So I would be on the floor most of the time, not in my office

Alan Lawson: You were a hand on producer

Monty Berman: You could put it that way, yes. And if there are any queries I'm there right on the spot

Alan Lawson: Not sitting in an armchair with a large cigar

Monty Berman: That's right. And I used to work the same hours as the crew

Alan Lawson: I think it's important that one does that.

Monty Berman: Yes. And of course working with Lew, he was a completely hands off. Once he'd said go that was it, all he wants is the finished series.

Alan Lawson: What did you do, just give him a brief outline

Monty Berman: Yes, about two lines, that's all

Alan Lawson: It must have been wonderful to have someone like that as your guardian angel

Monty Berman: Well, you see the result. The result is that he got television series made and now of course it's a different ball game completely

Alan Lawson: It's hard now is it

Monty Berman: I believe so

Alan Lawson: Do you see any chance for the old faithfuls, like yourself and the early producers

Monty Berman: It's hard to say, Gerry Anderson is doing a new show. He is one of the old producers. But his work is exceptional in as far as no one else can do it. I don't know anyone else that's doing anything

Alan Lawson: But that's much more geared to children

Monty Berman: Yes.

Alan Lawson: Which is the series you're most proud of

Monty Berman: I suppose Randall and Hopkirk. That was Dennis' idea. You see when you're doing 26 to 30 episodes, they can't all be good. One or two might be outstanding. It's almost like a factory, film's going in one end and coming out complete the other end. You haven't got time for any artistic, for want of a better word

Alan Lawson: Academy Awards

Monty Berman: All you're doing, you're in there to make your film, deliver it, and keep your crew working

Alan Lawson: In a way, crudely put, it's a slot filling

Monty Berman: Yes and hopefully you're filling it with a slot people want to watch. Because all our shows got very good ratings. In fact, they've got quite good ratings now, on these reruns, they came up five and six on the ratings, and they're made 30 years ago

Alan Lawson: So they're are cost effective

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: I only hope they're cost effective for you

Monty Berman: That's another side of the story

Alan Lawson: It is a problem for the producer to make sure he gets his return

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: You were saying about advice

Monty Berman: The only thing you can do is find the modern equivalent of Lew Grade,

Alan Lawson: That's advice to anybody going into the business

Monty Berman: Yes, going into the business. You want to find some one who makes a decision and doesn't have to refer to committees. Once you bring committees in, nobody will commit themselves in case they've given the wrong answer. That's true

Alan Lawson: Have you had that kind of thing happen on you

The Monty Berman: Not really, no

Alan Lawson. Your activity had dwindled by the time that kind of thing came in

Monty Berman: Yes

Alan Lawson: Everybody looking over their shoulder

Monty Berman: That's right

Alan Lawson: You were saying the costs have gone up so much

Monty Berman: The costs have gone up so much

Alan Lawson: That's an interesting point, when you first started what was the cost of one episode of The Saint

Monty Berman: Oh, £25,000- £28,000

Alan Lawson: What would it be now

Monty Berman: 10 times as much at least

Alan Lawson: What is that due to

Monty Berman: It's due to artists, salaries, rents, everything's gone up

Alan Lawson: Can you remember what the studio rental was when you first started

Monty Berman. No, I've no idea what sort of money.

Alan Lawson: But you reckon it's gone up at least 10 times

Monty Berman: Easily 10 times. From right at the start. The last series we made we were costing them about £40,000, £45,000. In fact it might even be more than £200,000. More like £300,000.

Alan Lawson: So no wonder we're seeing a dearth of them.

Monty Berman: So there we go

END OF INTERVIEW