

## Ken Holt Production manager

My father, Ken Holt, died unexpectedly in December 2018. He was 88 years old and had only been retired for the past 10 years. He loved his work and used to talk with glee about how the BBC obviously did not know how old he was as they were still employing him as freelance location manager when he was in his mid-seventies.

What struck me most about my dad the professional was his willingness and ability to move with the times. He was happy to share what he knew and always keen to learn new things. During the seven decades he worked in the industry, he saw the arrival (and passing) of a great many technological advances. He was quick to appreciate the strengths of new techniques and media. He had the ability to learn and grow, bringing his wealth of experience to new contexts. In retirement, his engagement with social media was a source of entertainment and pleasure to him as he connected to other film and TV enthusiasts both old and young across the world.

Ken's long career in film

and television began towards the end of the second world war when, aged 14, he was collecting news film reels from various locations across London and rushing them back to the film labs for processing. The films were highly flammable and London was still being bombed, but he said he never thought of that at the time. He was just loving his work.

Over the next 64 years Ken worked in a range of roles. His early career was in film labs before he moved to MGM where he met his future wife, Bette to whom he was married for 53 years until his death. It was only at his funeral that Bette found out that with his usual mischievous humour, he had always told his grandchildren that their grandma's job at MGM was to pull the MGM lion's tail to make it roar at the start of films! Ken meanwhile had worked in the technical production side of MGM on films such as *Mogambo*, *Tom Thumb*, *Yellow Rolls Royce* and *The Hill*.

Ken moved from MGM to Century 21 where he spent three years working with Gerry Anderson as studio and production manager,

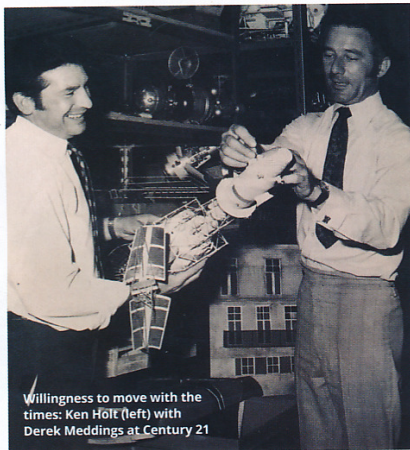
producing TV series such *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlett*, *Joe 90* and *UFO*. This was followed by three years working for Seabourne Enterprises, travelling the world producing documentaries and educational programmes for Canadian Television.

From the mid 1970s until 1990, Ken worked as head of film at ATV/Central TV in Birmingham. He was responsible for equipping, crewing and back-up for drama, current affairs, local and network documentaries all over the world including *Nature Watch*, *Year Zero* and *Cambodia* with Pilger and Pettifer. After he left Central TV in 1990, he worked as a freelance production manager, location manager and unit manager on programmes such as *Inspector Morse* and *Doctors* until his eventual retirement in 2008. Over the years he worked with so many different colleagues, often as their boss or team leader. One of the most remarkable things about his career was not only his energy and commitment but also the warmth and respect with which his colleagues still remember and talk about him.

He was also a loving husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. He played an active role in the bowls club and Probus after his retirement, making new friends wherever he went. He was known for being fun, with a smile and a cheerful story to tell.

We loved him; we were proud of him, lucky to have him in our lives and now we miss him. The comments posted on social media immediately following his death testify to the professionalism and skill combined with warmth, respect and humour that Ken brought to all that he did.

Deborah Holt



Willingness to move with the times: Ken Holt (left) with Derek Meddings at Century 21