

A Life Rewound

Part Four

Chapter		Page
23	1975 Foundation Trustee of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts - BAFTA. Article: 'Producers - who do we think we are?' The Queen opens Princess Anne's BAFTA Theatre. Family moves to Highgate.	202
24	1976 <i>Feature film for EMI celebrating the Queen's Silver Jubilee:</i> <i>25 Years - Impressions</i>	208
25	1976-77 Videodisc consultant to RCA in New York. Member of the European Audio Visual Committee	214
26	1977 <i>12-part series with Harold Wilson:</i> <i>Prime Minister on Prime Ministers</i> Article: Videodiscs 'The New Grammar'. <i>First Videodisc production for EMI: Christmas Carols from Cambridge</i>	217
27	1978 <i>90-minute documentary for Yorkshire Television:</i> <i>Kitty - Return to Auschwitz</i>	224
28	1979-80 <i>Quartet of documentaries for Yorkshire Television:</i> <i>Women of Courage</i> <i>The German: It Mattered To Me</i> <i>The Norwegian: A Hard Press On The Bell</i> <i>The Pole: Twins Were Born In Paviac</i> <i>The Brit : My Number Wasn't Up</i>	237
29	1981-90 Controller of Programmes Thorn-EMI Videodisc. 1991-2003 Freelance videodisc production. Lectures, presentations and screenings of programme portfolio in the UK, USA and Canada.	255
30	Afterthoughts	260

Chapter 23

The editor of the 'Shell Times', a monthly publication for the many thousands of Shell staff employed in the oil industry worldwide, told me that his paper had kept a pretty close eye on the development of television programming in the UK, and invited me to write an article for his paper on the role of the producer. He asked: "For instance, why did you think that anyone would want to watch seventy-five years of European history in thirteen hours?" A good question. "Could you write a piece on programme standards and generally answer the question: Producers – who do they think they are?"

I accepted, because I felt that maybe after twenty-one years of programme making under my belt, it was time to indulge in a bit of navel-gazing. I was reminded of all this when amongst my papers in the attic, I found this 'Shell Times' article, written thirty years ago, in 1975.

This is an edited version:

PRODUCERS – WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

Television comes like water out of a tap - we take it for granted. It is almost inconceivable to do without it. But unlike water, we have opinions about it; we have our likes and dislikes, we are amused, entertained, informed, enthralled, maddened, outraged and often plain bored by it. And the responsibility for provoking any one of these reactions must be faced fairly and squarely by the TV producer. "Who does he think he is?" is a good question. Our names appear briefly at the end of a programme, and with so much television on three channels I wonder whether, apart from my wife, children and mother-in-law, you, the viewer, have the time or indeed the interest to read and absorb that name, let alone reflect on the indisputable fact that this should be the target of your anger or applause? So 'who do I think I am' to be in a position to inflict my work on you, the public?

In the same way that a tax inspector is a taxpayer, a traffic warden a motorist, a customs officer a holiday traveller, so a tv producer is a viewer. And as a viewer, what do I make of this 'tap in the living room', and how does it influence me when, periodically, I help to top up the reservoir at the other end?

My approach to viewing is simple enough. I try to satisfy my curiosity and taste, knowing that a programme I go out of my way to avoid, is appreciated in many homes, and vice versa. So let me declare my tastes: News; documentaries; current affairs; history in any form; arts programmes; cricket; The Sky at Night; The Magic Roundabout. With two small sons prepared to look at almost anything, our diet at home also includes Jimmy Saville, pop programmes and a rationing of Westerns. Typical? No, of course not. Is there such a thing as a typical viewer – indeed, an average viewer, let alone an average person? I consider it to be an insult to be labelled average. It is a term that stifles individuality, denying its very existence. Yet, this is how the media often brands us. This is one of the dangers that afflict the communication industry, because by implication, the next step after working out the average is to arrive at the lowest common denominator, and that, of course, wildly underestimates the intelligence of the viewing public.

I believe that broadcasting organisations attempt to cater for most individuals and tastes, and try to resist the temptation to pitch their sights so low as to turn an evening's viewing into something that merely goes in one eye and comes out the other.

In the UK, we, the viewers, (so we are told) are lucky because according to world opinion, we have the finest television service; fortunately, there are many, in and out of the industry, who never cease to question this status.

The fifties and early sixties were the pioneering years when it was much easier than it is now to be original, to create a sense of occasion, to try something new, not simply for the sake of it, but because so much had never been attempted before. Novelty, innovation and unpredictability brought surprise and excitement to viewing.

How then does a producer square up to his audience; what yardstick can he use to measure his target? As I have said, I don't believe that there can be an average viewer, and this mercifully rules out the arrogant notion that I could possibly judge what you, the viewer, likes and dislikes. I can only know the tastes and prejudices of one viewer – myself – so that the yardstick of communication that I apply, finds its measure in my own highly subjective judgement, and how I look at tv programmes. You may think this to be a symptom of congenital conceit, but I simply could not operate any other way. Of course, this needs to be qualified, and I will try and do this by giving an example.

'The Mighty Continent' is a television history spanning seventy-five years of Europe in this century, in 12 one-hour episodes. The series expresses the personal views of historian John Terraine, TV writer and presenter, and took three long years to make. When I started off, should I have second-guessed the degree of knowledge of European history of a BBC-1 peak-time audience? Of course not, it would have been the height of arrogance. Instead, I just knew that European history had always fascinated me and, rightly or wrongly, I hoped that it might interest and stimulate others. That was my yardstick.

I am not an historian, and my knowledge was, to say the least, superficial and sketchy. So, in the course of making this series, I was enjoying a three-year history seminar; my mentor was John Terraine, my teaching aids were millions of feet of archive film, historical locations all over Europe, books, paintings, music, photographs and cartoons. You may think that 12 hours of TV, covering seventy-five years of history, is a lavish amount of screen time. But it isn't – one is still forced to be highly selective, and naturally, one man's choice is as good, or bad, as another's. The problem of successful communication, as every editor knows, is not deciding what to put in, but what to leave out.

What you finally saw on the screen was the result of three years of acquired knowledge, distilled, visualised and finally presented in such a way that, hopefully, those who watched the series got as much illumination and interest out of it as we endeavoured to put into it.

In other words, all the time I was making the series I tried to see the programmes as a viewer – this viewer – and as they would strike me within my own family circle on my own television set at home. I just don't know what other standards a producer can apply.

And what did the audience make of it all? Naturally, some people were bound to have disliked it, disagreed with it, been bored rigid by it. The Press response ranged from predictably hostile reviews to very friendly ones. We had an average audience size of 5 million (the BBC consider- this to be very large for Tuesday nights) but more satisfying, a very high audience appreciation index. And the only reaction which had any real meaning was a large bag of viewers' letters, and I am going to be immodest enough to quote an extract from my favourite:

"I am taking my History 'A' levels. Thank you for The Mighty Continent, you have made history live for me."

There were a lot of letters like this, and apart from doing one's ego a power of good, they manage to put flesh on to the dry bones of viewing figures and statistics. This is the only feed-back of any value to a producer. So the next time that you turn on that tap in your living room, and see a programme you don't much care for, or possibly like very much, at least you have the advantage of being able to identify the programme-maker, whereas the producer, even if he 'knows who he thinks he is', will never know who you are.

* * * *

Our two boys, Jonathan and Benjamin, were now nine and seven, attending Canonbury Primary School, and the move up to secondary schooling was going to be a major problem – at that time, secondary education in Islington was considered by many parents to be a wasteland. Jane and I had come to the conclusion that it was too risky to contemplate privately funded education – my lack of confidence in my freelance status, with its unpredictable see-saw income, saw to that. Our bijou neo-Georgian house in Canonbury was beginning to burst at the seams, so in any event, a move to something larger was on the cards.

We knew that the William Ellis Grammar School in Highgate was well regarded. At the time, grammar schools were about to lose their status (Wilson's labour government's education shake-up has a lot to answer for), and we hoped that for its new role, as a state secondary school, it would inherit its high standing. We went house hunting in Highgate to be within the school's catchment area – it was called, voting with one's feet.

We finally took possession of a five-bedroom house on Highgate's Holly Lodge Estate, which was in a terrible state, and just about needed everything doing to it. This is where being a freelance had an advantage. I took 'time out' for eight weeks, acting as clerk-of-works and carpenter, with a crew of two builders, an electrician and a heating engineer for what is now known as a complete make-over, and in October 1975, we moved in – and thirty years later, Jane and I are still here.

The boys went to St. Michael's, a Church of England primary school in Highgate village, and then both were accepted by William Ellis. Mission accomplished – or so we hoped. I remember saying to Jane at the time that it's only when the boys are in their thirties that we will begin to realise what mistakes we might have made with their education.

* * * *

During the early days in the seventies, the Society of Film and Television Arts (SFTA) was growing fast, and the Council had ambitious ideas for it. We rented a pokey little office in Great Portland Street, almost too small to hold council meetings, let alone for the membership to meet. It was obvious that unless we acquired our own premises with the necessary facilities, the SFTA would wither.

In 1969, Dickie Attenborough (now Lord Attenborough) had taken over from me as Chairman, and for the next two years, this dynamo of a man got things moving together with John (Lord) Brabourne – both ace fund raisers. They discovered that the majestic 19th Century classical building in Piccadilly, created for the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, had been empty for some time, and was now derelict – and the lease was up for grabs. It was an ideal building for our purposes, with an excellent address, but we would have to raise a massive amount of finance. The first positive idea for funding this ambitious scheme came from Dick Cawston. He had directed the joint BBC/ITV groundbreaking documentary, *The Royal Family*. This was the first time that the Queen had agreed to cooperate in a film that showed the Royal Family at work and play, and it was a huge success. The Queen had stipulated that any profits generated from its sales should be distributed to charities. Dick's film was screened in 1969, and soon the profits had accrued to £50,000. Dick suggested at a council meeting that we should try and persuade the Queen to nominate the SFTA as her preferred charity. We consulted Lord Mountbatten, our President, and he promised to help. He used his enormous power of persuasion, coupled with the closeness to his niece, to get her agreement. The Palace stipulated that the SFTA would first have to appoint a board of Trustees to ensure that the agreed terms of the royal donation would be safe-guarded, and that the new headquarters would be used solely to further the arts and crafts of film and television. In other words, the Trustees' responsibilities would include a guarantee that the old Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour would not be used as a blue-movie house! And so in 1971, the SFTA Trustees were established; they were Dickie Attenborough, John Brabourne, Dick Cawston and myself.

To get final approval from the Palace before purchasing the lease, Lord McLean, the Lord Chamberlain, had to vet the building, and in July 1972, Dick and I met him in Piccadilly and conducted him round the pitch dark interior, with a clutch of torches provided by the agent's representative. He liked what he saw and we were given the go ahead, but it took many more months before we acquired the lease of, what is now, 195 Piccadilly, close to Fortnum's and opposite the Royal Academy.

Dickie and John B. set out on a furious fund raising campaign. We required £250k to rebuild the inside of the building to create a 230 seat cinema, plus a smaller one, catering facilities, meeting areas with bars and all the necessary office accommodation. It was a very tall order, but we opened the doors to the membership in 1975.

We now called ourselves the British Academy of Film and Television Arts – BAFTA. A long haul from the late 1950's when the British Film Academy and the Guild of Television Producers and Directors began their tentative, difficult merger talks.

Lord Mountbatten persuaded his great-niece, Princess Anne, to take over as BAFTA's President, and she played a very active part supporting all our activities. The BAFTA council decided to name our main cinema 'The Princess Anne Theatre', and on 10th March 1976, The Queen, and Prince Philip, were on parade for the grand opening of the BAFTA Centre. Sydney Samuelson (now Sir Sydney) was reigning chairman of BAFTA at the time, and he and I staged this historic event.

The great and the good filled the theatre, and after the Queen had declared our headquarters officially open, Princess Anne announced the presentation of BAFTA's first fellowship. And then an extremely well kept secret was revealed. Earlier that evening, Charlie Chaplin, now very old and very frail, was smuggled into the building in his wheelchair, and hidden, if I remember correctly, in one of our large stationery cupboards. On cue, the doors to the theatre opened and to the audience's great surprise,

our Vice-Chairman, Johnny Goodman, wheeled him into the auditorium, where our President presented him with the BAFTA mask. The Queen then rose and walked over to him to congratulate him. That picture made the front page of the Times in the morning.

Then it was our opportunity to show the whole repertoire of the latest technical innovations we had installed, demonstrating BAFTA's ability to project images ranging from Wide Screen, Cinemascope, Panavision, to off-air TV, and the latest innovation – the video cassette.

Sydney Samuelson was on the stage, making the presentation and I was up in the projection box, cueing the projectionist – it was like doing a complicated live outside broadcast. We changed the screen masking for each format and played movie clips to show them off, ending with the huge Panavision screen size, with clips from that year's Innsbruck Winter Olympics. And then, as a planned afterthought, Sydney held up a video cassette and said: "For those who have not seen one of these, you just slot them into the recorder, press a button – and sometimes it can work miracles." And on the array of television monitors suspended from the theatre's ceiling, a picture of a hand holding a film clapperboard popped up, with a voice announcing: "Take One – and I sincerely hope it will be in one take." And with the clap, the camera panned up showing Prince Charles holding the board in a television studio. I was looking through the projection box porthole and saw the Queen being as surprised as the rest of the audience. The week before, I had flown up to Glasgow to shoot this piece. At the time he was a Lieutenant in command of the minesweeper HMS Bonnington moored in the Firth of Clyde, and so could not join his family at BAFTA. He directed his message to the Lord High Admiral, the Queen, and went on:

"Knowing of the presence of at least three other Admirals at the Centre today, I would like to pay my humble respects to the Academy's paternal first President, to the Academy's avuncular second President and to the Navy's most attractive Admiral, the present President."

It all went down well, and afterwards the Royal Party came up to the projection box and we introduced them to the crew and showed them round. We had a good laugh when I told the Queen about my trip to Prince Charles in Glasgow; it really was a secret that was successfully kept from her.

I frequently see Sydney Samuelson (now Sir), who became a fellow Trustee and a good friend in the eighties, after Dick Cawston's sad and totally unexpected death. Both of us started in this business as projectionists early in the War, and we often look back on BAFTA's Royal opening night with relish – staged by two ex- 'projies'.

BAFTA's Royal Opening 10 March 1975



Photograph courtesy of BAFTA

Jane greets BAFTA's new President, Princess Anne
Behind her are Sydney Samuelson, Dick Cawston
and Lord Mountbatten



Photograph courtesy of BAFTA

We show off our latest wizardry in the projection box to the
Queen, Prince Philip, Princess Anne and Lord Mountbatten



Photograph courtesy of BAFTA

The mood was, to say the least, very relaxed

The Family on the move



Jonathan and Ben have outgrown
our small house in Canonbury



and we settle in Highgate

Chapter 24

Early in 1976, I was approached by that great impresario, Bernard Delfont, to come and have lunch with him. He was, among many of his activities, the boss of EMI Films based at Elstree Studios. Because of my 'royal connections', as he put it, he offered me the prospect of making a documentary film for general cinema release in 1977, to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee. I readily accepted – the thought of making a film for the large screen was irresistible. That was the good news, and then I discovered the not so good news.

He told me that he had a limited budget (I understood that he was financing the film himself) and that I would have to observe Eady Fund rules, a government regulated system for subsidising British Films. This stipulated that 75% of the film had to be newly shot footage – a tall order for a film that, because of its subject matter, surely had to be based on archive footage; how else could one tell the story of the first twenty-five years of the monarch's reign in a feature-length movie? But I was prepared to have a go, and with the co-operation of the Palace, it might be possible to construct a film based on new material I would shoot with the Queen during this current year.

My first port of call was Ron Allison, the Queen's Press Officer. I went to see him in Buckingham Palace and soon discovered that I was asking for the impossible. The Queen's diary is finalised at least a year in advance, and to ask for facilities for some special filming simply was not on. I had met Ron before when I was making the Mountbatten series and he was most sympathetic, appreciating the hole I was in. He said that he would do his best to get approval for me to tag along with a film crew and cover some of the royal engagements and activities that are normally 'out of bounds' to the press. I crossed my fingers that I would get sufficient material, hopefully of a more intimate kind, to make this film for EMI.

Because of my close relationship with Lord Mountbatten, I was able to ask him to see whether he could put in a good word for me, and the outcome was that the Queen would try to fit in a session especially for my film, possibly later that year, but at that point there were no promises.

It was premature trying to think of the shape and style for the film until I had gathered in all its ingredients; this was familiar territory for me, as twelve years earlier I treated *LSO - The Music Men*, and *Black Marries White* in a similar way.

I asked the Palace to let me have the scripts and recordings of all the Queen's public speeches and Christmas broadcasts going back to 1952; I felt sure that they would provide the underlying themes of her reign, and form the backbone for the film. And that is how it finally worked out; once again, I did away with the narrator; instead, used extracts from these speeches, including one from Prince Philip, to achieve an impressionistic picture of the first twenty-five years of this monarch's reign.

I set up office in Elstree Studios and found it hugely enjoyable working in a movie-making atmosphere. I had a production Manager, Production Secretary, Unit Manager, Accountant and Publicist on my team, plus two fully-fledged 35mm camera crews and two cutting rooms.

We filmed in a great variety of locations, highlighting the busy and often taxing royal duties.

Of all the locations, it was the trip to Canada and the USA in 1976 that is firmly embedded in my memory. It combined the Queen's Commonwealth visit to Canada with the opening of the Montreal Olympic Games, followed by her visit to Boston to join the 1766 bicentennial celebrations of America's independence.

In June, I went on an advance recce starting in Boston, and with the enthusiastic organisers of 'Boston 200', set out to find locations, camera positions, boats to film from, and all the other small details for a successful shoot. The 'natives' were extremely friendly and we all relished the irony of the Queen's visit to Boston – the cradle of American Independence – joining Bostonians celebrating her forefather's overthrow and defeat two-hundred years earlier.

Then on to Ottawa, where I had to seek approval and co-operation from Canadian Government officials who were in charge of protocol and procedures for the royal visit. They were relieved when I made it clear that I was not going to Montreal to film the Olympics opening ceremony, but wanted to limit my locations to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she would arrive in Britannia, followed by her visit to New Brunswick. I was then due to leave Ottawa and fly to Fredericton, capital of New Brunswick, to organise the filming there, and then go on to Halifax to do the same; then quickly back to London for the next UK shoot – the State Visit of the French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

And so to the first unforeseen adventure: The Canadian Pilots union had called a nationwide strike, and air traffic was about to come to a standstill. The Colonel in charge of the royal tour came to my rescue. He drove me out to a small airfield where, on my behalf (at huge expense), he had persuaded the owner of a small single-engined plane to fly me from Ottawa to Fredericton.

The pilot lent me a fur lined flying jacket and we collected a flask of hot coffee and mugs, and stowed them under my seat. It turned out to be a hair-raising 400 miles. As we took off, I could see that the cloud base was only a few hundred feet, and as we climbed we were soon swallowed up inside a thick and turbulent cloud – and for the next few hours all I could see were the instruments showing altitude, speed and our direction. The pilot had given me a headset to wear 'to keep my ears warm', as he put it, but it enabled me to listen to his occasional calls to control points along the route verifying our position, and that was quite reassuring. After being tossed around in what looked like the same cloud we had entered in Ottawa over three hours earlier, the pilot pushed his control column forward and, with huge relief, I could see Fredericton airport less than a thousand feet below us. I admired the pilot's skill, thanked him and reminded him of the untouched coffee under my seat.

I checked in at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, and then went to the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, the focal point of the Queen's visit, to meet its curator and finalise camera positions for her visit. On my way to his office, I spotted Graham Sutherland's portrait of Churchill, and works by Turner, Stanley Spencer and Salvador Dali, to name but a few.

Back at the hotel, I was told that there might be a chance in the morning of hiring a private plane to take me another 200 miles east, to Halifax. I was very glad to crawl into bed.

Just after midnight, I was woken up by some frantic banging on my door; it was the assistant manager telling me that I had ten minutes to get to the airport for the last flight to Halifax. Apparently, the pilots of Maritime Airlines were the last to take strike action,

and this particular pilot lived in Halifax and he wanted to get home before the deadline. In a panic, I put on my shirt and trousers over my pyjamas, threw everything else into my case, and made for the airport where they were holding the plane for me. Three hours later I was sound asleep in a Halifax hotel bed. What a day.

I had only one call to make in the morning. It was to the Harbour Master to organise my coverage of the Queen's arrival in the Royal Yacht Britannia. When I told him that I had to find a way to get out of Canada to fly back to London, he contacted a friend who could fly me across the frontier to Bangor, Maine, in the States, where I could pick up a Delta flight to Boston, and then back to London. I spoke to the owner of the six-seater on the phone, and his hugely inflated fee for the flight was way above my Jubilee film budget. I told him I would have to find five passengers to share the cost. Off I went to my hotel, it was now lunchtime, and I went up to the bar, ordered a drink, and tapped my glass with some ice tongues. This momentarily stopped the chatter round the bar and I asked in a loud voice: "Anyone for Bangor?" Immediately, I became the most popular man in Halifax as at least twenty American citizens, now stranded in Canada, crowded round me, desperate to fly home. I picked five candidates, and in two taxis we drove to the flying club, and off we flew to Bangor. In spite of everything, I arrived back in London as per my schedule. Some recce – some trip.

* * * *

On 11th July, the Queen was due to arrive in Boston. I flew there three days in advance with my two camera crews, and a mountain of equipment as we were shooting in 35mm. Bearing in mind the limited ratio of archive film I could use in the final cut, we took the opportunity to shoot quite a long sequence of Boston girding itself for this historic visit. There were one or two choice moments we captured on camera, including the telephonist at the 'Boston 200' headquarters fielding an enquiry:

"Good afternoon, this is Boston 200. Yes, I can connect you with someone who can handle the Queen."

The Royal Address to the people of Boston was delivered from the Old State House, still bearing on its frontage the proud sculptures of the Imperial Lion and Unicorn. It was a well-received speech, and the Queen brought the house down with this:

"It was not many miles from here, at Lexington and Concord, that the first shots were fired in the war between Britain and America two-hundred-and-one years ago. If Paul Revere, Samuel Adams and other patriots could have known that one day a British monarch could have stood beneath the balcony of the Old State House from which the Declaration of Independence was first read to the people of Boston – well, I think they would have been extremely surprised."

Later that day, I attended a reception for Boston's dignitaries on board Britannia and at the same time made sure that one half of our camera equipment was stowed safely

below decks, ready for the Canadian leg of the tour. The next morning, the crew and I flew to Halifax to get ready to film Britannia's arrival due the following day.

And now for an unexpected adventure. I had arranged with the Harbour Master to get a lift in the pilot boat together with one of my cameramen and sound recordist. This was due to sail at 4 a.m. to meet the royal yacht several miles out in Halifax waters, and for us then to climb on board Britannia and film the arrival from her deck and for the other camera crew to cover the scene from the quay. The forecast was for severe gales, and when we met the pilot at that unearthly hour, he was not at all sure whether he would have to cancel his trip. I was rather hoping that he would, because I am such a lousy sailor, and can barely cope with the sea when it is dead flat. We climbed on board what looked like a miniature trawler. I was told that this pilot boat had an extremely powerful engine to be able to handle the notoriously heavy seas in Halifax waters. We set off and within minutes I was looking for something to hang on to. I stayed with the pilot in the wheelhouse, and when the skipper lit up a foul smelling pipe, even the pilot turned green. I went down below, threw up, and felt better for it. Visibility was almost nil, and the skipper was in constant radio contact with Britannia to achieve the planned rendezvous. One hour after setting out, about fifty yards away, her hull loomed up out of the darkness. We drew up along side, and Britannia's sailors dropped a very long rope ladder over the side and the experienced pilot grabbed it, and like a monkey, clambered up and disappeared from sight. It was now my turn. I tried hard to remember the skipper's strict instructions, telling me that because of the heavy swell of the sea, the pilot boat will rise and fall about twenty feet, and I had to make sure to make a quick grab for the rope ladder, at exactly the moment when the boat had reached her highest point in the water and then climb like mad. I did this as the boat disappeared from under me, and I had managed to climb just one rung when she came up again on her next rise, realising that I might be knocked back into the water. Survival instincts took over, and after, what seemed like an endless climb, the welcoming strong arms of two of Britannia's sailors helped to pull me onto the deck. I then made sure that the other two of my crew had followed me. The duty officer welcomed us, and a voice behind me said: "That was a bit hairy." I turned round, and it was Prince Philip, in a heavy raincoat, who had come out on deck at that early hour to watch the fun.

Sailors brought up our camera equipment, and although the weather was foul, we were able to capture on film the preparations for docking, with a very soggy Royal Marines Band on the deck of the Royal Yacht announcing her arrival in Halifax.

The only other journey we were able to cover was a State visit to Finland, and we also filmed a fistful of engagements in the UK, including the Royal Family in Balmoral Castle, and Trooping the Colour. And in the autumn, I was told that I could have half a day for some exclusive filming. I wanted some linking sequences in the final cut, so I asked to film the Queen riding, on her own, in Windsor Home Park. I planned a series of tracking shots taken from a camera car, riding alongside the Queen. She was very understanding and helpful, and didn't seem to mind a bit being asked for several takes. She wanted to know how I was getting on with the film, and regretted that it had not been possible to allocate more of her time to the project.

In November, I went to Buckingham Palace to screen the rough-cut to the Queen. She liked the Boston sequence best, and said that she hoped to see the final version before she and Prince Philip embarked on their Jubilee Commonwealth Tour early in 1977.

A few months later, on 4th February, I was asked to report to Windsor Castle at 8.45pm to show the finished film, *25 Years - Impressions*, to the Queen and Prince Philip. The venue was the magnificent St. George's Hall, with just four chairs facing a screen, which is normally secreted in the floor, but now had been pulled upwards to its open position. The projection box was at the far end of this very long hall, and when not in use, its portholes are obscured by large paintings.

The fourth chair was for the Queen's Private Secretary, and I sat between the Queen and Prince Philip. I just kept my fingers crossed that they would like the film, and when the lights went up there was a short silence, broken by Prince Philip: "Well, if nobody is going to say anything, I am going to clap my hands", and he turned to me and said "I like it very much." The Queen, too, looked pleased and asked some interesting questions about the difficulty of deciding on what to put in and what to leave out. She then invited me to join them for a nightcap, and we walked along corridors to her private quarters, where Prince Philip told me to choose from an array of at least ten malt whiskeys. There was a tray of finely cut smoked salmon sandwiches, and the Queen offered me a plate and asked me to help myself. It was all very relaxed, and she wanted to know more about the opening Boston sequence, which she said she really enjoyed.

In this sequence, showing Boston getting ready for her visit, the camera captured a rich moment with workmen erecting the dais from which the Queen made her speech in front of the Old State House. A very pretty, young black girl from 'Boston 200', called Virginia, was supervising this, and told the elderly foreman in no uncertain terms, that she was not satisfied with the dais position and wanted it swivelled round a bit to face the audience. "Ok, we'll do as the lady says", he reluctantly told his gang, and after moving it, and as the open sides of the base were nailed up, there was a loud yell and they discovered that they had nailed in one of their mates and they had to prise off the plank and pull him out by his feet.

I now witnessed a side to the Queen, which the public never sees – she launched into a word-perfect impersonation of Virginia. It was very funny.

We then talked a lot about the Mountbatten series (now seven years since its transmission) and she remembered very clearly the technical problems we had in Ceylon and how 'Uncle Dickie' thrived on problem solving. I left Windsor Castle after 11pm and I will always look back on that day with fond memories.

The 'gala' première was at the EMI cinema in Shaftsbury Avenue on 16th February 1977. The Queen and Prince Philip had departed on their Commonwealth Tour, so Prince Charles officiated, and there was the usual line-up in the foyer and it was all very jolly.

The film was shown in selected cinemas in Britain. I think I just about got away with it. Reviews were mixed, and only one or two critics mentioned the restrictions imposed by the Eady Plan on the use of archive material. For me, it felt like a sabbatical from television, an enjoyable experience.

1977 *The Queen's Silver Jubilee* Filmed in 1976



Windsor Great Park: With the Queen planning the riding sequences for the film



16th February 1977. West End premiere of EMI's *25 Years - Impressions* at the ABC Cinema in Shaftesbury Avenue



Prince Charles stands in for the Queen who is on her Silver Jubilee Commonwealth Tour

Chapter 25

Going through my appointments diaries, which I luckily still possess, 1976 and 1977 produced such a range of diverse activities, that thirty years later they make me wonder how I ever had any time to see my young family grow up. We were now well settled in our new home in Highgate and in spite of a hectic life away from home, I still somehow managed to find time for a certain amount of do-it-yourself to complete all the many targets we had set ourselves. The biggest and most rewarding of these was the Douglas fir tongue & grooving covering the whole of our newly created combined kitchen and living area – clear proof that the less time you have at your disposal, the more time you are somehow able to find to achieve the tasks that seem impossible.

While I was editing my Jubilee film, I was, at the same time, pursuing a new and novel way of communicating. My close friend, Richard Sonnenfeldt, room-mate from our school, Bunce Court, when we were in our early teens, was now a big noise with RCA, in charge of a large team of experts developing a revolutionary videodisc technology, called SelectaVision, and he asked me over to New York several times to suggest what sort of programming they ought to publish on RCA's new gadget.

We first started talking about this when I stayed with him on Long Island. I remember, when he took me sailing in Long Island Sound, we explored my first ideas about ways of making and presenting programmes that could be released from the tyranny of the broadcast time-slots, which dictate their running time. As I have stated earlier, the lesson learnt from making documentaries – single programmes or long series – is that the amount of information one can impart has to be rationed, to avoid mental overload. I called it the limitations of the medium. And in any case, the retention of details, seen and heard by the viewer, is immediately compromised by the demands made on the poor overworked brain by the programmes that follow it. Maybe, new technology, new means of imparting information, might now come to the rescue. It was an exciting prospect and I felt that I wanted to be a part of it.

On one of my brief visits to RCA, in the Rockefeller Centre, I was being given a demonstration of a prototype of the disc player, when Dick told me that, at short notice, he had arranged for me to attend the RCA board meeting that morning. The developing SelectaVision technology was on the agenda, and he thought that it would be very useful for me to give my views on 'software' – a new name in the communications vocabulary. At the appropriate moment when SelectaVision was about to be discussed, I was wheeled into the inner sanctum, and confronted by a boardroom table as long as a football pitch, with about twenty RCA executives sitting around it. Robert Sarnoff, President of RCA, and a name to conjure with, was in the chair. Everyone was sporting a diamond-studded tiepin. Dick's had a cluster of diamonds on his pin, each one confirming a patented invention. I was now in the company of a body of America's finest engineers.

"Welcome, Mr Morley," said Sarnoff, "Mr Sonnenfeldt has told us about you, and that you might have some suggestions for exploiting our new videodisc system." A sea of faces all turned their heads towards my end of this long table and I had to think fast,

as I was totally unprepared. “Mr President, RCA has set itself the problem of how to deposit high quality colour pictures and stereo sound on to a round flat object, and then be able to play it all back on a domestic machine. I have just had a demonstration of the disc player, and I am bowled over by it, and think it is very exciting. But it leaves me with a question: what motivated this engineering triumph in the first place?” I could feel the piercing stares of the assembled engineers focusing on me. “With great respect, I do hope that this is not a case of new technology being invented for its own sake, looking for an application – and I am very glad that Mr Sonnenfeldt has invited me over to New York, wearing my ‘software’ hat, to help identify some of the benefits your new technology might offer.”

I felt I had shot my bolt. After all, I was only a visitor, and I felt that I might be shown the door. Instead, I was asked to elaborate on my ideas for the ‘interactive’ use of their new technology, and there followed an interesting discussion. Sarnoff thanked me for my contribution, and I left. Shortly after, Dick called me and asked me to be a software consultant for RCA. And that meant visits to Holland and Germany, where both Philips, Grundig and Decca were developing their separate systems, and I had to write long reports on what I learnt and also put forward concrete ideas for what they called their ‘RCA’s opening night catalogue’. I didn’t realise it at the time, but it was to lead to an important change in my work a few years later.

* * * *

At about this time, one of those bizarre and totally unpredictable events appeared out of the blue. I received an invitation to join the European Audiovisual Committee. Being one of just two UK representatives, I was quite flattered, although I had never heard of it. Terry Hughes, a journalist, was the other member, and we met at our first session in Brussels and discovered what we had let ourselves in for:

‘The Audio-Visual Division of the European Commission is responsible for a wide range of activities including the supply of radio and TV and film material to developing countries, the supply of information to local and regional radio stations, the production of audio-visual material for the Commission offices in member and non-member states.’

Alan Watson (later Lord Watson), previously a television anchorman, was the Committee’s chairman. One of his minions (there were many) had sent out the agenda for this session including hotel details and expense claim forms for reimbursing travel and overnight expenses.

After checking in at a very posh Brussels hotel, we were escorted to an upmarket restaurant, where, over drinks, we met the other committee members from the other EEC Countries. It was all very jolly, and the dinner that followed was magnificent. When coffee was served, Alan Watson made a speech of welcome, followed by several other speeches in different languages. I enjoyed the Italian one best because the speaker had imbibed enough to make it difficult for him to keep his balance.

I was glad to get back to my room. The next morning, we assembled for the official committee meeting. Alan Watson chaired it, and the main item on the agenda was the

Commission's desire to establish an EEC television festival to award prizes to the best programmes from the nine member states, promoting interest in the first European Direct Election to be held in 1979. With the translations into French and English, and the first loose thoughts by some of the delegates, we were asked to come up with some firm ideas at the next meeting, probably in six month's time. It was time for lunch. Again, we were shipped to one of Brussels' superior watering holes, and after a splendid meal, there were more speeches, largely of a political nature, with several of the delegates offering their services to be put in charge of the proposed festival. I recall looking at Terry Hughes opposite me, wearing the same 'what the hell are we doing here' look on his face. And that was it. We flew back to London early that evening and not only waited for the date of the next meeting, but also about five months to get our not inconsiderable expenses reimbursed.

Wearing my BAFTA Trustee hat, I asked Reg Collin, our Chief Executive, to write an outline proposal for a TV festival, which I then presented at the next session in Brussels. And after a lot of opposition from the French, who really wanted to run the show, it was agreed that BAFTA should do a study and submit a detailed plan with costings for the next meeting. Once again, the same gastronomic procedures were observed, as was the maddening withholding of travel expenses. And so it went on for the following year with more meetings and a lot of work being put in by BAFTA to produce the detailed document. It all ended in tears when I got a letter of apology from Alan Watson, stating that the Commission could not afford the funding for a television festival. I finally received my expenses, and never heard from Brussels again.

To this day, I don't know whether I am still a member of the Audiovisual Committee, or, indeed, whether it was disbanded or not, but what I do know is that the burdening bureaucracy, the sheer incompetence, the waste of taxpayers' money and a strong whiff of political infighting, made my euro-sceptic juices rise.

Chapter 26

In August 1976, Paul Fox called me. Now, as Managing Director of Yorkshire Television, he had put YTV on the map with a very successful drama and documentary output. He said: "I need you to carry out a rescue mission."

He had done a deal with David Frost's company, David Paradine Productions, to make a series of thirteen programmes, called *Prime Minister on Prime Ministers*. Harold Wilson, now in retirement, had readily agreed to this, especially as it was going to be closely tied to a book of the same title that Wilson was writing, and the first three episodes had already been filmed: Pitt, Peel and Disraeli.

I met Paul in YTV's preview theatre in Old Burlington Street and he screened all three and wanted to have my opinion. They were dire. Both Wilson and David Frost had stipulated that they did not want to go to locations outside London, and as a result these three were static, boring interviews with a painting or sculpture of the relevant Prime Minister, in the background. I well remember when the lights went up, Paul looking at me and I made a thumbs down gesture. "A re-shoot?" he asked. I nodded.

The next step was for me to attend a luncheon in a private room at Kettners Restaurant in Soho. Present were Lord Blake, the great historian, biographer and the YTV series advisor, Michael Deakin, YTV's executive producer, Anthony Jay, David Frost's script consultant, Harold Wilson and Lady Falkender.

I had been warned about Lady Falkender, who, as Marcia Williams, became Harold Wilson's political secretary in October 1956, and was ennobled by him as Baroness Falkender in the 1974 notorious 'lavender honours list'. There was a flood of stories of intrigue about her – *Private Eye* thrived on it. Some say that she ruled her boss with an iron fist and 'ran No.10'. "Marcia can't see you for two weeks but the Prime Minister can see you straight away" was an often-quoted barb by the press. I was told to be very careful: she was foul tempered and she was likely to eat me alive.

On arrival, we had drinks at the bar and I was introduced to everyone. Lady F took me to one side (I thought to myself 'Tally Ho') and then she totally disarmed me:

"I would like you to call me Marcia – may I call you Peter?"

"Of course. But I have been warned that you might eat me!"

"People always say the most terrible things about me – all lies! But, please, be absolutely frank and tell me what you really think about Harold's first three programmes."

"I am afraid they won't do. They are boring to watch, with David reeling off questions, which sound as though Harold Wilson had provided him with a list of them in advance. They really need to be re-shot."

"What a relief! That's just what I think, but I have kept my mouth shut."

"Who will tell him – you or I?"

"You'd better leave that to me. Harold will take it from me."

We sat down to eat, and Wilson asked me what I thought about the three programmes, and I said that they lacked colour and that it would really be more interesting if he and David could film the interviews at appropriate locations, with some sequences filmed, for example, in the Palace of Westminster, and Walmer Castle for Pitt, Broadlands for

Palmerston, Chequers for Baldwin, Caernarvon for Lloyd George, the Cabinet War Rooms for Churchill, and so on. Everyone seemed to agree, and Marcia, sitting next to me, whispered: "Thank God for that. I will tell him about scrapping the first three when I am in the car with him."

From that moment on, she and I got on famously, and she turned out to be a great help and ally when filming started again later that year, accompanying Wilson to every location. We were to stay in contact for many years afterwards, meeting sometimes for lunch.

The production routine that I inherited when I took over was, to say the least, odd. Each programme, that is each Prime Minister, triggered a Café Royal luncheon, attended by the same group, with Wilson arriving with his drafted or finished chapter on that particular PM. Then a lively and very informative discussion took place, which highlighted the areas that the programme should explore. Wilson, himself a well qualified historian, had many an altercation with Lord Blake, and it was fascinating to observe some high-powered intellectual shadow boxing. There was one occasion when he apologised for arriving a bit late at the Café Royal, saying that he had been up all night "writing the Disraeli chapter"!

David Frost was never in attendance as he was commuting weekly by Concorde to New York for his coast-to-coast television show. So he missed out on what would have been a valuable briefing session. But Tony Jay, who made valuable contributions to these discussions, was responsible for bringing David up to speed. It sounds quite crazy now, but he used to meet him at Heathrow, coming off his over-night flight, and they would arrive in a chauffeur-driven car at the location wherever we were shooting, fully briefed for the interview. David had a talent for assimilating a lot of information very quickly and by the time he arrived, been to make-up to remove the telltale signs of the flight, he was well prepared to face Wilson.

Yorkshire Television had agreed to let me set up an office and two cutting rooms in Wardour Street, staffed by YTV film editors and assistants, who travelled down from York every Monday, returning home for the weekend. I must say that this was my least favourite way of making programmes. I felt frustrated that I could not provide my usual input, as the method used to harness Wilson and Frost (both very busy people) relegated me to the role of the 'rescuer', as Paul Fox put it.

Towards the end of the year the programmes trickled out weekly on the ITV network without fanfares. I was not proud of them. Sadly, such a good idea went out almost unnoticed. To hear someone who has been a Prime Minister – done the job and knows what he is talking about – expound on twelve of his predecessors could have been fascinating and historically very valuable.

But there were compensations for me, as Paul was to offer me opportunities in the following year for an adventure that was really worthwhile.

When Wilson's book was published, he kindly sent me a copy with this inscription:

HAROLD WILSON

A PRIME MINISTER ON PRIME MINISTERS

For Peter with warm thanks and
deep appreciation – always tyrannous
but nice with it.

Yorkshire T.V.,
Walmer to Westminster,
1976 to 1977.

Harold Wilson

* * * *

1977 was the year that saw the arrival of the domestic video cassette recorder, opening up a potential rental market for movies and, the newly named videograms: programmes made specially for this new technology, designed primarily for showing on home video systems. A new name had to be invented because new agreements – videogram agreements – covering copyright, performance, royalties, etc., had to be negotiated for a product that the public could purchase and own forever after.

There were three competing cassette systems vying for a huge potential market: Sony's Betamax, Philips' VCR and JVC's VHS; with VHS coming out on top and winning the world's markets. And looming up fast, was the prospect of videodisc technology.

In the autumn of 1977, while I was still cutting the Prime Minister series, I got an interesting call from EMI. They were, at the time, the largest manufacturers of audio discs in the world, and they set up a small company called EMI Videogram Productions, with the task to find means of packaging and marketing movies (known today as videos) for this new rental market. Their second task was to produce experimental audio-visual material for the approaching videodisc market, and they invited me to make their first production for this new technology. They probably approached me because they must have come across the following article I had written for the Royal Television Society (many years, incidentally, before the appearance of CD, CD-ROM and DVD, let alone solid state technologies):

A New Grammar - First Steps

Recently it was said that the weakness of the videodisc is not in its technology, but in the imagination of those who create programmes for it. The temptation to put technique before content is as old as broadcasting itself – the videodisc makes this temptation almost irresistible.

If brilliant innovations such as still-frame, random access, rapid search, chapterisation, dual audio information and all the other marvels are put at our disposal, why not exploit them? The challenge is plain: to develop a style using this amazing new technology in an entertaining and informative way – but avoiding the danger of doing so for its own sake.

Thus, for those who have spent years making films and TV programmes – with a beginning, middle and end – there is as much to learn as there is to ‘unlearn’. A new visual literacy beckons.

The videogram is not designed to fill a slot in a television schedule. It must stand on its own, unsupported by programmes either side of it, and what is more, earn its keep from its first day of publication. It is not a memory of last night's TV. Videograms must be able to stand up to the test of time and repetition. They must be able to survive close scrutiny over many years, that is why I like to label them ‘evergreen’ programmes. Unlike the ephemeral TV programme, the videodisc will carry its contents as though it has been set in concrete. And because of the ability to speak to the disc-user, unfettered by the strictures of TV programme scheduling and the accidental but inevitable collisions with programmes on competing channels, new and exciting possibilities present themselves.

The main one is a welcome opportunity to provide a much greater information density than even the most carefully crafted TV documentary is able to achieve. At last, programmes like ‘Life On Earth’, ‘World At War’, ‘The Life And Times Of Lord Mountbatten’ can, if published on videodisc, carry footnotes and appendices, encompassing a huge array of extra information which the programme maker has been forced to exclude, as the amount of detailed information which can be absorbed in one viewing is so limited. Similarly, a TV drama such as ‘Gossip From The Forest’ could be much enhanced by the addition of complementary videogram reference chapters detailing the historical context which inspired the writer in the first place.

The videogram maker will be inviting the disc-user to participate in an act of communication that is outside the prescribed time-frame of broadcast TV and its inherent passivity. ‘What is the running-time of a disc?’ will become an irrelevancy. The question is ‘how much information can be crowded into a disc?’ And if we can develop this new grammar successfully, time will not be the yardstick. The ‘non-linear’ approach will be measured by something else: involvement, enrichment, entertainment, repeatability and above all, participation. Not a million miles from traditional publishing!

EMI told me that they had got the approval from King's College, Cambridge, to record, on video, their traditional Christmas Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Quite a coup. When I was invited to direct this first videogram for them, I grasped the opportunity with both hands. I was asked to direct it in such a way that it could be transmitted as a

traditional linear programme on broadcast television, and at the same time to develop means to exploit some of the interactive properties of the videodisc.

I knew that in order to make it fit into an 'evergreen' and timeless programme category, this traditional Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols had to undergo a fundamental change in presentation. The BBC outside-broadcast units cover this splendid service every Christmas, a tradition as firmly established as the Queen's Christmas message, when lesson readers, alternating with the choir's carols, walk down the aisle to the lectern, and then return to their pews. The readers are usually chosen from various walks of Cambridge life, and the fashion of the ladies' hats and coats alone, would have made it difficult to create a sense of timelessness, quite apart from the risk taken every year with the quality of delivery and interpretation of the lessons. There had to be some changes.

With the enthusiastic support and invaluable help from the Dean of King's College, we transformed this annual event from a religious service into *Christmas Carols from Cambridge*. The first decision was to do away with a congregation, giving me the space and rare opportunity to display the magnificence of some of the Chapel's features, normally not visible or accessible to the public: the fan vaulting, Tudor heraldry, stone and wood carvings, door and ceiling bosses, paintings and tapestries.

In addition, I now had the freedom to place the choir in many different locations within the Chapel, against a variety of rich and unusual backgrounds, and as it turned out, discover acoustic qualities, which had never been put to the test before.

But the most telling transformation was brought about by asking Sir John Gielgud to pre-record the lessons. His reading of them is of an extraordinary beauty, his 'evergreen' voice having never sounded better.

My recording session with him took place at the EMI Abbey Road Studios, and he told me that he was delighted to work in Studio One, made famous by the Beatles.

I illustrated the lessons with appropriate details from the chapel's stained glass windows. As these are totally inaccessible, they had to be reproduced from transparencies taken some years before, when the interior of the Chapel was being restored and scaffolding provided access for photography. As I have always tried to avoid mixing electronic pictures with film, as the textural difference is so jarring, I persuaded Ken Morse, the ace film rostrum cameraman, temporarily to replace his film camera with one of the first relatively small EMI video cameras, which resulted in achieving rostrum camera work of a quality that is so remarkable that it really does look as though the windows were recorded on location.

Since *The Turn of the Screw* eighteen years before, I had not enjoyed and got so much pleasure out of a production. It started with my first planning trip to Cambridge. As I entered King's College Chapel one could not help looking up at that stunning fan vaulting and it literally took my breath away. No wonder that Sir Christopher Wren, when he first stepped inside the chapel is reported to have said: "I wouldn't know where to place the first stone."

And I was going to work in it for five days. I remember thinking that not only was this a great privilege, but that I was actually going to be paid for it.

A video facility company, Trillion Video, provided the crews and hardware for four cameras, plus the small EMI camera. I had asked for a big camera crane, and by the time all the lighting gear was in place, this glorious chapel looked like an expensive film set.

It was now one week before Christmas, and The Director of Music, Philip Ledger, appeared and conducted his immaculately rehearsed choir, but I was only allowed two two-hour recording sessions a day, so that some of the very young choirboys didn't keel over with fatigue. In fact, they were so excited, that my floor manager had his hands full preventing them from climbing all over the cameras. Now, nearly forty years later, some of these gifted young rascals may well have their own offspring in the choir.

The original stereo sound in the King's Chapel was recorded by EMI's senior sound recordist, Christopher Parker, who, after many years of making audio records of concerts, operas and indeed carols from King's College, found himself, for the first time, in company with cameras, cranes and lights. In spite of that, the final sound, as heard on this videogram, could easily have gone onto audio disc and no one would be any the wiser. The video and sound editing was carried out at Trillion and we had to develop untried techniques, and as a result, pushed forward the art of video editing with stereo sound by a considerable margin.

EMI's courage in commissioning an expensive production such as this on a purely experimental and speculative basis, was admirable. From my point of view, the experience gained in making this videogram was immense. I shipped a final version over to Dick Sonnenfeldt in New York, and with EMI's blessing, he had some experimental SelectaVision discs pressed. Five years later, I was able to produce an early 'interactive' disc on the Japanese VHD system and exploit the chapterisation possibilities with instant access to individual carols and lessons.

I invited a contingent of BBC decision makers, including Humphrey Burton, to BAFTA and showed them *Christmas Carols from Cambridge* in the Princess Anne Theatre. As a result, they transmitted my version twice the following Christmas, replacing their normal outside broadcast. It got good reviews. 1977 ended on a high note.

Christmas Carols from Cambridge 1977

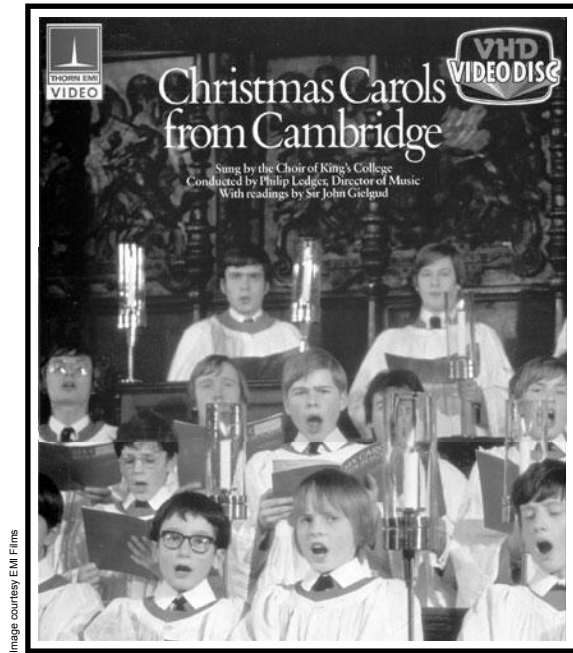


Image courtesy EMI Films

The sleeve for the VHD Videodisc



Image courtesy EMI Films

The choristers had a very good time



Image courtesy EMI Films

Recording the Lessons with Sir John Gielgud
in the Beatles studio in Abbey Road

Chapter 27

While I was still cutting *Prime Minister on Prime Ministers* and preparing for the King's Chapel shoot, Paul Fox sounded me out about producing and directing a clutch of six one-hour documentaries for Yorkshire television, telling the stories of acts of extraordinary courage displayed by women in World War II. Each one of these would focus on an individual's lone fight against Nazism and all it stood for. I thought this was a good idea and gladly accepted, and we agreed that my contract for these would start as soon as I had finished my current commitments. The series was to be called *Women of Courage*.

YTV's research team, allocated to this project, came to see me in my Wardour Street cutting rooms and we established the criteria for the choice of people and their experiences for inclusion. We agreed that, ideally, these should be untold stories, and the chosen women had to be able to speak English and willing to travel back to the locations to tell their stories. Kevin Sim, who later was to join me as YTV's co-producer on the series, led the research team, assisted by Barbara Twigg. They then set off round the world to find and compile a list of potential candidates, mailing me with progress reports and short synopses.

By May 1978, I had finished editing *Christmas Carols from Cambridge* and started on the YTV project. The successful research effort had produced a long and very impressive list of candidates. This had to be whittled down so that I could set off on my travels and meet those we had short-listed. As I went round the various countries, it became more and more difficult to choose between them. The courage and heroism these women had displayed in pursuit of a common cause deserved the inclusion of each and every one of them. Sadly, television schedules are not that accommodating.

One of the women the team had discovered was Kitty Hart, a radiologist, living in Birmingham. They were deeply impressed by the story of her survival in Auschwitz, and begged me to include her on my short list, urging me to go up to Birmingham to meet her. But I was reluctant to do that as I could not see how her story, although quite extraordinary, could possibly match the criteria we had laid down. All the other candidates were mature women who had made conscious decisions to fight evil regimes, while Kitty Hart, on the other hand, was an immature 12 year-old who was simply engulfed by events.

Kitty came from a Jewish community in the small town of Bielsko, and with the German invasion of Poland, had been on the run with her mother, initially, in her own country, Poland. In his despair, Kitty's father made a courageous and selfless decision: by bribing some officials with the remnants of his wealth, he procured false Aryan papers for his wife and daughter, and had them smuggled on to a train transporting Polish slave labourers to work inside Germany. As immigrant workers, he hoped it might just increase their chances of survival. They would never see him again.

Four years later, in 1943, Kitty and her mother, working as labourers in Dresden, were betrayed, and their false identities were discovered. They were arrested, tried and dispatched to Auschwitz, not because they were Jewish, but because they had committed a serious crime: '*endangering the security of the Third Reich...had illegally entered*

Germany with forged papers...herewith sentenced to hard labour for life'. Kitty was now sixteen. She and her mother now faced an entirely new challenge as they arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau – only a stone's throw away from their home town, Bielsko.

Hers is a complex story of courageous self-preservation and ultimate survival. If we were to go ahead and tell her story, I would have to ask YTV to let me make the film as a one-off documentary, and not part of the series I had been commissioned to make, and I doubted very much whether they would increase the budget for an extra programme.

Nevertheless, at the researchers' insistence, I reluctantly agreed to take the train up to Birmingham to get to know Kitty Hart.

I bought some flowers for her at the station, and when she opened her front door to me, she placed them on a chair in her hall, and showed me into her sitting room. I very soon realised that Kitty was counting on being taken back to Auschwitz and that the researchers had previously given her to understand that this was most likely to happen. I was a bit alarmed by this, as my initial concerns about this project, especially the possible harmful effects a pilgrimage back to the camp might have on this survivor, were now about to intensify.

She took me over to the mantelpiece and handed me a small transparent Perspex presentation stand. Mounted inside it were two separate pieces of human skin, each one bearing a camp number – one was Kitty's, the other her mother's. They had them removed from their arms when they finally settled in England after the war, and their display on the mantelpiece served as a visible and constant reminder of their time in Auschwitz. Kitty had prepared a light lunch and when we sat down, she produced a small loaf of bread she had baked, and ceremonially cut off one slice. As she held it up for me to see, she said that this slice represented "life or death – the daily Auschwitz bread ration", used by the inmates both for sustenance and for bribing and bartering. Every day, since settling in Birmingham after the war, she observed this ritual of cutting off just one slice, although now her loaf contained the most nutritious ingredients. After lunch, we sat down in her living room and I got the full impact of her fight for survival, delivered with an unstoppable eloquence that left me speechless and exhausted. Early evening, I made my excuses to return to London, with another visit planned for the following week.

On the rail journey back, I tried to analyse the situation. Here was a survivor with an almost unbelievable story to tell, and a most persuasive way of telling it. She appeared to 'live' Auschwitz every day of her life, being surrounded by memorabilia to recall her experiences. She told me that right through the post-war years she had felt completely detached from that particular part of her life. She had refused to get involved emotionally in the past, and said that she just pretended that it didn't happen. "I didn't allow my brain to take it in – I couldn't go on living if I did." And yet, she had surrounded herself with Auschwitz artefacts to remind her, every day, of the very events she had refused 'to take in'. I was confused. Was this how she was able to cope with memories? Was she burdened by a feeling of guilt? What effect would a return to Auschwitz have on her – could it be damaging? Was I prepared to accept the responsibility of taking that risk, quite apart from possibly having to face accusations of media manipulation? Would Yorkshire TV concur? It was a troubled journey.

On my next visit, I learned a great deal more about Kitty. She had little time for what she called the trivialities of life. For instance, when I arrived at her house, the flowers

from the previous visit were still in place, unwrapped, on the hall chair. I then took her out for lunch in her local pub, and on the way there the heavens opened, and I suggested that I would run back to fetch an umbrella. "Don't be daft," she said, "so it rains and we get wet – so what?"

We got on very well and I was able to ask her many questions. I got the impression that she not only wanted to, but really needed to go back – maybe to find tangible and convincing proof that she had, in reality, lived through this hell, survived it, and now, thirty-three years later, was seeking confirmation.

I then discovered that Kitty's eldest son, David, a young doctor working in Vancouver, was very keen to see Auschwitz. She put a call through to him and when I spoke to him, he said that he would gladly fly over from Canada to accompany his mother; he felt that the time had come for his mother to make the return journey. I felt reassured, that accompanied by her doctor son, she would be in safe hands, and that finally persuaded me that this was a risk worth taking.

I consulted Paul Fox and explained the situation to him. I was now keen to make this film and suggested that as a first step, I ought to go on a recce trip to Auschwitz and then report back to him with a proposal.

Now I could go ahead and get ideas on how to translate Kitty's story into a film. The story was becoming clear and now the film's style had to be decided in the light of discovering location details, with all the obvious logistical problems that were bound to arise. I flew, with Kevin Sim, to Krakow, and from there we took a taxi to the camp.

The emotions stirred by my arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau are hard to describe. None of the films and programmes I had made touching on the Nazi period (the earliest was *Tyranny - The Years of Adolf Hitler* in 1959) prepared me for what I was experiencing now. From the top of the main building's watchtower, as far as the eye could see, loomed this vast camp. It had never occurred to me to think about its physical size; Auschwitz statistics are measured in a headcount of people, not in acres. Seeing it now from where we were standing, high up over the camp's entrance, it became painfully obvious that to have an intake of millions of people at one end, only to reduce them to ashes at the other, required facilities on a massive scale. The few films I had seen on the holocaust had not made this clear to me, and now there was an opportunity to find a way of filming Kitty Hart and her son, David, that would convey an impression of the obscene size of Birkenau. This then would be a story of survival as seen through the eyes of one person, set against the infinite scale of this horrendous site.

Some of my YTV colleagues had suggested that a reporter should accompany Kitty and interview her. I could not accept this. I was certain that this would stifle Kitty's natural, eloquent style of delivery – it would blunt the impact of a mother telling her son what she and his grandmother had to endure. In any case, I felt that the intrusion of a questioning outsider, in what surely would prove to be a very private and highly emotional situation, was unacceptable.

With this in mind, the style for the film became very clear. I had got to know Kitty well enough to be fairly certain that once she entered Auschwitz-Birkenau, she would take control of the situation and pour out her recollections to David, peppered with anecdotes. This, no doubt, was going to be a very raw film, and its style would have to reflect this. I felt this to be a unique opportunity to add fresh insight to the infamy of

Auschwitz as had been portrayed in both fictional and non-fictional films and television programmes.

I explained to my colleagues that restraint was the order of the day. The style was going to be purely observational – a technique I first used in the late fifties and sixties, when it was known as ‘cinéma vérité’ – and it certainly was imperative for this film to capture the truth. This style of film-making demands an element of luck, as it depends on the persons being filmed becoming so preoccupied with what they are doing that they are oblivious of the camera.

On my return, I went up to York to put my plans to Paul (now Sir Paul Fox), who needed reassurance that Kitty really wanted to go on this pilgrimage. I was able to convince him and he was very supportive. I warned him that the main unknown risk was Kitty’s reaction on arriving at the camp, taking one look and deciding she could not, after all, go through with it. In other words, an expensive YTV crew left high and dry on location, no film to bring home and a blown budget. Typically, he backed the project and wished me luck.

I then suggested that YTV should consider Kitty’s story as a one-off television film. And that is what happened, and the film, now known as *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz*, became a single ninety minute documentary. The *Women of Courage* series was reduced to a quartet of one-hour films, telling the stories of four remarkable women, from Norway, Poland, England and Germany. All these five films were shot over a period of six months.

* * * *

November 1978, and filming *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz* was about to start. I arrived with the crew in Krakow, which is about fifty miles from Auschwitz and the closest town to it. We were all booked into the Holiday Inn - an inappropriate name if ever there was one. Kitty and David arrived the following day and over dinner I was able to brief them both. I explained to them that very early in the morning they would travel to Auschwitz in a taxi (the only mode of transport) and that the sound assistant would wave them down about a quarter of a mile out of sight of the camp’s main gate. He would then wire them up with radio microphones, and send the taxi on its way. The driver would be instructed to drop them at the Birkenau main gate; I was keen to capture her reaction on seeing the outside of the camp for the first time. I explained that the crew and I would be inconspicuous. We would keep our distance and simply observe them with the camera, and follow her wherever she chose to take David. I would not offer any suggestions or instructions. There would be no prompting or cueing; in fact, I would not be speaking to her at all. From the moment the taxi stopped and dropped them off, they would be on their own. Kitty then confessed that she was worried because she was very uncertain about how she would react on seeing the camp again. I crossed my fingers.

I knew that we might have to walk huge distances and could be miles away from the camera truck, and to ensure uninterrupted filming, the cameraman, Frank Pocklington, his assistant and the sound recordist and I weighed ourselves down with as many film magazines as we could carry. In order for us to be able to hear every word spoken by Kitty and her son, Frank and I wore cans, with short cables plugged into the recordist’s

mobile equipment. By keeping very close to Frank, I could whisper instructions into his ear. We were a small, mobile and compact unit.

November 18th – a bitterly cold morning – and we were ready. As they approached, we started filming and I held my breath as Kitty and David got out of the taxi. How would she react? She paused for a moment and then took her first tentative steps through the main gate of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I now felt that we stood a fair chance of bringing back a unique film.

We followed them into the camp, keeping a distance of about twenty yards. I did not want to intrude. When she was inside the camp, Kitty stopped, looked and sobbed. At that moment, I had to fight back my tears. Later, Frank warned me that these opening shots might be slightly out of focus, as the eyepiece of his camera had filled with his tears.

When Kitty had composed herself, she said to David: *“I have come to speak for all the people who have died here...”* and from that moment on, she took command of the situation and never drew breath. It was as though a bottle of rare vintage champagne had been uncorked and now its content was unstoppably gushing out. I sensed that she felt to be under great pressure to prove to herself that the millions of memories she had lived with all these years were really true. And now she was running out of time - she was in a great hurry.

She explained to David that she was doing all this because some people were denying that it ever happened, and soon there would be no one left who survived Auschwitz, and she owed it to future generations to come here and explain what happened before it was too late.

“You are here just to see that it is true. Thirty members of your family have died here. Your Grandfather, your Grandmother, my family, all my school friends, everybody out of our home town, everybody’s ashes are here.”

And so for three long, freezing days, we just followed her with the camera running, not knowing where she was taking David to next, and time and time again she surprised him, and us, with the most dreadful revelations.

I noticed quite early on that a curious change was taking place between mother and son, as though their natural relationship had been temporarily suspended – his mother had become a sort of stranger to him. On the few occasions when she did break down in the middle of some poignant recall, he found it awkward coming close to her, hesitant in putting his arm round her shoulder. His few questions to his mother were quickly put down; she found it hard to tolerate interruptions to her flow of recollections. She seemed to resent his presence, but was glad that there was someone who would listen to her. There was just one occasion when she put a question to David, wanting to know from him whether she should feel any guilt about some of the actions she took in order to survive:

“...you see, I realised one very important thing. That one of the best things to do in this camp was to do nothing. Just... just...be invisible...just, you know...hide, hide. I mean there were fifty thousand...hundred thousand people here, so you could hide behind people if you were small, insignificant, invisible as I tried to be. But the other thing I found is that one of the best things to do

was to carry bodies. Why? I mean, it was very hard work but (a) you worked inside the camp – you didn't do external work, you see; and (b) the dead body had a bread ration; a piece of bread!! The dead body had one change of clothes, and it wasn't any good to this dead body, was it? I mean, I don't have to feel guilty about this, do I?"

Kitty looked as though she gladly accepted her son's reassurance. And I learnt something about the 'guilt of surviving'.

On that first day, we filmed continuously for six hours. Bad light and total exhaustion brought that day's shooting to an end. I purposely did not contact Kitty after we had returned to the hotel that night, and the next morning we continued exactly where she had left off. By the end of the third day, the essential footage was in the can – and I had not spoken to her once.

There was one particular event during the filming, which, at first, troubled me. Kitty had looked for and found the block where thousands of women at a time were herded in for their almost waterless ablutions. It was black inside, there were no windows, and so we could not follow the two of them into the darkness. But I whispered to Frank to keep the camera running and then heard David exclaim that he had found a shoe. "*Oh, my God!*" said Kitty, "*Leather shoes...that meant life or death for somebody. To have a pair of leather shoes meant fifteen days bread ration – so either you ate or you had your pair of leather shoes.*" As she walked out into daylight, caressing this battered object, I thought that no one would believe this. I had seen a mountain of many thousands of similar shoes in the Auschwitz museum. What was a single one doing in this pitch-dark block? How did it get there? Had it languished there since 1945 when the Russians liberated the camp?

The presence of the shoe has remained a mystery to this day. Later, I queried it with the curator of Birkenau, and he, too, was baffled. The fact that there was no light inside this abluion block may have caused this relic to escape detection after the camp's liberation 34 years earlier.

I had to think twice whether to include this sequence in the final cut. If someone thought that I had planted that shoe in advance for the sake of 'good television', might it not undermine the honesty of the whole film? The same could also apply when Kitty led us to the pits where people were burned alive. With a stick, she digs around in the ashes and finds a human bone. "*This represents a small proportion of the 4 million,*" she says to David, "*and perhaps your grandparents – perhaps.*" Had someone planted this small bone fragment? Should this sequence also end up on the cutting room floor? I believe that if you don't have complete faith in the veracity of your own material, and embark on a course of dubious self-censorship, you should not be making this type of film.

I spent another day filming in Birkenau, picking up linking and atmospheric footage. Although I had finished with Kitty and David, they came back on their own, as she wanted to relive and retrace the last three days. I came across them walking along the infamous railway track, leading to the crematoria. This was the first time we briefly spoke to each other inside the camp. The next morning they returned to London, where David caught his flight back to Vancouver.

I had one more day filming essential linking material. The most important one was a very long tracking shot inside a latrine block, with an array of over sixty 'holes' designed to serve the bodily functions of over 2000 inmates. Only a small amount of light filtered into this block, so we had to find a mains supply for the small number of lights we had brought with us. I recruited the help of the camp's resident maintenance man. He ran a long cable to the rusted barbed wire fencing, about a hundred yards away, and connected it to the perimeter lighting circuit, which to our absolute amazement, after all these many years, was still live and functioning.

For me, this tracking shot turned out to be one of the most telling and most painful ones in the whole film. It plays in total silence for one minute, slowly exposing hole after hole in this obscene, endless concrete slab – barbarity revealed.

The maintenance man then told me that on the previous day he had seen Kitty and David disappear into one of the blocks nearby, and she had told him that she was going to write her name and camp number on a wall, as she had spent many nights there. I was determined to find that. Darkness had now set in, and I went off with the cameraman and one of our battery lights. Going inside several blocks trying to find Kitty's message was eerie beyond words. I was about to abandon the search, when I found the inscription. We took one shot of it, seconds before the battery in our lamp died – and that became the very last shot in the film. It simply stated:

Kitty-Felix Hart 39934
18.11.1978

* * * *

I travelled to Warsaw with the crew to shoot one of the *Women of Courage* documentaries, and arrived back in London eight days later. I was very keen to phone Kitty to find how she has reacted to the trip. And I got my biggest surprise yet. Tearfully, she said to me that she felt terrible because she had let me down, let the crew down, let Yorkshire Television down. I asked her what she meant, and she said: "*All the trouble you have taken, all that expense of flying everyone to Auschwitz, and I never opened my mouth once.*" And she had never stopped talking for three solid days!

When I had finished the cut, she came down to London and I screened it for her. She was dumbfounded. She could hardly believe that it was her, speaking, non-stop, throughout the whole film. I ran the film again, and then, slowly, she began to realise the full extent of the immediate effect her return to Auschwitz had on her.

* * * *

The reactions to the initial ITV network transmission in November 1979 were very positive, with huge press coverage. YTV was delighted with the exceptionally high viewer rating of close on 13 million.

Kitty was inundated with letters – they came by the sackful. Even those optimistically addressed to ‘Kitty, Birmingham’ reached her.

I was intrigued by a few telephone calls from viewers who wondered where I had found that old black and white footage I used in the film. In fact, I deliberately did not use one frame of archive film – Kitty’s word pictures she painted in peoples’ minds were far more graphic than old newsreel film. Extraordinary.

The film was subsequently shown on television around the world, including Germany, producing my largest collection of press cuttings:

The Sunday Telegraph - Philip Purser

The only pictures of Auschwitz were as it is today: vast, desolate, blank: not a single frame from the appalling historical material available. Yet Peter Morley’s rigorous self-limitation made this one of the most vivid and complete evocations of the infamous extermination complex I have encountered, certainly much more so than the fictional reconstructions.

New York Times - Richard F. Shepard

“Kitty - Return to Auschwitz” is probably unlike any other program you have seen in the welter of television in fact or in fiction with the extermination-camp horror. This is a documentary that might be called a testamentary. Mrs. Hart is the narrator, and she and her grown son are the only ones seen as they wander over the vast, rather bucolic and silent land known as Auschwitz in the plains of Poland. It is an extraordinarily touching program. So many others have tried to recapture the evil spirit of Auschwitz. It is eloquent in its restraint.

National Catholic News Service:

The British documentary, directed by Peter Morley, not only adds to our understanding of the Holocaust but is also a sensitive portrait of a survivor of mass hatred who can never forget the experience, but knows that living cannot be based on hatred and revenge.

Newsday

This a documentary? No. It’s too moving. This is non-fiction drama, a one-woman show, unaided by standard footage from the archives. Peter Morley has made a work of art. Restraint!

Indelible Shadows by Holocaust Historian, Annette Insdorf:

To see Kitty testifying in the physical context of the now silent death camp results in a uniquely cinematic event, as historically significant as it is emotionally wrenching. The historian Jon Toland acknowledged: “To my surprise, her oral history turned out to be at least as effective as any written record I’ve read, if not more so.

The film attracted a clutch of national and international awards: The Royal Television Society’s Documentary Award and also the Commonwealth Documentary Award. And then, in 1981, a particularly poignant award: the Berlin Prix Futura.

Yorkshire Television generously paid for Jane to accompany me to Berlin to attend the Prix Futura Festival, as *'Kitty'* had been short-listed. This was Jane's first visit to Germany and I was able to introduce her to Berlin, and take her to the locations that were now so much of my past. My sister, with her phenomenal memory, provided the details of locations, such as the site of the family apartment where I was born, the bakery round the corner where, apparently, I was sent to buy doughnuts, and my Primary School – all rebuilt. I had also become fairly familiar with the city while researching and filming for *The Mighty Continent* and other documentaries. I took Jane to the observation platform in the notorious Bernauer Strasse, making it possible to look over the Berlin Wall, revealing a typical swathe of the 'iron curtain' with its tank traps, minefields, barbed wire and snarling Alsatian guard dogs, tethered to long leads. It was all so grey and depressing, as were the memorial crosses, permanently adorned with fresh flowers, marking the spots where East Germans were shot attempting to flee to the West.

The next day, the international jury announced that I had won the Prix Futura, and I savoured the irony of the situation, an irony, which did not escape many of those who attended the presentation ceremony. The venue for this was in the Orangery of the rebuilt Charlottenburg Palace, the old town palace of the Kaiser. The last time I saw it was in 1945, when it lay there in ruin and ashes, as I drove past it in my tank. And now, thirty-six years later, as Dr Guido Brunner – the Burgomaster of Berlin, presented me with the prestigious Berlin Prix Futura for *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz*, he shook my hand and said: "I believe your film makes this a very special award." He was right.

Earlier that year, *'Kitty'* was shown twice on the American PBS network, and I was, subsequently, invited to the Banff Television Festival in the Canadian Rockies, to show it to delegates and speak at a seminar on its production. There were a great number of American television people present, and I believe that this sparked off the interest shown by the three big US networks. But it was Pamela Hill, a brilliant documentary producer, in charge of ABC Television's prestigious monthly peak time documentary slot, who approached YTV for the screening rights for the USA.

She stipulated that it would have to be cut down to 60 minutes for the States and wanted a transcript from YTV for this purpose. When I heard about this, I picked up a phone to her, and offered to make the cuts myself; I explained that as this was my baby, I would hate anyone else to do the butchery. She was a professional and totally agreed, and said she would come over to London to look at my proposed cut-down version. The following week, she arrived in my Soho cutting room, and she agreed with it, and after dinner at the Savoy, where she was staying, she said that she would like to invite Kitty and me over to New York for the screening. A week later, the invitations from ABC arrived: tickets for Kitty and me to fly over in Concorde, with reservations for two suites in the fabulously lush Helmsley Palace Hotel. Both of us enjoyed the adventure! The flight was memorable, especially the devilled kidneys for breakfast. We were met at Kennedy airport by Pamela's secretary who escorted us in a stretched limousine to the hotel. Kitty's sitting room was piled to the ceiling with flowers, and mine was suitably stacked with champagne and wines of all descriptions. What a welcome, what an extravagance, how delightfully over the top, how very American. It would be much more frugal today.

The next morning, we appeared on ABC's 'Good Morning America' and took part in two press conferences. I said to Pamela that it was almost an 'un-American Activity' to pre-empt one of her own peak time shows, in order to make room for a British documentary – this had never happened before. We were wined and dined, and that evening's transmission sparked off another round of press interviews the following morning. Soon afterwards I received, through the post, the American Clarion Award for the best Network TV Program in the 'Human Rights Division'.

Four years on, in 1985, Japan staged what they, rather innocently, termed the first 'International Television Festival'. The organisers had combed the world for what they considered to be the best documentaries ever made. They selected a long list of international productions, and then invited the directors of each one to Tokyo. From the UK, they selected a BBC documentary about the making of the H-Bomb and also '*Kitty*'.

At the time, I was involved in videodisc production and had close associations with JVC in Tokyo, and when they discovered that I had been invited to this Japanese Television Festival, they, in turn, invited 'Mrs Morley' to accompany me. At last, after all these years, Jane was able to join me on one of my exotic trips to the Far East, and we were able to fly out first-class, in style. Ever since I made *The Two Faces of Japan*, twenty-five years earlier, I had hoped that one day I would be able to show her Japan. And now it was happening.

But first came the Festival. Every one of the directors of the selected and nominated programmes for this one prize, had to address the festival jury, made up of 150 Japanese television producers and directors, followed by the screening of their film. There was instantaneous translation for all, and I saw some really excellent documentaries from other countries, including a dramatisation, from Holland, of the Wansee Conference, using the verbatim dialogue from the minutes taken at the time. I felt that this was certain to get the prize.

And then came the result of the jury's vote, and to my great surprise, '*Kitty*' triumphed. The Chairman of NHK, (the BBC of Japan) who had sponsored this festival, presented me with the Tokyo Prize. Two weeks later, they showed '*Kitty*' on the Fuji Television network. The reaction to this foreign documentary by the press and the viewing public was so overwhelming that they transmitted a repeat almost at once.

Then JVC took over, put us up in the grand Imperial Hotel for a week and provided one of their bright young executives to take us to Kyoto where we stayed for a few days. I had kept in touch with Ian Mutsu who had given me all the technical and other support in 1960 for *The Two Faces of Japan*, and when we got back in Tokyo, I made contact with him, and so we had another guide to show us around. A memorable trip.

* * * *

But what puts all these awards into the shade is the most valuable reward of all – the lasting effect the return to Auschwitz had on Kitty herself. The film we made produced results that totally changed her attitude to her incarceration and to her survival.

Over twenty-five years have now elapsed. We have kept in close touch, and I have witnessed, with admiration, the new life-style Kitty has chosen after her cathartic return

trip. She now faced these unspeakable experiences in a new light. My early misgivings about the great risk of taking her back to the camp had faded into the background. When at first I got to know her in Birmingham, I felt that probably she needed to go back, but I had no inkling that her pilgrimage would result in such a profound change to her life. Gone is the mantelpiece display of her and her mother's preserved camp numbers, gone is the ritual of baking the Auschwitz loaf, gone is the memorabilia that cast such a negative spell on her past. Instead, there emerged a new positive attitude to life in general, and to her experiences and survival in particular.

Ever since the film's transmission in November 1979, she has been in huge demand. She has lectured in dozens of schools on the holocaust. She has visited her hometown, Bielsko, where the Jewish community, which included thirty members of her family, perished in the holocaust. She has taken student groups on numerous trips to Auschwitz and has played an active role in countering those who have denied that any of this ever happened.

The raw style of this film, eschewing cold statistics, interviews and conventional film-making, has managed to establish a truth about this camp that is unchallengeable – and thanks to her courage and her eloquence, Kitty gave the word, Auschwitz, a new meaning.

Kitty - Return to Auschwitz

1978

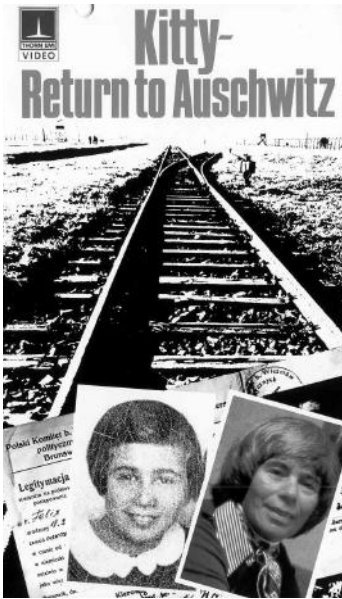


Kitty Hart returns to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1978 to show her son David what it was like to live and survive there



Kitty - Return to Auschwitz

1978



Cover for VHS Cassette



The Chairman of NHK reads out the citation for the Tokyo Prize



The Tokyo Prize



The Royal Television Society's Documentary Award presented by John Freeman President of the RTS



Dr Guido Brunner, Burgomaster of Berlin, presents the Berlin Prix Futura in the Orangery of the rebuilt Charlottenburg Palace



Twenty-six years later Kitty and I make a joint presentation of our film at the Imperial War Museum

Chapter 28

Of the many examples of individual acts of courage displayed in World War II against Nazism — usually attributed to men — the four people we chose for the *Women of Courage* quartet gives the words, idealism, belief and humanity a special meaning. They shared that instinctive compulsion to fight the Nazi regime, and the films set out to throw light on what inspired them to respond in this way, and why they were ready to take appalling risks, willing to sacrifice themselves and their families, when the end result was so very uncertain. Kitty Hart — at the start of the Second World War — was only twelve years old when she was engulfed by events; whereas the films of these four women show that they were mature enough to realise what was happening in Germany, and, single-handedly, took up the challenge. Here was a German, a Norwegian, a Pole and a Brit, sharing an instinctive compulsion to fight the Nazis. Different countries, different backgrounds, different motivations — a rich mixture of political ideals, religious beliefs, pacifism, patriotism and sense of duty.

What they all had in common was an unshakeable faith in what they were fighting for, and fighting against. They took it upon themselves, in spite of all odds, to take a stand against that evil regime.

The experience of working with these four finalists we had chosen for the *Women of Courage* quartet, was quite different from telling Kitty's story. The style I had used for that film had no place here. These four films, telling largely unknown stories, had to be treated in a more conventional way, with eyewitness contributions from those involved in these extraordinary adventures, plus a narrative — expertly written by Kevin Sim — providing factual, personal, historical and geographical information. Archive film also became an important ingredient.

Hiltgunt Zassenhaus

I first met our German participant when I visited Baltimore on my 1979 travels, choosing or eliminating potential candidates for this project. Hiltgunt Zassenhaus, at that time, was well-known and much admired for belonging to a rare breed of family doctors who spent a great deal of their time visiting people in their own homes. There was absolutely no outward sign of the extraordinary perilous double life she had led in her hometown, Hamburg, during the Nazi years. I had been well briefed about her by the research team, and now, in her comfortable Baltimore house, I was able to get to know her and to persuade her to come over to Germany to film her story.

She was 17 when Hitler came to power in 1933. Her father was a Lutheran Minister and Headmaster of the Girls High School; her mother was an active supporter of the Social Democratic Party. Her liberal upbringing ensured an instant revulsion against everything the National Socialists stood for, and in 1934 she 'fled to Denmark to inhale free air', as she put it, and studied Scandinavian languages. And because of her linguistic talents in mastering both Danish and Norwegian, by the time war broke out in 1939, she was called up for war work and ordered to report to the Nazi Department of Justice as a censor. And after the invasion of Norway in 1940, she not only was

responsible for censoring the mail passing to and from Scandinavian prisoners and resistance fighters, who were caught and incarcerated in jails and camps all over Germany, but at the insistence of the Gestapo, she also had to visit these very prisoners to spy on them, and not only that, she was ordered to spy on their jailers too, and report back to her masters in Hamburg.

Outwardly, she was working for the Nazis as a censor and as a spy. In fact, the risks she took on her official spying missions were extraordinary. She would carry weighty suitcases of food, medication, vitamins, books and writing materials for the prisoners, with letters from their families she had intercepted in her censor's office. Above all, she was bringing them hope and inspiration. Crucially, she kept a detailed record of all the prisoners and their locations. She carried a gun on these perilous journeys, in case she was caught – to use on herself. She constantly feared being denounced by informers and, in turn, the prison officials feared her, thinking she was working for the Gestapo. As Hiltgunt says: “It was a question of who feared the most.”

She survived the Hamburg RAF firestorm that had killed so many, including some of her friends with whom she was now studying medicine in her precious spare time. And these words give a measure of Hiltgunt's true feelings at that time:

“It really came to this, that at least in my family we had to hope that we would be bombed, although it was almost suicidal to think this way. But how could we otherwise hope for it all to come to an end? But as a German, continuously I had to hope for the demise of Nazi Germany.”

I will always remember this quote – because I had seen the devastation of Hamburg for myself, when we entered this city in our tanks in 1945.

Having been nearly caught out several times, and summoned for interrogation to Gestapo headquarters, the final blow fell when she was arrested on one of her secret mercy missions to a prison in Bautzen, very close to Dresden. It was February 1945, and Dresden was the target of that massive raid by allied bombers causing huge devastation. This coincided with Hiltgunt being taken by train to the city. Everyone had to get off the train and walk the last few kilometres because of the destruction. And amongst panic and confusion, she managed to free herself and eventually find her way back to Hamburg. The Dresden raid had saved her life.

In Hamburg, she heard from a prison guard that all political prisoners were to be executed, as the Nazis did not want any witnesses to their crimes. Himmler, to save his own skin, had started negotiations with Count Bernadotte, the President of the Swedish Red Cross, who had flown to Berlin. His mission was to save all the Scandinavian prisoners. A fleet of Red Cross buses arrived in Germany to collect them in one place and get them home. Many of those outside Hamburg could not be found, but then Hiltgunt intervened. Her ultimate achievement was to help save the lives of 1200 Scandinavian captives in the closing weeks of the war, because she had kept a detailed record of their exact locations. They called her ‘The German Angel’.

“My task was to help 1200 people to maintain their hope and somehow to last out until they could come home. Now you might say, what does it matter 1200 people, there were millions of people who died. Well it mattered to me.”

This is how she felt about her own country, Germany, immediately after the war – a sequence I shot with her thirty-five years later, on a platform at Hamburg’s main railway station as a train departed for Dresden, in what was then East Germany, with relatives waving goodbye to loved ones they were not allowed to visit in the DDR:

“...I saw people saying goodbye to each other and it suddenly reminded me of how many times in my life I had to say goodbye. I had to say goodbye to many Germans, whom I had hoped would rise to the occasion and who did not, who just failed. I had to say goodbye to my prisoner friends who got their freedom, who left me behind, and I had to say goodbye to a brother whom I loved very much, who died in Russia., I had to say goodbye to a Germany where I could no longer live. Somehow my trust in people had been taken forever and ever. Somehow I could never be the same in my relationship with other Germans. It was just as if you had had a friend who had somehow disappointed you so much that it could never be the same.”

Hiltgunt took up work, looking after war orphans in Hamburg who were roaming the streets. She made an appeal to her ex-prisoners in Scandinavia and they responded with supplies of food and clothing for these children. In 1947, Hiltgunt was the first German after the war to be invited to Norway and Denmark. By this time her story was well known in Scandinavia and she was welcomed in both countries as a heroine. She resumed her medical studies, first in Bergen and then Copenhagen. In 1952, Hiltgunt, now a qualified Doctor, left Europe with her mother to start a new life in America.

I visited her again many years later, in 2001, in Baltimore. She was now 82, having retired only two years before – a remarkable and admirable person, revered by her old patients and, of course, by her surviving Scandinavian ex-prisoners.

Sigrid Lund

So little had been told about the Nazi occupation of Norway, that I welcomed the chance to go to go to Oslo and to meet our ‘woman of courage’.

Filming Sigrid Lund in her Oslo home, now aged eighty-eight, I was fascinated listening to her early recollections, and we were in awe of her eloquent and very moving use of the English language.

Born in Oslo in 1892, her parents brought up Sigrid and her siblings in a religious, liberal and strictly pacifist atmosphere. In 1913, this twenty-one year-old, well-educated, young woman experienced her first contact with early Nazi ideas. She was studying singing, and with her teacher grasped the opportunity to go to Germany, to Bayreuth, staying at Wahnfried, the villa belonging to the Wagner family. Eva Wagner (daughter of Richard Wagner) and her son, Siegfried, were their hosts. There, they met Eva’s English husband, the writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a naturalised German since 1916. Noted for his anti-Semitic racist views, expressed in his ‘Foundations of the Nineteenth Century’, he proclaimed the superiority of the German people, asserting that they were descended from superior Teutonic or Aryan stock. Sigrid had a lot of discussions with him and she returned to Oslo utterly appalled, setting her on a course that, twenty years later, would challenge her strong pacifist beliefs.

By the time the Nazis came to power, Sigrid was taking an active part in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, helping refugees fleeing from Germany. By the time the war started in 1939, there were several organisations helping refugees, and she became involved in *Nansenhjelp*, headed by Odd Nansen, the son of the famous arctic explorer. He sent Sigrid to Prague, in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, to attempt to bring out a group of thirty-seven Jewish children. Tears came to her eyes when she began to describe this mission and the emotions she felt forty years ago:

"It was a very moving moment when the children said goodbye to their parents. They did not know that they might never see them again. And to see these parents carrying these old suitcases with the clothes, small toys and all the things that could help to give some joy and support to the children – and how they stood there alone back on the station – was a very, very sad moment."

With two Norwegian helpers, Sigrid travelled with her charges by train to Berlin, where they had to change railway stations for their journey further north. She tells of their dreadful experience when they tried to get onto a bus to take them to the other stations, and the conductor would not let 'Jewish children onto my bus'. So they had to cross Berlin and total strangers spat on them.

They finally made it, first to Sweden, and then to Oslo. Sigrid then found foster homes for the children spread all over Norway. Safe at last, but not for long.

Norwegians counted on their neutrality to keep them out of the war – it had kept them out of the Great War – but this hope was shattered when, in 1940, they were invaded and occupied by the Wehrmacht.

Sigrid and her family now became very active with the underground resistance movement. Her husband and teenage son were deeply implicated with her in their clandestine work. All three knew that somehow they were involved, but to protect their security, they kept their activities from each other. It was two years later, when the Gestapo came and arrested their son that she discovered, that at the age of sixteen, he was editing an underground newspaper. He spent the first two years in an Oslo prison and was later shipped to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp inside Germany (which he survived). Her husband, who was a resistance organiser in the north, was betrayed, escaped arrest, and fled to Sweden. In spite of her strong pacifist upbringing, she decided to continue the struggle: *"What inspired us was the absolute belief in the value of the human being."*

Also that year, in 1942, Quisling, the Norwegian Nazi, installed by the Germans as Norway's Minister President, ordered the arrest of Jews throughout the country, and Sigrid summoned her group of resistance fighters to find a way of bringing her thirty-seven children from their dispersed foster homes to Oslo, and then set a well-planned escape line into motion, smuggling them to neutral Sweden.

Finally, after many communication problems, the children she had snatched from German-occupied Prague, made it to a secret hiding place in Oslo, except for three. Sadly, they had been betrayed by their foster parents to the Gestapo; they were shipped to Poland where they perished in concentration camps. Sigrid was tipped off that she, too, was about to be betrayed to the Gestapo, and was now forced to join the children and seek refuge in Sweden.

We shot the hazardous journey that Sigrid and her team had organised to smuggle her small charges across the frontier to Sweden. I was driving the car with the

cameraman in the passenger seat, filming Sigrid and Sverre Sigordson (who had been in charge of the Oslo end of the escape line) in conversation on the backseat. They recalled, with great clarity every moment of that hair-raising journey, reliving their experience for the first time since that bitterly cold winter of 1944 – travelling in two open lorries, covered with tarpaulin sheets, for several hours in pitch darkness, only just avoiding German patrols.

The researchers had found the exact spot, about fifty miles to the east of Oslo, where a large lake marks the Norwegian/Swedish frontier. That is where Torkel Fornessis, a woodcutter, had lived all his life in a small cottage on the edge of a huge forest. Thirty-six years before, he acted as the fearless guide who escorted refugees on skis and sledges across the frozen lake to the far side, and then through the snow, up a forest trek to a cairn marking the frontier with neutral Sweden. He would then return home to get ready for his next secret crossing.

I had arranged in advance for one of the team to flag us down a few hundred yards inside the forest, so that the cameraman and I could walk on ahead to the woodcutter's cottage, as I wanted to catch on camera the meeting between Torkel and Sigrid. This was going to be their very first reunion since he escorted her and the children across the ice to safety in Sweden.

Aged eighty-eight, this remarkable woman had put on her skis and now came down a small track from the edge of the forest and joined us; and when she saw Torkel, she threw her arms around him, and we all felt a lump in our throats.

"We were very sad all of us to leave Norway. We didn't feel freedom as something that we were looking forward to, but something that we had to take because we were forced to leave the country. When we came to the broad open gate in the forest which showed what was the border line with a cairn in the middle, stones laid upon stones, and there we stood, all of us, and without actually thinking about it or reflecting anything, we all began to sing our national anthem, until we couldn't do it any more, because we actually, I think, wept, all of us. And then, Torkel, we said goodbye to you and wished you all the best and thanked you for what you had done for us and you turned your back to us and went home – alone."

Maria Rutkiewicz

I looked forward to filming in Warsaw, intrigued to find out how freely people could talk about their recent past – such as Stalin's hatred of all Poles, including members of the Polish Communist Party, the purges, the Katyn massacre, etc.

In 1978, the Cold War was still with us, and Maria Rutkiewicz, now a widow, had lived through the worst of this period, although her elegant Warsaw flat gave no clues about the extraordinary wartime experiences and the cruelties that its owner had to endure.

Maria was most welcoming. Her command of English fairly good. This was not surprising, when we discovered that after the war she had remarried – a diplomat. Her new husband was Arturo Stanewicz, who, in 1971, was appointed Polish Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and they lived in London for seven years. Those invited to the numerous Embassy receptions she must have hosted, could never have guessed the story behind this remarkable woman.

In 1919, as a result of the Great War, and after 130 years of foreign domination by her two neighbours, Russia and Germany, Poland's independence was restored. Maria, born in Warsaw in 1917, was to witness the internal conflicts freedom brought to this new Poland.

She came from a well-educated, liberal family, and was much influenced by her sister and elder brothers, who early in their lives became part of a group of young socialists and communists, and by the time she was seventeen, Maria joined in with their activities. Marshal Piłsudski, the nation's hero who had fought for and won Poland's freedom, was now in charge. By 1926, he had taken on virtual dictatorial powers and cracked down heavily on communists and their activities. Maria's sister and brothers were arrested, as was Maria herself for a short time. At the age of twenty-one, she married Wicek Rutkiewicz an active communist party member, and they faced a bleak future. They now discovered that Stalin distrusted Polish communists, and as part of his purges of the thirties, he summoned their leaders to Moscow and had them executed.

And in 1939, a mere twenty years after Poland regained her freedom, it took just thirty-six days for her to lose it again when Hitler invaded. Thousands of Polish soldiers, including Maria's husband, were marched off to an uncertain future in German prisoner of war camps. Maria saw the German troops march through the streets of Warsaw. There was no doubt about their intention – they were there to smash the Polish nation once and for all, and the order went out to liquidate the educated classes, as clarified by Berlin in this spine-chilling memorandum:

'The term Polish intelligentsia covers primarily Polish priests, teachers, lecturers, doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons, officers, executives, businessmen, landowners, writers, journalists, plus all persons who have received a higher or secondary education.'

Maria had no choice, and like many of her communist friends, she fled east, to that part of Poland which was now occupied by Russia – thanks to that infamous pact between Hitler and Stalin. And two years later, when the Germans invaded Russia, it was time for her to flee once again, this time to Moscow. She was recruited to the Polish underground movement – the Russians now found use for some Polish exiles to strike back at the Nazis. Maria, now trained as a radio operator, joined an underground cell of Polish communist activists to galvanise communist opposition to the Nazis inside Poland itself.

After just one practice jump, on a December night in 1941, the cell parachuted into Poland, just outside Warsaw. Maria recalled that moment:

"What was it like to be for the first time flying into Poland? We were very happy that we were back in our country, but I'll tell you something very intimate. I would be a bit embarrassed to repeat it in other circumstances, but I think that it will be enough to understand that when we landed with our parachutes and we were together because it was some minutes to find each other, and we all came together with Marcelli Nowotko, our leader of the cell, who was a huge man, and we stand with him for a moment, and our first words for all of us, for all of us, it was the same one word, it was Poland, Poland, Poland."

Maria's husband had escaped from a PoW cage and joined his wife in Warsaw to work alongside her in the Communist Underground. Transmitting intelligence reports back to Moscow meant that Maria had to move her radio equipment around Warsaw to escape detection, and that is how she witnessed many atrocities being committed in the streets by the Nazis. She talked most movingly about the Warsaw ghetto, where she describes seeing Jews dying in the street:

"We knew that this was the end of some part of our Polish population, Jewish origin, but Polish, and it was a tragic experience, because the most difficult moment is when you can't help."

In May 1943, after the heroic uprising of the surviving Jews, the SS were able to report to Berlin that the ghetto no longer existed. Now they intensified their search for members of the underground movement. They caught and shot all but one of Maria's cell, including its leader, Marcelli Nowotko. In July, Maria's husband was arrested and shipped to Auschwitz, and two months later she was caught in the act of transmitting messages to Moscow.

"I remember that the door opened and many Gestapo men ran in, and I managed to smash my apparatus. And then they asked me questions and tried to find out everything connected with my work. They started to beat me, and then they found in my bag a letter from a doctor stating that I am pregnant, and they said now you will be shot."

Maria was taken to Poland's notorious Pawiak prison, the holding centre for political prisoners of the Nazis. Her interrogation took place in the cells of the Gestapo headquarters. The remains of both have been restored and now feature as a museum in Warsaw.

We had some difficulty at first to get permission to film there. Probably some over-sensitive official thought that she might air views about Russia's attitude to Polish communists, but in the end we were able to bring her back to this evil place – thirty-six years after the event.

"In a room of interrogation like this, happened awful things, you see all these tools for beating, for beating to death sometimes. They told me that they would 'bring my husband here and we will beat him to death in front of you and then you will tell us everything'. When I was beaten, they told me that they are very humane, because they beat me only in my face and not all over as I was pregnant, so they were very humane. I was beaten very hard, so when I was sent back to the prison, the woman supervisor said she can't recognise me, and she didn't know to what cell to send me, and then I told her my name and the number of my cell."

Maria was under sentence of death and now discovered that she was going to have twins. Polish prison doctors, who had befriended and looked after her, used all their influence to persuade the Germans to postpone carrying out the death sentence, at least

until the birth of the babies. They agreed – twins triggered a special medical research interest for the Germans.

On February 16th 1944, it was reported from Paviak that five women and three children had been shot. On the same day, in the prison hospital, Maria's twins, a boy and a girl were born.

“Suddenly I was not alone. I had the responsibility for two little human beings. I thought of my husband who wanted so much to have the children and now he has the children, but not knowing about them. In Warsaw it was an event. In the underground press there was a notice that twins were born in Paviak.”

And as we filmed Maria telling us the next part of her story, I would have had doubts about it, had she not handed us tangible proof.

Through the prison underground, a message reached Maria from Auschwitz that her husband, Wicek, desperately wanted to know what had happened to her. He was oblivious of her incarceration, let alone the twins. She befriended a German criminal prisoner, who had a camera that he used for photographing portraits of the SS guards to send home to their families. She persuaded him to take a snapshot of her with the twins, which the underground would then smuggle to Auschwitz, hoping that her husband would receive them. To prevent him guessing that she was in Paviak, Maria with one of her doctor friends, posed in front of a nondescript fence with some trees in the background, happily holding the twins. Amazingly, quite soon afterwards, the photograph was in Wicek's hands. He was overjoyed, but sadly, he showed it to a friend who had been to Paviak, and who recognised the fencing in the background; so Wicek now knew the worst. He survived Auschwitz, but died at the very end of the war in another camp.

Maria then presented me with a copy of the photograph.

In the summer of 1944, the main Polish Underground Movement, The Home Army, was preparing for its most important action of the war. With Russian forces fast approaching from the east, they were waiting for the order, from London, to liberate Warsaw. On walls throughout the city, slogans appeared: ‘Paviak will be revenged’. The Germans, sensing that the end was near, now began to deal with the problem posed by the remaining inmates of Paviak prison. The lucky ones were evacuated to concentration camps. But many were executed, including the last survivor of Maria's cell, parachuted with her into Warsaw. She now waited her turn. And then there was talk that something dramatic was about to happen in Warsaw. The Gestapo began burning all documents. The SS guards were now disorganized and in a panic:

It was rumoured that children maybe allowed to go free, and Maria smuggled out this note in the hope that it would reach her brother's family:

‘My dears, the last days have brought us so much news, and given us new hope, but our situation is extremely poor, we could be executed at any moment. So after long hours of thinking I've come to the conclusion that I must send the babies to you now. There is no chance of all three of us escaping. I know I am putting you in a difficult situation but only you, my dearest ones, can save them.’

A brave woman from an organization helping prisoners, arrived with horse and cart at Paviak's gates to collect the children:

"Mothers together, mothers together with the children', so we went together. It was so unexpected that I didn't feel that it was so marvellous to be free; I didn't feel it because I wasn't prepared. And my sister-in-law waited for me expecting me to hand over the babies, and she was so astonished, when I told her, 'I am going with you'. After three years of imprisonment, and suddenly we were to be free. It was another kind of freedom, it was not the real freedom, but we were free. At that time, a time of war, a time of Nazis, everything could happen, everything in the world could happen and suddenly there happened something very good but unexpected."

I shot the last scene in the film showing Maria sitting on a bench in Warsaw's ancient square, with the twins each side of her: Wicek (named after her husband), an architect, and Malgosia, a theatre designer. They never knew their father, and like millions of other Poles, the war had devastated their family. Maria's mother was shot by the Germans, her husband died in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, her eldest brother had joined the army and was killed in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, the other brother fought with the French resistance, and after capture, perished in Auschwitz. This is how she summed up her feelings:

"How to forget all my relatives; all my close friends who were killed; how to forget over six million people killed in my country? Impossible. I don't want to remember who did it – of course, I remember quite well. But it is not a matter of who did it, but why it happened, why it was so. We must only remember that we have a duty not to allow it to be repeated. My generation must remember that something so cruel happened that we must protect others from this awful experience."

Mary Lindell

When the research team discovered this fiercely patriotic, eccentric, arrogant, and very amusing eighty-five year-old, I agreed at once that she simply had to be one of the four in our *Women of Courage* quartet. Her story was, to say the least, bordering on the bizarre, and filming it became irresistible.

Meeting her for the first time in her smart apartment in Paris, merely confirmed that her story had to be told. All of 5-feet tall, slightly-built and elegantly dressed, Mary Lindell greeted us, holding her dachshund 'Tommy' in her arms: *"Oh, thank God, some Englishmen! Can't stand the French, you know – come in."* Yet she had lived in Paris for the past sixty-one years – since the end of the Great War – and considered her apartment to be on British soil, and she never let one forget it.

In her living room, the well-known Karsh portrait of Churchill glared down at you, and on display beneath it, an impressive array of medals and decorations, including a Croix de Guerre awarded to her in the 1914-18 war and a Croix de Guerre from the Second World War. It was now sixty-two years since the London Daily Mail broke the news of her death on the Western Front, and thirty-six years since notices appeared on the streets of Paris declaring that she had been shot by the Nazis.

Mary Lindell was born in Surrey in 1895 into a wealthy English family, and I am going to quote liberally from the film, because one has to savour her use of the English language, to get a true flavour of this extraordinary woman:

“My mother was a Colls of the Trollops and Colls. It was her father who was a very well known architect. I think he'd built the Mansion House, and God knows what he didn't build, and of course he was stinking with money – made absolutely millions. I mean he was a very wealthy man. My mother was a very wealthy bit of works too, although nobody would ever have thought of it, and because she had the necessary, I was lucky. My godfather died and left me quite a nice little lot of money too, so I was really quite independent. That I suppose is why I've become arrogant and independent now, because from fifteen onwards I never knew what money was, do you see what I mean? It just was there.”

After this first take, I knew that we had struck gold.

Aged nineteen at the outbreak of World War One, Mary immediately volunteered for the VAD Nursing Service, but left, after a run-in with her superiors; instead, she went over to France and volunteered for the Secours aux Blessés Militaires, the aristocratic division of the French Red Cross. Joining the French troops in the trenches on the Western Front, she worked for the next four years in forward dressing stations and hospitals, where she was known to the wounded as the ‘Bébé Anglaise’. There were many recorded acts of sheer bravery when she went with small medical teams to tend the wounded only a short distance from the German trenches, once suffering a gas attack. And this was recognised by the Croix de Guerre awarded to her in 1918.

Mary remained in France. She had married a French Count, so now she was the Comtesse de Milleville, and had dual nationality, and produced three children. In the thirties, she closely followed the rise of the Nazis, and dusted down her old French Red Cross uniform with its rows of medal ribbons – in case the balloon went up. The Comtesse was ready for all eventualities.

She did not have to wait long. In 1940, the demoralised French army suffered its greatest defeat in history, and her British allies were scurrying back home from Dunkirk. Many were left behind and taken prisoner. Those still free had little hope of escaping from enemy occupied France by themselves. It was to help them to get back to England to fight again that galvanised Mary, and she sprang into action.

“Well, to be quite honest, we weren't really proud of the French – we were sick to death of them – and we knew that some of us had to stay here who could stand up to the Jerries and could help the people through. The French wouldn't have done it. What gave me the idea was what Edith Cavell had done in the last war, and it was therefore necessary that something had to be done in this war. Who? There was nobody in Paris, nobody who could do it. And so I said, ‘There you are, darling. It's you. You'd better do it’.”

And she did. With the help of her son Maurice, she organised an escape route to ferry soldiers and refugees past the heavily guarded checkpoints, marking the demarcation line between German occupied France and Vichy France. She put escapees up in her flat, and when the coast was clear, ferried them in her car across the border. She flaunted her Red Cross Uniform, and managed to intimidate high-ranking officers in charge of the German army in Paris, declaring that she was an officer of the Red Cross and demanded petrol coupons for humanitarian reasons. She was fearless, and they simply did not know what to make of her. She said that *“the Jerries simply loved titled people, especially in uniform with lots of medal ribbons.”*

Soon the Secret Service Chiefs in London got their first intimation from an officer who, thanks to Mary, made it back to England, who told them that there was an extraordinary English woman and her son, who ran an escape line from her flat in Paris.

“I had a very special ceremony here because I had to sort out the people who were genuine and wanted to go over. And so I had a tray with English earth, which I'd dug up from the Embassy garden. Although the Germans had closed the Embassy down, I managed to get in – you can always get in with a bit of you know what. Now this tray with the earth on it – they had to put their hand on the earth and swear an oath; I think we brought God into it and things like that, and they had to swear that they wanted to go over to England to fight, otherwise if they didn't, well they were simply shoved out and that was the end of it.”

And as early as Christmas 1940, the Germans were getting suspicious of Mary's many car journeys, plus the traffic of people in and out of her flat. And in the New Year, Nazi Security Police arrived to arrest her.

“The bell rang. My daughter answered it and she just looked back and said 'It's the Huns'. I said: 'Oh, well, bring 'em in.' And they were extremely polite and extremely co-operative. And the first thing we did, we had tea. It was tea-time, so we had tea and they loved it.”

They left, unable to prove that Mary was helping escapees. But she was found guilty of insulting the German Army, and they gave her a nine months prison sentence, which she served in Fresnes Prison outside Paris. This diminutive figure then threw her weight around, demanding special treatment for imprisoned British officers, and they were only too glad to get rid of her at the end of her sentence.

But Paris was now too dangerous a place for Mary; the Gestapo had got her number, and she knew that she could not resume her people-smuggling activities. Afraid that she might be arrested at any moment, she decided to escape back to England. After a difficult and dangerous journey, which took almost six months, she arrived in London in 1942 and reported her clandestine freelance activities to Colonel Jimmy Langley of M19, the unit which organised escape lines.

He and his assistant, Col. Airey Neave, who had recently escaped from Colditz Prison, found Mary rather hard to take, and certainly disapproved of having ‘such a loose cannon’ doing her own thing in France, putting at risk their organised and disciplined escape plans. She had fierce arguments with them and hated the thought of being controlled by someone from London, but, in the end, agreed to their demands. Langley and Neave then defied their own rules of never sending anyone back to the Continent who was known to the enemy. After training her for her a new assignment,

they arranged for her to be flown back to Vichy France in a Lysander, to set up an escape network for shot-down British airmen. They were both much relieved to see the back of her.

We filmed Jimmy Langley, then long retired, living in Bawdsey on the East Coast, and, with the cut-glass voice of a professional soldier, ended his interview thus:

“Mary is a very brave and courageous woman who always, and still does, I think, wanted to have it her own way. From the moment she arrived in England, she was, to put it mildly, difficult. She made it clear that she wished to go back and she was absolutely fit so to do, but she did get across people, there’s no doubt about that. A lot of the high-ups in M19 came away with an impression that she was all right in very small doses.”

On her return, Mary discovered, that during her absence, the Germans in Paris had sentenced the Comtesse de Millville to death. But she now had a new name: Marie Claire, and she set up the Marie Claire Line, centred in the small town of Ruffec, just inside Vichy France.

Escaping allied pilots were contacted over a wide area of Northern France, collected at Ruffec, smuggled into Vichy France, and then escorted, normally by train, to Foix. Pyrenean guides then led them over the mountains to Spain, and most of them finally got back to England. Each of these journeys was hazardous to say the least, and Mary got into many scrapes, once being badly wounded by French collaborators.

During this time, her son Maurice had been betrayed, caught and imprisoned in Lyon. He was severely tortured to make him reveal the whereabouts of his mother, her new name, and the names of all her contacts. When Mary heard about this, she immediately went to Lyon, and paid a huge ransom for his release.

“He looked just like God’s Wrath. He was so thin, the poor little devil, and as he came forward to kiss me his glasses dropped off and to my horror he went down on his knees and was feeling about for them and I said, ‘what’s the matter’, and then he told me that they’d tried to make him talk, and they’d beaten him with these chains across his eyes, you see, and well, we thought he was going blind. He did have a very, very cheap time there, he really was tortured. But they didn’t get anything out of him, I will say that for him.”

In November 1943, Mary’s luck finally ran out. On one of her many trips south to Foix with escaping airmen, she too was betrayed and arrested at the railway station by German Security Police operating in Vichy France. With an escort, they put her on a train bound for Paris to face her death sentence.

“As I didn’t want to go to Paris, I thought the best thing to do was to get off the train and I chose my spot, and when I got there I told my guard that I usually felt sick on the train and when I’m going to be sick, I’ll just hit him on the knee so as not to do it in his lap. So I hit him on the knee where I got where I wanted to get off the train and went in the corridor. Unfortunately, I walked a bit too quickly because I wanted to get a move on, you see. He followed me, and he immediately began shooting. I thought, oh, the bastard, he’s shooting. As I turned to go through, he got me in the cheek. I didn’t even feel it. And I opened

the door on to the rail and there, when you do that, you can't jump at once because you have to be careful of the telegraph poles, because if the telegraph pole hits you, it's nasty. And as I jumped, he fired. He got me twice in the head, which, of course, helped me getting along a bit. It really was a hell of a jump."

Amazingly, when the train stopped, the guards found her body, still alive, on the embankment. She was taken to a military hospital, and against all odds survived, and when well enough, she was taken to Dijon Jail for interrogation. In September 1944, she was transported by rail to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, north of Berlin. This was a camp for women from all over occupied France. Amongst them was a group British prisoners who were S.O.E agents, caught working with the French Resistance.

"The conditions in Ravensbrück were pretty dim for the general public. But you must remember I got there in a British uniform, with a couple of rows of British decorations, with my identity papers proving my title, which you know, the Germans love. The political officer was completely lost from the very beginning, and, of course, when I realised this, I threw my weight about, as you can imagine. They used to call me the arrogant English woman, 'Die arrogante Engländerin'. I'd say, 'You're a lot of bastards.' I was arrogant and I consider we had the right to be arrogant, don't you? After all said and done, we were winning the war and if ever there were any discussions with them, I used to say right at the beginning, 'You've lost it, you know perfectly well you've lost the war.' And they knew they had too. Didn't stop them. They were beastly. The weaker the people, the more beastly they were."

Mary was more fortunate than the others; because of her nursing experience, she got a job in the Revere, the camp hospital. Taking great risks, as usual, she was able to steal some precious medication from the Revere, and saved the lives of several British prisoners, including some of the S.O.E agents. But she was powerless to stop the Germans from executing Violet Zabo, Lilian Rolf and Danielle Williams.

Count Bernadotte who, thanks to Hiltgunt Zassenhaus, had saved the lives of Scandinavian prisoners, had also negotiated with Himmler the release of some of the foreign women inmates of Ravensbrück. Mary Lindell was one of them, and that is how she finished her war.

She was taken to Sweden, and then returned to her old apartment in Paris. She was now separated from her husband, who had gone to live in South America. Maurice also survived and was a great help to us in the making of this film, as were her Marie Claire Line team in Ruffec, who risked their lives many times over to help allied airmen, and who also played their part in telling her story. And when we went to Ruffec to film them, they were sad that we couldn't persuade Mary to come with us. ("I hate those beastly trains," she said.) All of them idolised their leader. And when we filmed the eighty-five year-old Abbé Blanchbarb, the Canon of Metz Cathedral, and leader of the Pyrenean leg of Mary's escape line, he declared triumphantly: "Pour une femme, Marie Claire est un grand homme."

We finished the film with this statement from Mary – which said it all:

“When they say I’m a heroine, I am most embarrassed and I think it’s ridiculous. I mean, after all said and done, one does a job – it’s a job. A lot of people say, oh, how courageous, how brave, and I say, no. Luck. I was lucky. And I was wounded three times and they all said, you’ll never recover. Luck. My number wasn’t up. But a heroine? All twiddle rot. What is a heroine? Joan of Ark? I’m certainly nothing like that. Edith Cavell? Phew. When people say that it makes me mad.

I’ll tell you, in my little tupenny-ha’penny mind I represented Great Britain, who was standing up against the world and fighting for it, and I wasn’t going to let Great Britain down. It just didn’t enter my head. And I wasn’t frightened. I mean to say, if you’re shot, well, you’re shot, and that’s the end of the story, isn’t it?”

* * * *

These four films exemplify the triumph of the human spirit, and in getting to know these four exceptional people, I learnt that courage breeds a special form of modesty – a reluctance to admit that they had done anything out of the ordinary. Instinctively, they took it upon themselves, in spite of all odds, to make a stand against an evil regime. It would have been unthinkable for them to have acted in any other way.

In recalling these four stories of sixty years ago, I have an additional reason to appreciate the remarkable courage displayed by these four, who decided to act single-handedly in their fight against Nazism. Because by a strange coincidence of place and time, it so happened, that in May 1945, as Germany was collapsing, and as I entered Hamburg in my tank with the 8th Hussars, Mary Lindell came through the city on her way from Ravensbrück to Sweden; Hilgunt Zassenhaus had just arrived in Hamburg, her home town, escaping arrest in Dresden; Sigrid Lund’s son was released from Sachsenhausen concentration camp and arrived in Hamburg on his way home to Norway.

Therefore, my memory of that time brings into sharp focus the crucial difference between a soldier and the lone resistance fighter. While these women had to face the enemy on their own, make their decisions on their own, take personal responsibility for every action, big and small, on their own – we, on the other hand, were protected, cosseted in effect, by a well organised military machine acting in unison with thousands of others.

This memory alone underlines my unbounded admiration for these four Women of Courage.



The German

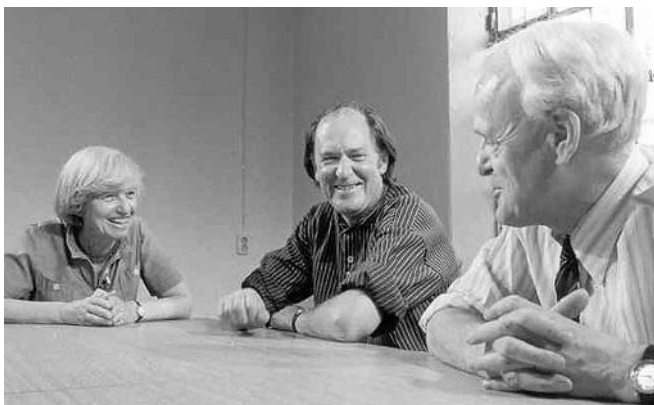
Hiltgunt Zassenhaus born in 1916 in Hamburg. Working on her own inside Nazi Germany, she helped to save the lives of 1200 Scandinavian captives in German camps. They called her 'The German Angel'



On location in Hamburg with Hiltgunt and the crew



Reliving the hazardous train journeys she made smuggling vitamins, bread and news from home to her Scandinavian prisoners dispersed across Germany



A reunion in Hamburg's Fuhlbüttel Prison with two of the Norwegian inmates. 35 years earlier her secret missions to prisons and camps were instrumental in saving their lives



The Norwegian

Sigrid Lund born 1892 in Oslo. Although a pacifist all her life, her clandestine role in the underground movement in Norway took her to Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia to bring out and rescue 37 Jewish children



Sigrid Lund aged 88 joins us on location



37 years ago the woodcutter, Torkel Fornæss, guided Sigrid Lund and the Jewish children on their escape across the lake to Sweden and to safety,. This was their first meeting since that hazardous operation



They were happy to cross the lake again for the camera



Sigrid's teenager son Bernti, caught red-handed for his clandestine work in the resistance movement, survived Sachsenhausen Concentration camp



The Pole

Maria Rutkiewicz born in 1917 in Warsaw.
Parachuted by the Russians into German occupied Warsaw as a secret radio operator.
Caught, tortured and sentenced to death.
Gave birth to twins in the notorious Paviac prison, and survived



We filmed Maria in the torture chamber of the Gestapo Headquarters in Warsaw, now a museum



Maria and a prison-doctor bribed a guard to take a photograph inside Paviac prison of her newly-born twins. It was then smuggled to Maria's husband who was languishing in Auschwitz



Maria and her twins thirty-five years later in Warsaw.
Wicek is an architect, Malgosia a theatre designer

Women of Courage

1979-80

The Brit

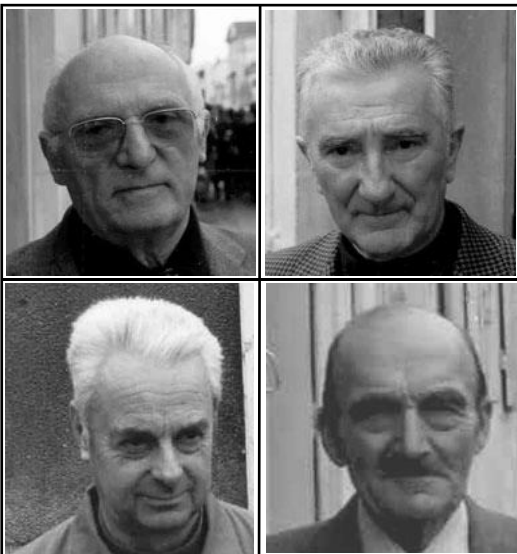
Mary Lindell born in 1894 in Surrey. Earned her first Croix de Guerre as a nurse in the trenches in World War I, and her second Croix de Guerre for fearlessly running a secret escape line for shot-down Allied airmen in World War II. She survived her death sentence



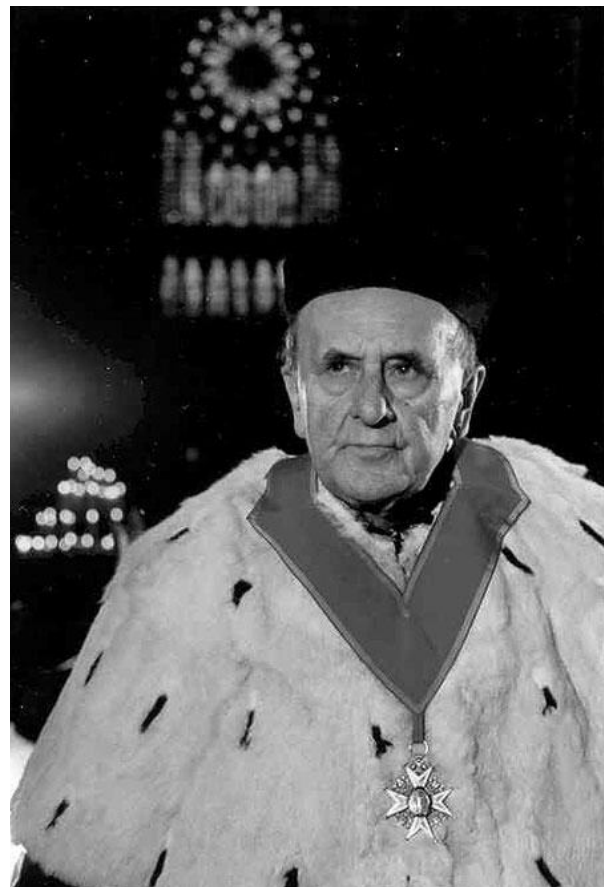
Mary Lindell aged 86 with Tommy her companion for filming



Mary's son Maurice. Captured, incarcerated and tortured in Lyons. The Nazis failed to beat the whereabouts of his mother out of him



Four brave men at the 'Toque Blanche' in Ruffec. The patron, the forger, the village baker and the farmer took huge risks running Mary Lindell's highly successful 'Mary-Claire Line' through Vichy France down to the Pyrenees.



Canon of Metz Cathedral and leader of the Pyrenean leg of Mary's escape line. He declared triumphantly: "Pour une femme, Marie Claire est un grand homme."

Chapter 29

In 1980, my three-year contract with Yorkshire Television came to an end, and I felt that I wanted a change of direction, and it was *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz* that provided the final push. I feared that the opportunities to have the freedom to make films like that were receding fast. For *Kitty*, I asked for a 90-minute slot and got it. I asked for the suspension of commercial breaks, and I got it. It was the only time in all those years I worked in television, that I could sit back and look at the final cut and not face the age-old problem of what to put in and worse, what to leave out. For once, I was not forced to compromise – the contents, and style saw to that. What chances were there for future projects of that nature?

The exciting pioneering days had long gone. For a freelance to hawk around programme ideas in the eighties to BBC-1 and 2, ITV and Channel 4, was that much harder, with an abundance of challenging younger talent competing for attention. Also, I was conscious of the first signs of the ‘bean counters’ beginning to take over the management and decision-making from senior programme people. A development, which made me anxious about the future of broadcasting. I felt that the moment had come to draw the line.

At first, of course, I feared that I might miss directing films and TV programmes – but not a bit of it. I relished the opportunity to be in on something new for the second time in my life.

My interest in videodisc development had increased over the last few years. I had got the first taste of it in 1976, with *Christmas Carols from Cambridge*, and my continuing association with the RCA system in the States whetted my appetite for a different sort of programme making. And what finally tipped the balance was an irresistible offer from Thorn-EMI.

It was EMI who had contracted me to make the Christmas Carol ‘Videogram’, and the powerful Thorn Group had now gobbled up EMI. Thorn, with their rental clout in the UK and abroad, was well on the way to make VHS the world standard home video system. And the purchase of EMI gave them ownership of a very large movie catalogue to prime the new video cassette market.

VHS was invented and manufactured by JVC in Japan, and the Thorn technology agreement with JVC meant that they were obliged to back their next home video gizmo, namely the brand-new VHD videodisc technology. This is when the EMI executives who had hired me in 1976, and knew about my loose RCA involvement, made an attractive offer for me to come and develop and produce videodiscs for the VHD system.

There were many Soho lunchtime meetings, and I finally negotiated a satisfactory contract. I was to be Thorn-EMI’s Controller of Programmes, and to my surprise they accepted my insistence on an eight-year contract. I was able to persuade them that it would take that long to develop and produce the quality and quantity for a sustainable

videodisc market. And with a splendid office in Thorn House, Upper St.Martin's Lane, and a small team of enthusiasts, I started an unfamiliar, but very intriguing, new life.

As in the early days of television, there was no yardstick to go by; so-called interactive videodiscs were talked about in the abstract, and one just made it up as one went along. It was exhilarating, once more, to start with a clean slate.

The next three years were frantic. Thorn had announced a launch date for VHD, and I was responsible for producing an inventory of interactive videodiscs for their opening-night catalogue. They were spending a fortune in acquiring more movie rights, while I was in charge of a two million pound budget, creating something entirely new.

Now, by using narrower 'brush strokes', it was possible to invite the active user of the videodisc to interact with a richness of information, denied to the passive television viewer. Here was the escape from the tyranny of the broadcast time-slot I had been looking for, and the release from the medium's limitations in communicating detailed facts, figures, let alone ideas.

This, in 2004, sounds like old hat, but in the early eighties it was entirely new. The whole panoply of technological magic, now taken for granted, simply did not exist. Home computers, CD-ROM, mobile phones, the Internet, CD, DVD, etc, had yet to be invented.

Thorn-EMI felt that the 'how to' market should be the first aim, and so I found myself producing discs on fishing, motorcar maintenance, dress making (so help me), cooking and subjects of that ilk. What intrigued me was not the subject matter, but designing methods of manipulating the contents and finding ways to exploit the new, but still primitive functions of the videodisc player, such as chapterisation, indexing, automatic picture stops, still frame, slow motion, dual sound tracks allowing two comprehension levels, and so on. And all this controlled by the user's handset.

JVC sent over a large team of technicians to oversee the building of a VHD disc manufacturing plant in Swindon, and I found myself making many trips to Japan to persuade JVC to implement technical functions for their player that had not occurred to them.

Tokyo, with its new skyscrapers, brilliant underground train service, and all the other outward changes that have transformed this city since *The Two Faces of Japan* in 1960, was always an exciting experience. I was about to learn something about the way large corporations conduct their business.

It was customary for Thorn to despatch a large team, consisting of senior engineers, technicians, corporate business affairs experts, lawyers and publicity people, to negotiate, finalise and sign off agreements with JVC. And I arrived in Tokyo on my own.

On the first morning, I was met by a JVC representative who came to pick me up at my hotel and escorted me in a chauffeur-driven car to their plant. About a mile before reaching our destination, he stopped the car and got out to make a phone call. I realised that he was alerting his superiors of my imminent arrival. When we pulled into the drive of their huge head office, I was greeted with an array of Union Jacks fluttering in the breeze. I was nearly as surprised as the baffled JVC high-ranking welcoming group, who expected to greet the usual army of Thorn people.

Tea was served in an anteroom to the boardroom, and the conversation was very formal but friendly. My hosts were all wearing identical smart light blue uniforms, sporting the JVC logo. I explained that I was a producer and director, and their international sales director, who spoke good English, declared that he would, from now on, call me 'Mister Peter Morray Softwarosan'.

I sat on one side of a very long boardroom table, facing twelve JVC executives and an interpreter. As was normal practice, I had telexed an agenda for that meeting from London, and the Managing Director announced that he had to put an extra item at the top of my agenda. This did not surprise me. He felt that he needed an explanation as to how decisions could be arrived at without the presence of the usual Thorn representatives. I then explained that the UK launch date for their splendid system meant that there was great urgency to settle some purely technical matters, and that Thorn-EMI had given me full plenipotentiary powers to achieve this on this visit. I said that agreement had to be reached today, or the launch date would be jeopardised. There was a big sucking-in of breath, but it worked.

In order to exploit some of the VHD player's tricks, I had requested some additional player functions, and I had redesigned, and made a cardboard model of the remote handset to accommodate these functions. I then handed it to the chief engineer across the table. He, and two of his assistants, went into a huddle and studied my proposed changes. After a lot of discussion between them and their other colleagues, to my surprise, they requested another meeting the following day to announce the result of their deliberations. Normally, when technical alterations have been accepted, it takes about six weeks for JVC to come up with a prototype. To my astonishment, the following morning, they successfully demonstrated the redesigned remote control, implementing all the functions I had asked. They must have worked flat-out all night. It was very impressive.

Back at Thorn House, I had got to know the Group's chairman. I had invited him to some early demonstrations of the first clutch of discs we were making, and we got on well. He asked me to lunch and I was able to hold forth on my views of the early VHD launch. As Thorn-EMI was creating a world VHS video cassette market using a video player that could also record programmes, would not the VHD videodisc system, without recording capability, create unwelcome competition? He told me I was not the only person who had nobbled him on this.

Thorn-EMI Videodisc, as we were now called, moved to new premises in Tottenham Court Road, and there I continued to spend huge chunks of production money on all manner of titles. I contracted Colin Mably onto my team, a senior science lecturer, and between us, we created a rich science resource for primary schools. A six-disc set, which we believed would stimulate a videodisc market in the UK.

We persuaded Thorn to make their VHD players available at a reduced price to schools, and started a marketing operation. The desktop computer was now making itself known, and we started to investigate the prospect of putting the videodisc player under computer control. It was an interesting time, and I enjoyed it, little realising that rampant, unstoppable technology was consigning videodisc to rapid obsolescence.

As it turned out, and as no surprise to me, a year later the VHD launch was aborted, the disc plant in Swindon was shut down and the write-off cost Thorn-EMI over twelve million pounds.

And yet, in spite of that, I was told to soldier on and develop more titles. I was asked to find new accommodation, and so I set up shop in Dean Street, right in the middle of Soho. My contract had four more years to run; Colin Mably and I had become good friends, and I was able to keep him on board while we continued to make and market our science series of discs to schools.

Thorn decreed to set up a new company that did not carry their name and I thought that Evergreen Communications Ltd. would fit the bill. We instigated an independent evaluation of school users, and the reaction was enthusiastic. As always, schools were underfunded, and they found it almost impossible to finance the new technology; they were happy with their video cassette players.

We now changed over to the Philips competing laserdisc technology. Their optical disc looked like becoming the world standard. It was even more expensive than the VHD player, but the discs could be pressed in Germany, and so I had to convert all our material to make it play on laserdisc. Little did any of us realise at the time, that this large, shiny laserdisc, with its optical reading technology, was the grandfather of all the emerging disc systems such as CD-ROM, CD-I, Audio CD and DVD.

In 1989, Thorn said that enough was enough and decided to close us down. One of their main board directors, Marshall Young, who had monitored our progress and signed off our accounts, called me on the phone and asked whether I would like to consider an MBO. After I asked what on earth MBO meant, he explained that he was offering a 'Management Buy-Out'. Not only that, he was so enthusiastic about our efforts, that he resigned from Thorn, became our chairman (of Evergreen), and then persuaded Thorn to loan us the money for the buy-out.

We had a couple of months to vacate our Dean Street offices, and the three new directors of Evergreen Communications, Marshall Young, Colin Mably and myself, set an early trend by deciding to work from our respective homes. The best move I have ever made. I relished working from home; I set up all the technical video editing equipment, acquired a computer, a fax machine, a copier and an answer-phone. Self-contained and self-sufficient – it felt good.

Jonathan and Ben had by now flown the nest, and I converted the boys' old playroom into my office/studio, and taught myself word processing and desktop publishing.

With Marshall's overseas contacts, we got an American publisher excited about our science discs, and after several trips to the States, clinched a distribution deal with Simon & Schuster. After two years, they admitted that they had failed in their marketing effort and wanted to get out of the tough contract Marshall had negotiated. It cost them dearly, and the moneys we received from them easily (and thankfully) enabled us to pay off our MBO borrowings from Thorn. What a relief.

Colin, in the meantime, had struck up a friendship (culminating a few years later in a very happy marriage) with Anne Benbow, educational chief of the American Chemical Society, who now sponsored a run of science programmes on laserdisc and video cassettes for American schools, and Colin and I were contracted to make them. All the rushes were shipped back here, and I enjoyed the prospect of being, once again, an editor, using my own equipment in my own home. Every so often, I popped over the pond to Annapolis to do all the post-production work; always a pleasurable experience.

And then in 1996 – disaster. Something totally unexpected occurred. It just proves the old saying that all of us are only inches away from the unknown. Jane suffered a spontaneous prolapse of a disc halfway down her spine, and after hospitalisation and two years of physiotherapy, is now classed as an incomplete paraplegic. What this means is that she is confined to a wheelchair, although with enormous effort and support she manages to take a few steps, such as going into a restaurant or theatre where there is no disabled access. She is amazingly agile in water, and I take her swimming every week.

As I am writing this – it is now ten years since this blow fell – I can't begin to describe Jane's great courage, her stoicism, and above all, her good humour. My 'caring' duties could have been so onerous, but they are not. Working from home means that my new and unexpected duties don't interfere with my work. I reckon that we make a good, cheerful team, facing the realities of this situation. Long may it last.

* * * *

In 1998, I was asked by the United States National Archive and Records Administration, based in Maryland, to lecture on, and then screen *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz*. I had done this once before, in 1981, at the Banff Television Festival in Canada, and now, all those years later, I found myself 'in demand' in the States, because a senior staff member from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was in the audience. That started a series of lecture/presentation engagements in the States, lasting four years. The bulk of these were sponsored by the Holocaust Museum, with gigs in New York, Washington, Chicago, Florida, Los Angeles, Denver and San Diego.

In addition to *Kitty*, I also showed the four *Women of Courage* films to an interesting variety of audiences, a mixture of holocaust survivors and their families, Jewish groups, Catholic groups, university students, teachers, and sometimes, whole classes of young pupils from the local schools. I enjoyed all this very much, and felt it was worth doing.

I always get a kick out of visiting the States, and at the end of each trip, on my way back to London, I managed to stay with my old friend, Dick Sonnenfeldt, and his wife Barbara, in their Port Washington home on Long Island. Jane too, looked forward to my short absences. She enjoys being independent, and copes wonderfully well.

These gigs dried up after 2002 due to the economic climate in the States, and sponsorship funding became very difficult. Back here, however, I made similar presentations that now included the *Churchill Funeral* and *The Turn of the Screw*. The venues were the National Film Theatre on the South Bank, the Imperial War Museum and Christ Church, Oxford.

In the summer of 2004, I retired from BAFTA, together with my fellow trustees, the Lords John Brabourne and David Puttman. John and I had been trustees from the very first day and had now served for almost thirty years. It was time to make room for fresh blood.

I hoped that I could win more time to do other things, including this attempt to rewind my life, by putting it down on paper. I embarked on this task over three years ago – of course, it took much longer than I had imagined. The demands made on one's time, as one gets older, evoke the old cry: 'How on earth did one ever find the time to go to work?'

Afterthoughts

In this chronology I have listed the output of a fairly eclectic range of programmes by just one practitioner – but I was not alone – there were many others who could equally claim similar experiences in this shared adventure starting fifty years ago. Now, with hindsight, I am going to step back for a moment and briefly recall some thoughts about television, then and now.

No one could guess, when faced with competition from the launch of ITV in 1955, how the BBC would react. History tells us that the BBC was confident that its broadcasting ethos was secure, and there was no need to fear the challenge from the ‘commercial upstarts’. Fierce public arguments, in the press and in Parliament broke out, focusing on opposing theories: ‘giving people what they want’, versus ‘giving them what you think is good for them’.

But this controversy was not the talking point in Associated-Rediffusion’s club bar – we were much too busy satisfying the voracious appetite of a brand new national network, helping to sustain its daily schedule of programmes.

There have been many learned books tracing the history of those first ten-or-so years of the two-channel service, and they make interesting reading today, especially in the light of the fairly recent, and in my view, rather frightening revolution in broadcasting technology. Historians and media experts tell us about the BBC’s early shock discovery of an entirely unexpected, indeed exploding, mass audience for television, clamouring to be ‘entertained’. It is worth recalling that within the first year of ITV, the number of homes able to receive television went up from 188,000 to a staggering 1,550,000. By the winter of 1956 this number was increasing by 50,000 every week, and by September 1957, ITV, now two-years-old, reached 4.8 million homes, and the viewing ratio was 79:21 in favour of ITV. The BBC monopoly had been well and truly broken. And that turned out to be very good news, because within a short time, the advent of ITV, acting as a powerful stimulant, transformed the BBC into the best and most respected broadcasting organisation in the world. The standard was set for Public Service Broadcasting.

It was in this climate that I started making programmes – in a way, ploughing my own furrow – oblivious of the changes that would, sooner or later, affect programme makers. I consider myself to have been fortunate to have had the chance to make, in those early few years, a contribution to both mass and minority audience programmes that some thought could only be made by the BBC. *The Turn of the Screw* and *Tyranny – the Years of Adolf Hitler* exactly fitted that category.

I have often wondered what made me tick at the time. There was no yardstick to go by; there was hardly any time to watch other people’s programmes; the documentaries I had been making before 1955 suddenly seemed dated. The immediacy of this new medium was going to change everything. There was precious little ‘thinking time’ to develop concepts, ideas and styles; there was no one around to ask for help or advice. The pressures were such that you just went ahead and somehow made it up as you went along. The chances were that you achieved something entirely new – such was the primitive state of the medium. I was quite unaware of the bigger picture. I certainly never thought about the role of television, let alone its duty to the public – I had seen so

little of it – and like many others, I was conscious only of its novelty value. It is difficult for today's viewers to realise that video recording in the home had yet to be invented, and if you were not able to see a programme as it was being transmitted – well, that was your bad luck.

I got to know fellow programme makers from the BBC, (through the Guild of Television Producers and Directors) and was impressed – and obviously influenced – by their approach to broadcasting, admiring the commitment to the very broad spectrum of programming that made up the BBC broadcasting philosophy.

I became aware that programme makers at the BBC belonged to an all-embracing broadcasting organisation, dedicated 'to speak to the nation', whereas ITV, as set up by Parliament, was a network of regional companies, with the major competing players providing the bulk of the programmes. And the prospect, therefore, of establishing cohesiveness – ITV speaking with one voice, as the BBC was able to – was to prove illusory.

In spite of that, new ground was being broken in many fields of programming: ITV's contemporary dramas were beginning to have an effect on the BBC's output, as were the current affairs programmes starting in 1956 with *This Week*, soon followed by Granada's *World in Action*. Most memorable was the contribution made by ITN. They introduced the role of the newscaster, and put television journalism firmly on the new medium's map. And at A-R, we also were contributing to a new grammar in programme making.

The only tangible feedback of our endeavours was from the press. Of course, it was always warming to bask for a few moments in a good review, but very few critics had the experience (or column inches) to indulge in detailed constructive criticisms. I consider Philip Purser, Maurice Richardson, Maurice Wiggin and Peter Black to have been my distant mentors. I felt as though they conducted a gentle, continuing dialogue with me over many years, and I learnt more from their columns about television in general, and my programmes in particular, than from anywhere else.

As the years passed and as television evolved from being a grand adventure, as I used to call it, into a communications industry, I was able to develop my thoughts about the medium, and my belief in the Public Service Broadcasting ethos as practised by the BBC. My involvement in the arguments for a future second channel for ITV was motivated by this belief, and I was much relieved when the new Channel 4's remit came into being.

During these years, I felt great loyalty to Rediffusion although I was not on the staff. It was a lucky mixture, both of belonging and yet keeping a certain distance, which gave me, as a freelance, an element of freedom to pick and choose the sort of programmes I wished to make. Apart from producing and directing, I got satisfaction from my involvement, firstly with the Guild and then, for over thirty years, with BAFTA and The Royal Television Society. I never felt any ambition to shin up that greasy pole to an executive position, as a number of friends and colleagues managed to do. Lord Mountbatten said to me after the three-year production period with him, that I should put my name forward to become a head of department or channel controller, and he found it difficult to understand that I was happy with what I was doing. Promotion for him was part of the game, but I did not feel like playing it.

When I decided to put active programme making to one side in the early eighties, some colleagues found this difficult to take. In a way, I had had my fill. I had been lucky to have been in at the start, and the time had come for a change of gear. A chance, once again, to be in on something new. What finally persuaded me, in effect it became my swansong, was *Kitty - Return to Auschwitz*. As I have indicated in my chapter on this production, the emotional impact left its mark on me, and the support I received from Yorkshire Television, and especially from Paul Fox, to go and make this film ‘my way’, underlined my fear that this courageous attitude to programme making was likely to undergo changes in the eighties and beyond. The culture of television at the end of the first quarter century of ITV’s existence was showing these signs, and I didn’t much like the direction it was taking. Profit motivation was to become a growing driving force. Those of my colleagues who had made it to the top of the tree were in danger of being outnumbered by others whose broadcasting philosophy was a million miles away from the more idealistic years, which I had the good fortune to experience.

* * * *

The year 2005 signalled both the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the 50th of the start of Independent Television in the UK – two landmarks, nostalgia aside, that cause me to reflect on these last eighty-two fairly active years of my life. The first, recalls a bizarre irony when I finished my war, when with my brother Tommy, we proudly stood to attention in the gun turrets of our 8th Hussars tanks as we passed Churchill’s saluting base in the 1945 victory parade – of all places – in Berlin.

The second event marks the great good luck I had, when fifty years ago, my television career took root– but there is an even more important reason for celebrating – because that was the moment when, in 1955, I met Associated-Rediffusion’s Production Assistant, Jane Tillett.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my family and especially to Jane, for her patient and constructive support during my long absences at the computer keyboard and, of course, for her valiant proof-reading effort of this narrative.

I hope that the contents of these chapters will be of interest, especially to media students who may wish to find out more about the background and the growing pains of this extraordinary industry.

It is almost sixty-five years since I started as a rewind-boy in the projection box of the Dominion, Tottenham Court Road. Needless to say, it never occurred to me at the time that one day I might sit down, put pen to paper, and chronicle these events – but I have – I have now done with rewinding. And I am left with the memory of a cavalcade of unpredictable and often surprising happenings – sometimes described as ‘the rich panoply of life’.

* * * *

It’s a wrap!