

# David Prosser (newsreel cameraman)

## 2/2/1917- ?

by [admin](#) — last modified Jul 27, 2008 02:41 PM

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### BECTU History Project - Interview No. TBC

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Transcription Date: 2002-01-18

Interview Date: 1989-05-23

Interviewer: Alan Lawson

Interviewee: David Prosser

Tape 1, Side 1

**Alan Lawson:** The copyright of this recording is vested in the ACTT History Project. David Prosser, Newsreel cameraman, later BBC film cameraman. Recorded on the 23rd of the fifth, 1989 at his home in Chandler's Ford, Interviewer Alan Lawson. Side one.

[break in recording]

**Alan Lawson:** David, to ask you first, where and when were you born?

**David Prosser:** Born Carshalton, Surrey, 2 February 1917 and moved very shortly after that, within four years, to South Wales, Swansea in the Gower peninsula.

**Alan Lawson:** What kind of schooling did you have?

**David Prosser:** Er, a thing that's never heard of nowadays, called Kindergarten, from the age of about three or four onwards, where I learned to write, learned Latin and learnt French, believe it or not, in this day and age, and er, and English, of course. Um, and then to another school, and bear in mind that schools were very largely private in those days, except for what was known as Council schools, which, in Wales, were very very good, and still are - but this was a private, sort of Prep school, and I haven't forgotten the name, I know it's Lloyds, but the name has recently changed, because I finally moved to a Monastery, nearby, um, and then I was sent to boarding school at the age of about...I think...probably ten, which was at [Newenham] in Gloucestershire, which was a very good Prep school, but with co-headmasters - one of whom was an absolute sadist - so much so, that I went to back to beat him up when I was about sixteen, and every time I went back he was out! But he taught me a tremendous amount, and it was immensely valuable, and the more the years...er...the longer the years went on, I realised what valuable wisdom this

chap had taught me, therefore I 'm extremely grateful. At the age of about fourteen I went to Oundle, largely because my parents thought I was an engineering type, I was always doing things with my hands. This was a misnomer on their part, in fact it was a science school, although they did engineering, and um, I duly worked through all the usual things there, starting in classics and then going into science eventually, after learning Greek, German, Latin, and English again. Umm, and eventually sort of transferred to science, with the aim, ultimately, of becoming a scientist. If you want the rest, I then went on to...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes we do, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** (Chuckles). Oh, to um, er, a college called Imperial College of Science and Technology in London University, but it regarded itself as separate from London University...it was based in South Ken., and, er, I was at the Royal College of Science and, while I was basically doing alright, I used to 'boob' a bit on one particular subject. Anyway, after the second year, after attempting to get into Newsreel, er, for reasons which will materialise later, I...threw the whole thing up...

**Alan Lawson:** When was that, when was that about?

**David Prosser:** I'm just trying to work out the year, I think the summer, it would be the summer of '37, I think I went there in '35, because I rowed for Imperial College Boat Club at Henley and whatever, in '35 and '36, and I only recently threw away the blazer, with the dates on it, which reminds me. Er, so in September '37, after a lot of contacting and whatnot, I got a job in Movietone as a trainee Newsreel man.

**Alan Lawson:** Why Newsreel?

**David Prosser:** Ah, well, it materialised in my thinking, even as a student and before, that the kind of job I wanted could have been offered at one time by the Navy, and I seriously thought of it for a while, because I wanted to be able to travel the world at somebody else's expense, to get experience, without having to pay for it, in that sense. Ah, then I realised that the Navy was just a bit too strict, because I'd done a bit with them, I'd been to sea with them, even as a small child and my father.... um, I used to go to sea with the escort ship for the Royal, er, Royal Yacht escort ship when Tommy Sopwith used to race...

**Alan Lawson:** [over interviewee] Oh yes, yeah.

**David Prosser:** ...T Class...flyer...Er...T Class....

**Alan Lawson:** Yachts.

**David Prosser:** T Class yachts in the Bristol Channel off Swansea, so I knew a bit about the Navy from that.... and that was at a very early age.

**Alan Lawson:** Was your father was... was Navy was he?

**David Prosser:** No, no, my father was a banker.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs] Oh, oh I see, I see.

**David Prosser:** [Laughs] No my father was a banker, but he had a lot of contacts you see, and so one was able to be shown around quite a lot. Anyway, the Navy obviously wasn't on, in the circumstances, but newsreel, clearly had that kind of advantage. I'd been doing film...not film camera work, but still camera work from the age of about seven - I've still got some stills I took on an [Ensign?] plate camera...er...which aren't bad pictures, I mean rather than just a snapshot, um, at the age of seven or eight, and I worked on from there learning about it. My father also did photography, but not all that seriously. So I'd learned about photography, and when I joined the newsreel business, I was told "well you can forget about all this business of photography - the main thing is, you've got to learn journalism, and you've got to be there and shoot at the right moment."

**Alan Lawson:** Who was...so you got to Movietone. Who was your introduction to Movietone? How did you get the introduction?

**David Prosser:** Er, it's a bit complex. A school friend of mine in the next door house at Oundle, called Normal Fisher...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** ...had got a contact through some family contact of his to get him into Movietone, and we used to talk about it at school, umm.... sorry I'm going to cough...(coughs).... And he, um, rather encouraged me with the idea, and he could give me merely names, there he couldn't obviously, in the low standing that he had, he couldn't introduce me to anybody. Er, but, again, through my father and some solicitor, we managed to get a contact to Sir Gordon Craig, I think it was then, who was Managing Director or General Manager of Movietone, and a director in Fox -20th Century Fox - films, and eventually I think we got to see Tommy Scales, who gave me the job, who was editor of Movietone, through Sir Gordon Craig presumably, and this wasn't a push job, it was a question of, em....how really one needed relatives to be able to get into the film business, as you probably know, in those days...

**Alan Lawson:** (over interviewee) yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...So it wasn't actually somebody pushing, but I just got introduced to the right people and was able to impress them sufficiently to get the job. They then put me through Kay Laboratories for about three months for training, basic training, in the late developing labs, and er, thereafter, I came out as a trainee cameraman and, um, was generally hawked around the Newsreel business as second man.

**Alan Lawson:** Who was, if you like, your first mentor as a cameraman? Do you remember?

**David Prosser:** Not offhand, because I went out with the whole lot, and I've got the list here of the crews. Normally I went out with what was then known as another silent man, the silent men

were Dick Harris, Norman Fisher, Alec Tozer and myself. I don't remember anybody else - we had one or two freelance ones - there was one called Bunny Hutchins who used to do quite a lot of work for them, but I normally went out as second camera to any of those, and the so-called sound cameramen were Paul Wyand, who's was far and away the sort of ace of the lot, Jack Cotter, who was basically, the senior newsreel man, and Alf Tunwell, they worked with sound cameras - their soundman being respectively Derek Stiles with Paul Wyand, Martin Gray, I think with Jack Cotter, and Pat Wyand with Alf Tunwell.

**Alan Lawson:** And, the, err, during the War, I did a bit of, er, what shall I say.... Newsreel shooting, and I found it one of the most difficult kind of disciplines to get. Presumably because I was studio trained.

**David Prosser:** Yeah it would be, if you were used to features. That was the valuable training in the very beginning about the Newsreel business was the fact that, a) you had to be there, b) you had to think ahead, and you had to predict what was gonna go on, and you had to, therefore, organise yourself to be in the right place at the right time and do this frequently through a lot of contacts that you had to be making at the time.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And this was enormously valuable, even much more so in later years, well, not all that many later years, in 1939, I made my first basically self directed, self written, er ten minute film about the Queen Mother...er... the lady who is now the Queen Mother, called 'Britannia is a Woman'[,?], er, and about two years later in '41, when I was a foreign correspondent with the Navy, or Naval correspondent, War correspondent, in the Middle East, um, I made my first ever ten or twenty, depending who you were dealing with....

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...ten or twenty minute film, which I wrote the script of, had to get through Admiralty and through the local Navy departments as well - because nobody ever made a film about submarines, they were too secret, you didn't do publicity like that - but I had the unusual, it turned out later, I had the unusual habit of regarding anything that was good propaganda for Britain during the War, as being possibly a good story and a very necessary story, of course, we obviously in those early years were suffering very bad propaganda for the British. Ah, so I made this, er, originally twenty minute film about the full operation of submarines attacking Rommel's convoys.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah-ha.

**David Prosser:** This was nothing... [pause]... not purely about submarine, it was about the way submarines worked, how they were backed up by their depot ship, how they were serviced, how they were looked after and how they were rescued and everything else, and it covered the whole field, which meant lighting depot ship workshops, lathes and metal shops, and this sort of thing, with a couple of photo floods, mirrors, daylight - you name it...

**Alan Lawson:** And did anybody else with you on that at all, or were you....

**David Prosser:** John Turner, whom you may remember...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** of Gaumont and I, um.... John was originally going to participate in it, and he did do several shots for me, but we used to alternately direct, or, um, light, or film, for each other, but, because he was otherwise occupied most of the time, he didn't really do very much. I wrote the script, in primitive terms, for the benefit of the Admirals, and then did a shooting script and a final shot for shot version, before we even started shooting. But, er, it might be worth noting on the record, that it's very seldom, even today, that one young man of about twenty three or twenty four years old, can go to the top Admirals in the business and say "alright, you passed my submarine film, thanks very much, against all the normal rules. What I want now, is one submarine, one complete ship's company for that submarine, and a captain, and, additionally, another submarine captain, as a liaison man, who can tell me which way things ought to be done, and who can get the submarine to do what I want it to do." And they gave it to me, and Movietone, about three months after we... three weeks, after we'd started shooting, Movietone sent me the cable, after I'd asked for permission, immediately, and, through John Turner's office, we got it, er... they said, um, "no - no market for it," you see. The fact remains it's subsequently sold in twenty languages, that film...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And it's still in the records.

**Alan Lawson:** Is it really? Yes, yes...yes. Um, yes - now you became a war correspondent...um...when was that, actually? Can you remember?

**David Prosser:** August 1940.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha, ah ha.

**David Prosser:** Overnight. Um, Tony Kimmins, the playwright, director and commander, R.N., and you name it - famous chap - er 'phoned up my news editor and said "we need a man to go off on an unspecified operation, for anything up to six months, may be more - and he'll have to find his own way back, this is an order from Churchill." And, just to give you a build up to it, Tony Kimmins had been dining a girlfriend at the 'Ivy', the night he rang up my news editor, and he received, in the middle of this dinner, an immediate demand from Churchill, to go to 10 Downing Street, right now - when he was told that he had to organise a newsreel man and a still photographer, to take off, and it later transpired, with General de Gaulle and General [Speirs], on operation... by sea. Well this wasn't allowed to be told to me, I was simply told that I had got to stand by and get all the gear together, so the whole of the next morning was spent buying equipment, buying tropical gear and, you name it, you know - getting film stock in, in fair size quantities, in two hundred foot rolls of 35 mm, because I'd only got a Newman Sinclair. And, er,

so Tony Kimmins and I were then rushing around in Simpsons, Piccadilly, buying this equipment, and ordering it - not taking anything with us...

**Alan Lawson:** No, no.

**David Prosser:** ...and saying, "right, you can send the whole lot up to Euston Station in a bed roll," - rolled up in these old fashioned army bed rolls, which we were also purchasing - er, "to be ready to leave on the 9 o'clock train." He didn't say where to, but obviously it was going to be to a port. Well, this was heavily interrupted all the time, because every five minutes at that particular time, there were air raid warnings sounding off, and every time they sounded off, Simpson's closed the steel shutters between departments....

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles over interviewee]

**David Prosser:** and there might be three to open before you can get out of that department into another one. This cause a lot of trouble, so Tony produced this letter from Churchill, (they sensibly got it all in writing), so that whatever happened, this officer was to have all facilities and they were to do exactly what he said, whatever it was.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs].

**David Prosser:** And so Tony got the place opened up. Anyway, we got all the equipment and we finally sort of went up to Liverpool overnight with various trials and tribulations, and Simpson's sort of sent me out with two left shoes and things like that - it was all a bit of a mess when we collected it. We arrived in Liverpool - do you want to go right through that bit?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, please [chuckling].

**David Prosser:** Arrived in Liverpool at some ungodly hour in the middle of the night, in the middle of an air raid, of course, as usual.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And, er, we...by this time I'd met up with the still man whose name I have forgotten for the moment, without actually looking up my records. Um, a Fleet Street still man, of course, and so we had to hang about in Liverpool. We were shut down into the archive room, a sort of air raid, um, I've forgotten what the word is now - shelter, I suppose.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, an air raid shelter, yes.

**David Prosser:** You know, a sort of air raid shelter, with masses of sort of dusty records from the post office, the bureaucrats, and you name it - and we were all getting a bit tetchy and fed-up and said "Look, for God's sake, we're obviously going to join a ship - why can't we get cracking and join it?" Anyway, they wouldn't let us out. We'd met some Naval [fouring??] captain by this time, who was sort of organising things for us, and we couldn't really pull rank on that! I mean, this chap was quite young, and I was only about twenty one or twenty two, or something, at this

stage. And, um, eventually, we joined a ship called [Penlant???], which was a Dutch liner, who'd just been brought in from the Far East, manned entirely by a Dutch crew, and it transpired they had on board, um, all the crew other than the...I mean, all the, um, passengers in the ship other than the Dutch crew, were French Foreign Legion. There was one British Officer, who was a very junior sub-lieutenant RNVR, from, um, straight out of King Alfred, which was the training station for the Navy in those days, down in Brighton, and, um, we were on our own. While this happened, we found a French foreign...whilst we were about to try and get on board, because they'd shipped all the gangways and this sort of thing, er, we found a French foreign Legionnaire, trying to escape over the side, on the end of a rope, with a motorbike!

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles].

**David Prosser:** So we sort of put the port police on to this and they duly ran him in, and all this sort of thing, but, um, anyway, we finally got on board and sort of got some cabins, and I found I was in the next cabin to the Deuxieme Bureau, which again, these days, Deuxieme Bureau, it probably doesn't mean much, but it's the French equivalent of the KGB!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs].

**David Prosser:** (Can I pause there for a moment, because I don't want to waste your tape).

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

[break in recording]

**Alan Lawson:** You say you're now getting on board.

**David Prosser:** Yeah, we're now on board the [SS Penlant????], Dutch luxury liner ship....ex Dutch Luxury liner ship, manned entirely by a Dutch crew, not Dutch Navy, but Dutch Merchant Service as we call it, or Mercantile Marine I think it is today, and the French Foreign Legion, um....

**Alan Lawson:** And you had the Deuxieme Bureau man next door...[chuckles].

**David Prosser:** And, that's right, the Deuxieme Bureau man was dressed, of course, in British uniform, because the French Foreign Legion all had to be dressed by us, as they, you know, were a bit short of stuff and they'd escaped from France or North Africa, or wherever. The Deuxieme Bureau man was an interesting character, because he was highly suspicious of two characters like the still man and myself (and I'm sorry I don't remember his name), being free to go around and, er, he sort of followed us all day long, every day. Although I used to say 'good morning' to the chap, he never greeted me for about the first three or four days, and he had these awful British, um, I've forgotten what the....Bombay boomers I think they were called. They were shorts....

**Alan Lawson:** [Over interviewee]. That's right, like [indecipherable] [Laughs].

**David Prosser:** ...that came down below the knees, and, um, an ill fitting khaki shirt and some sort of French headgear, a solar topee, I don't know if they call them those these days. You see them in period movies on television sometimes and that sort of thing...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing]. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...and he used to slump around with these damn great boots on [chuckles] and shorts, and we were rather tittering at him. The embarrassing thing about it was, though - because we met de Gaulle every morning, or five or six times a day, actually, and eventually they'd attached a somewhat English speaking French Foreign Legion Lieutenant to us, to interpret and to put us into the routine of what the French Foreign Legion - how they behave, compared with the Army or the British Navy, or whatever. Er, this bloke used to get up very tight, because I would salute General de Gaulle first thing in the morning and I would salute him last thing at night - but, if I saw him six times during the day, I ignored him, you see. And he used to nudge me every time de Gaulle appeared on the deck, (quite frequently). "Attention! Attention! The General!" And I used to say "Oh blow the General. I am performing according to the British Naval practice. I am a naval correspondent and, um, you know, this is the form." Um, one salutes a Senior Officer first thing in the morning and last thing at night and that's the end of it, and I'm doing the same thing with de Gaulle - after all he's only a bloody foreigner to me!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs].

**David Prosser:** That didn't go down too well! Er, that was more-or-less the end of it. By this time we were trying to deduce where we were going, and most of us had figured out we were going to Dakar, West Africa. I then tried to do some stories on how the French Foreign Legion lived, which simply meant having, sort of, five litre bottles of wine sculling around the deck and spilling all over everything. And their cabins were much the same, they were all sort of smothered in wine and mess and so on and the discipline didn't appear to be all that good compared to what one had heard in earlier days about the Foreign Legion...and nothing very much happened, until we hit the Cape Verde Islands..

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hm.

**David Prosser:** Which were en route to Dakar, and the moment we did that, the English sub-lieutenant, the English still-photographer, and myself, all agreed that this was plain madness from the point of... [traffic noise] (do you want the window shut?)

**Alan Lawson:** (No, that's all right, no no.)

**David Prosser:** Plain madness, from the point of view of intelligence, because, the fact that we went through the Cape Verde Islands with a bloody great convoy and two large liners and a Naval escort, was going to break security, um, and anybody could see that, you know, there was somebody coming down to Africa and the chances were that we were going to Dakar. Because there was a French General, whose name escapes me, and he was in control.... Oh God, I can't remember the name of the town, just north of Dakar...no, it was Dakar. But, he was in control of the country which is now called something quite different, of which Dakar was then the capital

and he and his Vichy French were controlling it, and the idea was that this force would go in, land at or near Dakar and make their way up the coast or into Dakar and take over the place from this General and return it to Allied control. It wasn't called Allied in those days - it was free French control, I suppose. Er, of course the other Allies hadn't come really much into it at that point. Er, so, for some reason, when we hit Freetown, I either was asked to move or I arranged to move into the Headquarters Ship. Incidentally, I jumped the gun on the de Gaulle story, because it was only after I joined the SS [Vestinland????], which was the Headquarters Ship, out of [Penland????], that I sort of met up with de Gaulle daily - that was after we hit Freetown.

Anyway, we then stuck around for a fortnight in Freetown, coaling[????] and generally hanging about and going ashore and seeing what the country was like and this sort of thing. And, of course, those of us who were newsmen (two of us) [chuckles], all sort of saying, "this is absolute madness, you know. This is a security break, everybody is gonna know what we're doing." I mean people in Freetown, Negroes in the bars, were just saying to us, "well, good luck in Dakar old boy" and this kind of thing. So it was obvious that security was broken and the whole operation was going to be chaos. Er, anyway, to cut a long story short, it was chaos. We went up there, we didn't see any direct action, but I palled up with a marine major who was going to do the forerunner of a commando landing south, at a place called [Roufiske????], south of Dakar, seventeen miles down the coast - and, er, I said, you know, "can you manage to take me with you? because I'd like to do this operation, it's a far more effective job you're going to do than what these wallahs are gonna do - because they're not going to get anywhere." And he said yes he would take me with him, and we became friends and it was all sort of organised. But, in the meanwhile, when we sort of moved out from Freetown, de Gaulle sent off from the aircraft carrier, (which I think was either... I think it was [Argos????] at the time) er, a free French Navy fouring[?] captain - um, in a civilian aeroplane, which had been specially brought for the occasion - French civilian aeroplane - to fly to Dakar, land and parley with the Commanding General there. This poor chap was unarmed, but he was in uniform, so there was no question of shooting him as a spy or anything like that. The aircraft was unarmed and when he landed they just took him ashore, he explained his mission and they shot him. News didn't get back to us for, I suppose, nearly twenty four hours that this had happened and, of course, we were all absolutely furious and disgusted with this kind of Vichy French behaviour, and could see no reason - I mean I knew this Captain, he was also a good friend of mine, a hell of a nice bloke - and totally sincere and, you know, wouldn't try and twist anybody on anything. So, then.... I only found out later - we made one or two sort of attacks round Dakar with battleships - Barham and one or two other ships we had around, the names of which I don't always recall, er, and a few shells were fired from a ship, which we'd allowed to go through the straits of Gibraltar, um, a French ship sailing out of Toulon I suppose, and made it's way down the coast and joined this Vichy General. She was firing fifteen inch (or the French equivalent of fifteen inch) shells at us, and eventually I discovered later in Barham myself that she'd actually hit Barham and they didn't know it!

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles].

**David Prosser:** Anyway, that's another story, another time. Er, and that's really all that happened with that lot. So, as soon as we got back after this total debacle, er, I went to go ashore and make a Naval signal, because in my particular capacity, although I was paid and employed officially by Movietone, er, I was only able to communicate with Britain by making Naval signals to the

admiralty from a Naval base or something, you see, and I used to make them, er, for Movietone through Kimmins, or whatever, you see, and they were addressed slightly more officially in the Naval parlance. And, er, I had this signal drafted in my hand, and I was stopped at the gangway from going ashore, so I said 'by whose order do you stop me? I am a free civilian. I'm under orders from Admiralty, not you 'bloomin' pongo wallahs. [Chuckles].

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles].

**David Prosser:** Or whatever it was in French. I mean I could speak adequate French in those days. So they said "right". [Chuckles]. They took me to General [Spiers??], who was the British, er, Liaison Officer to General de Gaulle...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah.

**David Prosser:** ...and, of whom Macmillan, in my presence, said to me one day...many years later..."Trouble with that fella was, bit too British for the French and a bit too French for the British - bit of a Jew, you know!" And I thought, coming from Macmillan, this was a strange thing - but I divert. However, Spiers[?] was dead trouble. He said, "you can't go ashore without my permission, unless I read that signal first." And I said, "you've got absolutely no right. I am under the direct command of Admiralty." So he said, "well, you won't get ashore to make it then." So I said, "alright, give me ten minutes." And I went away and drafted one that would pass Spiers[?] and kept the other copy in my pocket - my original signal - which was very, very critical of the whole operation and the security breaks and everything else...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...er, which I considered, as a patriot in those days, you know - it was one's duty to report. Total bloody incompetence on the part of the pongos, starting with Spiers[?] in particular, and whoever organised the convoy, and de Gaulle also, you see. Anyway, this went back. I never heard how Kimmins or the Admiralty received it, or whether anybody other than Kimmins of any importance saw it, but various other people were saying the same thing, apparently. Anyway, that was the end of that and I eventually made passage back to Gibraltar in HMS Barham, which was a 1915-class battleship. Er, and there I palled up with a Marine General, um, Marine Brigadier, rather - because we used to sunbathe on the quarterdeck when we were at sea going out to the Atlantic. And, er he'd had some concern in this Marine operation that I'd hoped to get involved with. (Are you all right for tape?)

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And, um, he doesn't really come into the story I suppose anywhere, except that he was a useful contact later on in Gibraltar, merely to keep in touch with what was going on elsewhere - because although technically, you see, I was a Naval correspondent, this transpired much more later on in years - I was fully prepared wherever possible, if things were a bit quite with the Navy, to go and film with the Army or the Royal Air Force, or any other service for that matter. Um, hit Gibraltar, I think went to sea on one or two Malta convoys in Barham and on the way up, I palled up with the captain of the Walrus aircraft which was the spotter aircraft for

Barham and was an amphibious flying boat, it was a strange thing in these days. A very useful thing, and so as soon as we got to Gibraltar there wasn't very much to do, other than wait about for the next convoy, which was forever - or go and bathe, where I made friends with a dolphin, and things like that.

(Interview momentarily stopped - Prosser's wife enters the room).

**David Prosser:** This, um aircraft pilot/captain, I can't remember his name (again I could look it up). But, he was very helpful, because he and I used to do anti-submarine patrols almost daily over the straits of Gibraltar and out into the Atlantic, and thanks to this exception of my presence on board, um, of his aircraft, I got my first good story from Gibraltar. On the very first day, I think, we went to sea on one of these searches, about a day or two after we actually hit Gibraltar from Freetown, West Africa. We were flying west into the Atlantic, down the straits and, I don't know whether he or I spotted it first, but anyway I suddenly spotted three submarines steaming on the surface westward through the straits with French markings on their super-structure. So we talked about this and I said, "Well look, be a pal and dive on 'em and let's get some pictures of 'em, to see if the blighters dive. I bet they're Vichy ones going down to Dakar." He said, "yes, you're probably right old boy." So, we did all this and I filmed them and all this sort of thing, got close ups of the crew loafing about on deck and that sort of thing, and they made no attempt to dive. Well they couldn't have been anything to do with us, because we didn't - we, the Allies - of course, as such, hadn't got any particular contact at all with French submarines other than Vichy ones. At any-rate we hung about for these and did what we could in the way of filming, and nothing very much happened. They finally disappeared out into the Atlantic and turned left, as we'd expected, and then they dived - so they were obviously going down to Dakar to joint this crooked General. The interesting part about the story was, since we hadn't got a story just on these craft by themselves, er, I think it was one Italian submarine, then appeared in the Atlantic heading east, straight into the straits. And, we identified it was an Italian submarine by the type, er, you know, from the groins and that sort of thing, you have these identification things. Um, and it was typically Italian, I mean this occurred all the way through the war with the Italians, in every case I came up against them practically, they were sort of continually dropping clangers. They stayed on the surface, and here was a hostile, potentially hostile aircraft, loaded with bombs, small bombs in those days...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...very small. I don't know even if we had any depth charges or anything of that kind, on this particular operation, and, er, [laughs], he didn't dive - so we dived on him, just to put the fear of God into him. We thought it would be interesting at any rate. So, we filmed this and, of course, he did do a rather sort of half hearted crash dive, and the water was so clear and calm - I can see it to this day, actually - that you could see him quite clearly underwater, and he was only twenty or thirty feet down - I've forgotten what the depth of the straits were at that time. But the extraordinary thing to us was, you see, he was probably a mile or two off shore from the Spanish coast on one side and the coast of Morocco, I suppose, on the south side - and he turned right. Well there were a lot of steep, rocky cliffs on his right, which was on the coast of Morocco, and it wasn't much better on the left either around Cape [Chapelgar??] and places like that. [Laughs]. And he continued to turn right and steered south, straight into this rocky thing. So

we kept filming this, you see, because he was just visible - all right, it was in fairly long shot, because I didn't have very long lenses in those days....and then suddenly, as expected, when we thought he was going to hit some of the rocks, he surfaced in an awful hurry, looking very confused and a bit stupid, and sort of hung about for a bit and finished up by going in circles just offshore, so he'd obviously damaged something. At any rate, he surfaced again, and managed to get himself on a rough sort of zig-zag course instead of a straight one, and tried to head east again, and the upshot of it was that we filmed him going along in this rather erratic fashion and going into the port of Tangiers, I suppose it was - limping in there - and we filmed him by staying just outside the territorial limits. I think I was able to use up to a three or four inch lens. I filmed him going into port and actually going in between the pontoons and whatever, and going along the side, and that was the end of that job. Now he.... Is this getting too long-winded and boring?

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, no, that's fine.

**David Prosser:** He was able to, legally, to stay there, I think, for forty eight hours, under International Law, while he conducted repairs, and after that, he had to put to sea again - otherwise he was breaking International Law. So we had a break and a sort of afternoon off, I think we did have another aircraft up, an RAF one up, just to check that he didn't try and come out any earlier, and I went along in the next RAF aircraft, which was probably the [indecipherable??] of the next day. Er, an RAF London Flying Boat again, and thought well we'll probably get the blighter coming out. because meanwhile we'd had destroyers, a couple of destroyers, hanging about outside, waiting to get him when he came out, you see. Anyway, he hung around for at least forty eight hours, and bang on the deadline - and by this time the destroyers had been busy - taken off on something else - and I think I was still in the London aircraft, not the Royal Navy one, but the RAF one by this time. Er, by this time that he was due to come out, we were flying overhead - well, just offshore, three miles or whatever the limit was offshore, and, sure enough, he parted from the shore, dropped his lines and started to make his way out, and we thought right, now what the hell do we do? You know, we'd been calling destroyers right, left and centre, saying "for Christ's sake, he's cast off, you know, come and get him." And you know, they were all too busy out in the Atlantic with something else, so they couldn't. So we kept filming, and he came on out, and he got as far as the mouth of the harbour and another one surfaced, another Italian submarine, surfaced alongside him, going in. And he just turned round and they both went back into harbour, and that was the end of that story.

**Alan Lawson:** Tell me, how did you get yourself back?

**David Prosser:** Back to where?

**Alan Lawson:** London.

**David Prosser:** Ha, that's a hell of long story - that was ages later. I had to break all manner of rules again, it was the 'old boy network'.

**Alan Lawson:** You were stacking up stuff to get back.

**David Prosser:** No, no, I was shipping the stuff back. Oh no, I forget how I used to send it, either by.... no, we had aircraft in those days, used to fly back from their flying [loads??]. Er, sorry, you mean me getting back or material getting back?

**Alan Lawson:** No, material getting back.

**David Prosser:** Material getting back, I used to send off, oh, I think the Admiralty or the Navy office in Gibraltar used to get it off for me. Anyway, it used to go back by aircraft and reasonably quickly.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** But I never got a Naval report, I never got a report saying it was a good or bad story from Movietone.

**Alan Lawson:** [Over interviewee] No, no, no. But tell me, the limitations actually with the Newman, er, it's two hundred footer, OK, you could do the two hundred foot on the one wind...

**David Prosser:** Yup.

AL:...with a bit of luck. Um, did you have much trouble with your Newman at all?

**David Prosser:** Ha! Quite incredible. My Newman was never serviced throughout the whole, I think, seven years of the war, or whatever it was - anyway, that I had it, and it was number 203 or 205.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, it was one of the early ones.

**David Prosser:** One of the early ones.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And it stood up incredibly well and the only trouble I ever had with it was when I, later on during this period in Gibraltar, joined Ark Royal and I was filming a lot of air attacks on a Malta convoy, and I was standing, rather foolishly, between two 4.5 inch guns on the flight deck, re-loading. And as I re-loaded, they opened up with the 4.5's and the camera stopped, first time ever.

**Alan Lawson:** Really.

**David Prosser:** Jam you see, I thought: Oh what's happened now? The blast from the 4.5-inch guns had blown the film out of the gate.

**Alan Lawson:** Good Lord!

**David Prosser:** And I found the gate - you know an old Newman gate is propped open - you see, so I cleared that and got further away from the guns and everything went alright - so as far as the camera was concerned, no problem.

**Alan Lawson:** And, again, now, you know all these long bottles and, er, zoom lenses, what was your maximum telephoto?

**David Prosser:** 6 inch.

**Alan Lawson:** You had a 6-inch?

**David Prosser:** Yeah, three times magnification normally, that was about all.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** No zooms, no nothing. No, this was the whole problem, I mean you couldn't film at sea with a 6 inch lens normally. You couldn't film in the air. I didn't normally shoot on more than a 3 or 4-inch lens at sea or in the air.

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, hmm.

**David Prosser:** Occasionally, in very still air-conditions you would use a 6, but I don't remember using it appreciably - except on that submarine thing.

**Alan Lawson:** How long were you on the, er, the, um, war correspondent with the Navy?

**David Prosser:** Initially, until January 10th 1941.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** Because, er, I kept sending very crooked, rough, rude cables back to my office saying "unless you send a sound crew shortly, I'm gonna come back." And Tony Kimmins used to send polite signals back, "David, recommend you stay where you are!" um and this sort of thing, and they didn't send one anyway. I was doing a hell of a lot of coverage. I was flying in Swordfish from Ark Royal, doing Malta convoys, and doing all manner of stories and getting loads of stuff back. But we really did need, once I joined Ark Royal, which was a very stable platform, relatively, we really did need a sound crew to be able to talk to some of the officers and the [ratings???) and whatever, and get a story on more personalised lines. And, in detail, of what we were doing on a Malta convoy. I mean there was a lot of fleet action going on....

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** You know, enemy attacks and heaven knows what - let alone aircraft or submarines and D boats. Um, so they wouldn't send one. Well, by January 10th, I'd made friends with the captain of a town class cruiser, and I can't remember the name... 'Birmingham'? Yes I think it was 'Birmingham'. But this is where my history goes adrift, because I'm not dead sure

whether this is before or after the Singapore debacle. No, I think, no.... 'Birmingham' I must have met later when I was in the western Med. Anyway, I was a naval correspondent, in reply to your question. I was a Naval correspondent more or less until I got back, and then Movietone put me back on the old sort of Downing Street 'hump' - standing outside number 10, or the foreign office, again, or whatever you see. The Navy didn't fire me. I still retain my naval correspondent's pass and everything...

**Alan Lawson:** [Over interviewee]. Oh, yes, sure, yes.

**David Prosser:** I've still got it today, actually. But they just said, you know "you can't really do this, we can't spare a sound crew to go outside, um of UK" I mean, let's face it, they'd only got two blokes, there was only Paul Wyand and Alf Tunwell, and it wasn't towards...after 1943 that Paul Wyand went out to Italy, as a sound crew. So, they weren't very pleased, but much to my surprise, after a bit of the usual sort of 'humping' of this sort of thing, they did, in fact, attach me to the army, with a view to going back out to the Middle East this time. Er, and it was a very strange change to come back to UK after being master of everything you survey and being able to ask everybody, from an admiral to a naval seaman to do what you wanted - to be, sort of stuck back into sort of Downing Street routine, as I call it. Anyway, they then put me to go with the Middle East forces, which would be the Eighth Army and that sort of thing, I suppose. And, in March, (I'd covered air raids in London and that sort of thing, quite a lot, in the meanwhile), but in March '41 I again took ship from Glasgow this time, I think, and we'd barely got outside the coast when something happened, the ship was damaged and we had to go back, and it was another month before I got off, back in April eventually, heading for South Africa this time, er, with a view to getting up, because that was the only way to get up to Egypt - you couldn't fly it or anything, because of the Italians, and you couldn't sail through the 'Med.', again because of the Italians. And this time I'd got a load of other war correspondents with me, um, whose names I can't list, and, er, they taught me a great deal about a good many things - they were all newspaper men of considerable experience, and, um, I don't remember the name of the ship I went out there in even, actually - I don't know whether it's important. Um, you look as though you might be about to change rolls...

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, not yet.

**David Prosser:** You're OK, are you?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, thank you.

**David Prosser:** Anyway, we sailed through the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, um, with few trials and tribulations on the way. I learned Arabic on the way out, or had a course in it anyway, which I thought might be useful. And, um, learned a good deal about wine, because this was another luxury liner which had suddenly been converted to a troop ship and all my correspondent friends knew a good deal about wine and they'd got a very good cellar. So I was living pretty well on the whole, except we were cramped a bit tightly in there. I shared a cabin with Ronnie Noble, um, of Universal, who was also going out there, and Terry Ashwood of Pathe, of whom the less said the better, because I shall libel the fella, if I say any more.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles].

**David Prosser:** He was the only one that never actually filmed a wartime action - that's enough to be said - whereas Ronnie and I were there, when the troops were going in, we went in with them, and this sort of thing. Anyway, we got to Capetown, had an enormously luxurious reception there from the South Africans, and I was already prejudiced, because I had become friends with [??? Gallacher???], who was then war correspondent for the, I think the Daily Mail at that time, and he was a South African and he induced my permanent prejudice against the South African treatment of Negro's in South Africa, as a result of getting to know him and him sort of showing me around Capetown and later in Durban and so on.

**Alan Lawson:** Right, I'm going to stop now.

[End of Side One] Tape 1, Side 2

**Alan Lawson:** You're now in Durban.

**David Prosser:** So, I've now reached Durban, er, and I'm living in luxury in the Durban Club, which is about the top club in South Africa, um, you know, senior officers, senior army officers, or, you name it, big bureaucrats and everything else, with my own servant. And waiting, I think, the best part of a month, for a C Class flying boat flight on the old Imperial Airways, up to Cairo. I forget exactly how long it was, it might be less than that - anyway I had to wait quite a long time there. And again, found my way around and learned a lot about South Africa. But the interesting thing and the reason I mentioned South Africa in particular is that it's the only country in the world in fifty years that I've refused to work in, and that includes Iron Curtain countries, South America, you name it - North America, and everything else. And they were so... the police were so stroppy there, that I said "if that's your attitude, if I can't tell the truth, I'm not interested, I'm not shooting" and I cabled the office, to that effect. I don't know whether the cable was censored or not, but any rate, that was the fact. I didn't shoot a single story in South Africa as a result of it...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** ...other than on board a British ship. Anyway, I then joined this old C Class flying boat to fly up, which was very interesting, they used to stop - it took four days to get from Durban to Cairo.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, lovely trip that.

**David Prosser:** You know it well? Yes, it was er, you know, down ashore every night, this sort of thing, luxury meals and this sort of thing.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And, um, by comparison with modern flying standards, I mean it was incredible, that sort of flight, it was an education in itself. So much so, that I don't know whether you

experienced it, but it's worth mentioning, that if the captain of the aircraft, if he saw a nice load of thunder clouds (somewhere near the Victoria Falls, in this particular case) he would take the aircraft up to the top of the bank of cloud, whatever it was, twenty five thousand feet or more, and then zoom down the cloud...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...just sort of, it couldn't have been twenty five thousand feet because we weren't pressurised...well, we weren't supplied with oxygen but we were pressurised a bit I think. And flatten out and then as you flattened out, there was the Victoria Falls....

**Alan Lawson:** Lovely, yes...

**David Prosser:** ...on the side, you know. And you could do that sort of thing as an airline pilot and get away with it, and enthuse your passengers with it. I arrived in Cairo - it was a total dead loss for weeks on end. I couldn't get any sense out of the army, I made all the usual contacts through GHQ Cairo and I kept on saying "well there's only one thing I'm interested in and that's getting out in the desert with the army." And they had not laid anything on whatever, nor would they lay anything on, as far as I could tell. So I said "well this is ridiculous." So I cabled the office because a chap I mentioned earlier on, my old school friend Norman Fisher, was already attached to the Navy in Alexandria and he didn't like it, because he'd been with the Army in France in the western approaches in the...(see, memory goes again)...what was the kind of war it was in those days? It never happened, during...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, in the 'phoney war' period.

**David Prosser:** 'Phoney war'... that was the phrase I was looking for...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Well, he'd been there in the 'phoney' war and he had been with the Army and he was quite happy to stay with the Army. So, um, I cabled the office (and got him to agree - because we met up from time to time - he was only too delighted) that we change jobs. And rather to our surprise, within about a week or so, the office had confirmed this, so we duly did change and there was no problem. I went back and discovered one or two destroyer captains - by destroyer captains, I mean [fouring??] captains, flotilla leader captains, um and that sort of thing, up there - cruiser squadron admirals and people that I'd come across before - made contact with them and, of course, I was in. And from then on, I worked officially through the Fleet Press Liaison Officer, who hardly ever told me a thing of any importance, except to stick me on a wrong ship. I'm trying to abbreviate this a bit now, to stop it getting too long winded, as it seems as though it is getting. All that I did through the Fleet Press Liaison Officer was occasionally go to sea on a sweep with destroyers out on the wing, where you didn't even see half the other destroyers most of the day, let alone going on a sweep with cruisers and that sort of thing, where you hardly saw the rest of the fleet for the rest of the day, because you were so far away, and this was ridiculous. Er, and I then made arrangements, and got there OK, with one or two cruiser captains, who would be more or less in the centre of the operations during sweeps or any other

kind of, Malta-convoys, or whatever. They'd be more or less in the centre of operation and if you picked a sort of lead or tail or middle cruiser, out of three of them, you were still likely to see more of it than anybody else...you know, destroyer out on the wing. And er, they agreed to take me, and I said, "You sure you don't need a sort of authority from FPLO?" and they said, "Oh, that blighter - he was only a rat catcher in civilian life!"

[DP and AL laugh together]

**David Prosser:** Which was perfectly true...I found out later from direct interview. So, from then on, things began to pick up, er... but in the meanwhile I'd palled up with Captain Mac, who was a [fouring??] captain flotilla leader of the, I think, fourteenth destroyer flotilla. Now when things were a bit quiet, there wasn't anything much you could film in that line, but Captain Mac was so helpful and co-operative, that I used to go to sea with him, officially on a sweep, and he would put the entire flotilla through a closed up formation act, for my benefit you see....

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...so it meant that you could cut this in with subsequent attacks, convoys, or whatever. And he was a most incredible seaman actually. He was the chap who made a signal to Cunningham, who was the commanding admiral at the time, at the Battle of Matapan, saying "out of ammunition, propose to blow"... some Italian battleship's... "stern off with depth charges," which was an unheard of thing, because it was liable to do your own stern as well, in.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Anyway, he was that sort of chap, you see, and he did everything for me. He'd have his destroyers sort of sweeping alongside by the dozen for me, and this sort of thing, and we were able to have all this cut in stuff that you would use for years later, to go with a battle scene. And he was enormously helpful, and a little bit later on I saw the kind of seaman that he was - apart from what I'd seen already - because I went up to Cyprus with him, when things were a bit quiet after the Crete debacle, and we were unloading more troops up to Cyprus. And, I think I went up in Jarves[???]. And the port in Cyprus is rather like a sort of fairly narrow room, only about two ships or perhaps three ships wide...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...with a dead-end, and it's only about a ship and a half long. And he approached this harbour dead in line with the harbour walls at twenty knots! And you thought, God, you know - I know he's a marvellous seaman, but can he stop in time? And, sure enough, he sort of goes straight in, stops ten feet from the end of the dock, dead on the long side and the lines are out before you know where you are, he was that kind of seaman, marvellous gentleman. He became very famous later on, for other reasons, and then poor chap was killed in some ghastly air accident, I think. Anyway, it was he who taught me a lot about the Navy and how to work with the Navy, and from then on, if I wasn't going to sea with him, which wasn't very often after all this stuff had been done, it was Malta convoys, and they were fairly routine, and it was attacks and sinkings and this sort of thing. But, but this time, it may be of interest to note, that

we'd had a thing called the Newsreel Association formed in London, I think by the newsreel companies, with the result that John Turner, who was also still a Naval correspondent out there, working for Gaumont, and I, used always to arrange never to be in the same ship on a Malta convoy or any other big operation - with the result that we could virtually shoot without any communication and no VHF communication or anything like that. But we could shoot stories which would cut in with each other, in the sense that he could be doing close ups from, say, Cleopatra and I would be in Naiad doing long shots of the enemy fleet, or something like that, you see - and this would tie in.

**Alan Lawson:** About when was this, what year - can you remember?

**David Prosser:** '41.

**Alan Lawson:** '41, I see.

**David Prosser:** This would be from about June '41 I should think. And, um, this went on, um, with Malta convoys every month and the odd sweep and this sort of thing. Um, I don't remember what date the [De-brook???) commander attack was - I think it was probably in '42 in the summer, but I'm not sure about that. That was the only one we weren't actually allowed on and I had a frightful row with the Navy about that, because the only chap who managed to go was Larry Allen of the Associated Press, who was a very loud mouthed middle west American, and um, he managed to go, and, well like most of the ships who went actually, he was sunk, but he was captured, and he finished up a few days later broadcasting for the Italian radio - which didn't go down very well. So, that was the only time they actually stopped us going, but otherwise I used to ignore the Fleet Press Liaison Officer and go where I wanted. During, in the meanwhile, one of the things that broke, when things were a bit quiet, between these naval operations at sea - there was quite an interesting one, which I picked up. (And again, I don't want to repeat all this if you're picking anything out of the war museum tapes).

**Alan Lawson:** No we're not, no, no, no.

**David Prosser:** Well this is where intelligence work, it demonstrates the use of intelligence work amongst newsreel men working on their own. And I would like, later on, to talk about this business of being on our own, because I have costed the way a present similar operation to what I was doing then, would nowadays to do the same thing cost about twelve lives and three helicopters. Anyway, I was in the Naval intelligence office, around the time that Rommel was getting a bit close to Alexandria, and so the intelligence office had shifted to Port Said. And I knew the chap - he was an ex comic of some sort - but anyway he was a lieutenant commander in charge of that office. I mean, I knew the Chief of Naval intelligence, Captain [Busfield???) who was a [fouring???) captain, but actually a retired admiral who'd been brought back. Anyway, I was in this chap's office for some totally different motive and, er, I heard him say, on the telephone, after I'd been in there some time, so it wasn't a question of a secret of private conversation: "No I'm afraid you can't speak to Major Quill, he's gone North" - which immediately told me there was a story, up in Beirut probably, or possibly Haifa - er, I didn't say very much and I don't remember anything much that I said to this chap, just gave him the story and he didn't sort of tell me any more. Anyway, I went out of the office, checked a few of my

contacts and found that we had sunk an Italian submarine with women on board and the poor wretched women had been stuck out (when they were on the point of capture) they had been blown out through the torpedo tubes and a lot of their underclothes and things had been left in the boat. And she'd been captured by a minesweeper, or something like that, and (I've got a record of her name somewhere, but I haven't had time to turn it all up), and taken in tow to Beirut. So, I took a flight up to Beirut, [laughs] which appeared to baffle the war museum questioner somewhat, when he said "how did you manage to do it?" and I said 'well, you know, I just booked a flight on Missa Airways (laughs). Anyway I flew up to Beirut, with all the gear, and with me, as a passenger, was a German, (whose name I've forgotten also, but I could recall it, given a long enough time) who was going to do the interviewing in Italian, the debriefing, or whatever it is, of this Italian crew. So he and I had a long chat and I said you know "this is a funny kind of business" and he said "oh, you know, you can expect anything of the Italians." Well, I'd already discovered this in the Malta convoys and the way they behaved in the air...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yeah, yeah..

**David Prosser:** ...apart from the way they behaved in the desert as well. Anyway, we got there and I started to cover the story, and then I got a clamp from the Navy, because they wouldn't let me take even any purchased underclothes, let alone the originals, into the submarine. I was able to film in the submarine and show the torpedo tubes and everything else, but no panties hanging outside of the torpedo tube shutters, and, er, I mean I saw the point, because we all felt sorry for the Italians, as I tried to explain a minute ago - you know, we were all inclined to think what stupid idiots they were and this sort of thing - and the Navy thought well, really, we can't show them up as being quite so stupid, let alone cruel, um, and so the story didn't go down all that well, apart from just getting the capture and the ship coming ashore and the boat ashore and some of the crew and things like that. But it was interesting to me that one could pick up a story like that...

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...absolutely solo, from a trans-conversation, alright albeit in the intelligence office, but if I hadn't known who Major Quill was and what he did...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes... yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** ...I knew he was a sort of top intelligence agent and that sort of thing, not because of any breach of security, but because one knew a lot of the top intelligence people and very often had drinks with them and that sort of thing, and nobody broke security, but quite often you were able to give them information yourself. Er, and that's the sort of thing that went on. Now what is interesting about that is the fact that I was damned near drummed out of the service as a result of that discovery, because I didn't tell the Naval press office I was going up north - I sent them cables and that sort of thing, but I couldn't reach the normal man on the telephone, so I merely sent a cable, sort of "going north of Beirut on a story" - or something like that and later on (I've got the paperwork up there in the loft now), reams of stuff, giving me no end of rockets from far more senior levels, (like commanders) than the chap who was the Fleet Press Liaison Officer, as to why I did it. Now the interesting follow-up to that (if you regard this as interesting

- it's interesting to me) is that I was suspended as a Naval correspondent, by the Navy, by the Special Investigation Branch, which is a very sort of critical kind of thing - um, basically because I'd broke this story. They never actually said that. What they blamed it on was this: at that time I was living, after we'd been moved from Alexandria to Port Said, by order of the Navy, because of Rommel's proximity to Alexandria, I'd been living in the Eastern Exchange Hotel in Port Said, which was a pretty downmarket sort of place, but it was only second on the list from the top, the top one was the Casino Palace and I couldn't originally get in there - most of the Naval staff were in there. On this particular day, a few days after this episode had happened, when I'd done the filming in Beirut, I was walking out with porters galore and my half or three quarters of a ton of camera gear, film stock baggage, and you name it. Out of the Eastern Exchange, into a series of taxis, to move to the Casino Palace. And there was a Navy commander's wife sitting on the terrace, having coffee - whom I knew, I'd known her in Alexandria, we'd all lived in the same hotel there too - and she said "Good Lord, David, where are you going?" And I said "oh I'm getting out, they're coming in at Damietta" - which doesn't mean anything to anybody now, but Damietta was a sort of [???]up on the estuary, which implied that possibly the enemy were landing troops there, or something like that. And she said "no, really?" - obviously knowing I was joking, and I said "No, of course not. I'm just going to the Casino Palace Hotel." Now, apparently I'd been watched by an SIB man, who was presumably sitting on the terrace, shadowing me, and he'd heard the first part of this conversation, and at the point I'd said they're coming in at Damietta, he shot off and went back to Navy headquarters, or wherever he was based. I met the chap years later, chap called Sketch, met him at a party in London....

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** ...and, er, he reported all this and said "the fella's suspect," you see. Spreading alarm and despondency was the crime in those days, and er...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Anyway there was a sort of, either at the same time I was having a frightful row with the captain of the fleet or somebody like that - by mail, because the chap wouldn't see me, whereas any other ranking captain or admiral would normally see me at very short notice - and I wanted to get hold of a vehicle or something like that at the time. Anyway, I moved to the Casino Palace and on suspension, the amusing part was that I knew all the Naval staff pretty well, one normally used to drink with them in the evenings - and half of them used to cut me stone dead every time we met down below in the lounge or the bar or whatever. And the other half treated me perfectly as normal you see. They all knew I'd been suspended temporarily, but by this time Admiral Harwood had taken over from Admiral Cunningham, as Commander in Chief for the Eastern Med. - Mediterranean Fleet, and eventually, er, Harwood had me up and said, um, "alright, you're in the clear Prosser. You're a very enthusiastic young man in your job, just watch it next time and don't upset these bloody SIB boys", you see, and we had a drink together on it [laughs], and I was duly reinstated. But during that period, about five or six weeks, I wasn't actually able to operate at sea, and whether it was during that period or what, I forget, but I then went off and did stories in the desert with the Army and I made a ten minute film with the RAF about the fighter defence of Alexandria.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** The RAF one was quite interesting because it involved single seat fighters, which were I think Hurricanes in those days before the Spitfire days...

**Alan Lawson:** Uh Hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...and I was lighting again, the whole kind of operation at a base in the desert east of Alexandria, tented accommodation only, and I was lighting the operations room with mirrors, photo floods and, occasionally, where we had a power supply (if I could pick up a long enough power supply [chuckles] without getting too much voltage dropped), the odd photo flood you see. But I was lighting all this sort of stuff with mirrors. And we came to the point where we wanted [obs??] for the usual stuff in the aircraft, which we couldn't get because they were all single seat aircraft and we couldn't get a two seat aircraft to film another aeroplane, so it had to all be done ground to air, and we also needed two shots in particular. One was a head-on shot, as though from the position of an enemy aeroplane being shot at by the eight guns on this aircraft, which I stunted by jacking the stern of the aircraft up so she was firing horizontally...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** ...and putting a camera, after checking very carefully what the matching was between the guns' firing lines, putting a camera between the two and doing that at night with the tracer you see, every third round was a tracer. And filmed that all right, no problem. Then we had to get the JU88 being shot down and crashing, which wasn't quite so easy, because it wasn't often you even saw one, let alone shot it down.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** So, this is when the services were so incredibly co-operative. They built me a model (at my request), they built me a model of the JU88 to scale and everything else - beautifully done - and they said "well how are you going to get on about the petrol tanks bursting into flame when it crashes?" And I said, "Oh that's easy, old boy, we'll put a bit of (I forget what we used, paraffin or methylated spirit, or what), in the engine ourselves, with a little wick, so that at least one of them is flaming when it comes down." And they'd got a flagpole in the ground, you see. And I said, "We rig a line from that flag pole to the ground at a suitable angle, and slide the aircraft down it, and when it hits the ground, the liquid will burst forth, there'll be a slight flame as it comes down, as though an engine's on fire, and, um, when it hits the ground the whole thing'll burst into flame." "Oh marvellous, old boy! Just the job!" It was made of wood, of course...and it worked! It worked so well that when the other units of the RAF saw the story, they said, "Well they haven't shot down a [JU88] for years!" They never said, you know, "Oh, that's a stunted shot" or "it's no damn good!" - they really took it as real, so it can't have been all that bad. The story went out quite well, actually.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** So that was, um, you know, another case of branching off to do something else...um...as far as the rest of the Naval part's concerned, there's not a lot to it really, because the remaining stuff - apart from, I'd told you about the submarine film, didn't I?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Apart from the ensuing Malta convoys, there wasn't really very much more with them, but I do...

[break in recording]

**David Prosser:** ... with the Army....

**Alan Lawson:** The Malta convoys were pretty hectic, weren't they? It was a hectic time, and I can remember seeing....

**David Prosser:** Oh it was very hectic. I mean, you didn't sleep for five days and five nights, you were on watch the whole time. I mean, if one did, one dropped off for five or ten minutes on a pile of bunting on the bridge, because you were under E-Boat attack, submarine attack, aircraft all day - and periodically the Italian fleet.

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, hmm.

**David Prosser:** The best one I got on that was the, um, Battle of Sirte Gulf, which was quite effective and was three quarter back- lit with a superb sky...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...with a fairly choppy sea, so it looked like one of these posters at 'Wilkinsons' one used to see years and years ago....

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles] Yes, yeah...

**David Prosser:** ...and the Italian fleet really turned out in full, and we were laying smoke screens and swirling all over the shop as well, and, um, all you got was a shell burst near you and the occasional - I mean the Italian fleet was fifteen miles away - well from high up in a ship you could actually see their gun burst, but that was about as far as you could see...literally just sort of red flashes on the horizon - so one didn't actually see a lot of that - um, but there was some very good stuff. There were the destroyers belting suddenly out of the smoke screen and going in and torpedoing and some Italian ship, and they torpedoed about one battle ship and three cruisers in the course of that battle. And, while we didn't see an awful lot of the sinking and that sort of thing - because we never closed the Italian fleet that much - they were too busy turning away and running away most of the time, actually! [chuckles]. So we weren't able to get all that close to them...otherwise we'd probably have sunk a good deal more. But, no, once they started getting incoming shells making hits, they turned away very fast and we had to get the convoy through, so we couldn't really detach a sort of battle squadron to go and sink them. But the biggest snag

about it was, you could never go into Malta. I'd been into this earlier on, because I thought, "well, it might be a good idea to go in, in a merchant ship for a change and do the whole thing from their point of view," you see.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** And bear in mind that about two thirds of the merchant ships were being sunk on the way in...

**Alan Lawson:** Hm.

**David Prosser:** and I was told that they would "not, repeat not," allow me into a merchant ship because it would be going ashore in Malta, if it got there, and because I would be stuck there, possibly for the rest of the war, because there was no way of getting me out...and my duties lay between Alexandria, Turkey, South Africa and Iran...literally. That was the sort of area for a Middle East correspondent...and, um, so I didn't ever get that far, either from the western end with Ark Royal or Barham, or from the eastern end with Cunningham's lot.

**Alan Lawson:** Tell me, did you have any stop troubles at all, from heat... or....?

**David Prosser:** Not too much....except in Freetown on the earlier thing over the Dakar show. There it was a bit much, because the humidity was about one hundred per cent and it was very difficult in a changing bag in a hot cabin without air conditioning or anything like that. You found the emulsion was coming off in your hands while you were trying to change the rolls...

**Alan Lawson:** Sticky, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...and with coal dust all over the place as well, because we were a coaling ship. But apart from that, I don't remember any in the Med., because usually you've got sort of cool places in the ship...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And in the Ark, I mean I used to keep the stuff in the fridge...they gave me that kind of facility. I had a marvellous cabin in the Ark, which might amuse people a little bit these days, because they don't know what de-gousing is, I imagine. I don't know whether you know?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Well you'd remember what it is...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** The de-gousing cables in the Ark ran through the best cabin in the ship...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]. Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...and for some odd reason, the Navy was firmly of the belief - the Naval officers were firmly of the belief that this had a sterilising effect on men, if you went near them. And I said "I don't believe it...I was brought up as a scientist, and, you know, let me have the cabin...there's room for all my gear and everything else." "Good idea!" So they were delighted that somebody would occupy this cabin...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...and there was no basic problem at all and it didn't happen to me, as you know, and that worked very well. But at that sort of time, going back to the film stop point, this meant that I had full facilities...I don't think I actually had a fridge in that cabin...not like modern Trusthouse standards or anything like that, but I could easily access to a fridge, not very far away.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And what's more, in Ark Royal, (something I forgot to mention earlier on) they had a Newman-Sinclair.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh!

**David Prosser:** And while they had a Photographic Officer, who I think was a Lieutenant Bob Everett in those days...um, subsequently took over Mole Richardson or somebody, in later years, when he had to leave the Navy in a hurry. He had sufficient control to be able to let me use that Newman whenever I wanted. So I basically...while the lenses and things were not compatible, as you remember the Newman lenses were not interchangeable...

**Alan Lawson:** No, no.

**David Prosser:** It meant that I could use that Newman at any time and if I ran out of my two or three magazines, whatever it was I had for the other camera, I could always pick up this Newman and carry on with the filming on an attack, you see. Which was extremely valuable, and it had a twelve inch lens, which, it wasn't often you could use it, but um, once or twice came in handy. And, er, that was a great facility, and I always wonder what happened to that camera when she was finally sunk, because it will undoubtedly have been rescued and put down as 'sunk!'

**Alan Lawson:** Um, now...you came out of the Navy didn't you?

**David Prosser:** Um...

**Alan Lawson:** Er...as a war correspondent...sorry [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** Yes, about...I think it was November, the office told me I was gonna come home. I'd been beefing about it, because I'd gone out there for a limited period and, again, it had been over-extended, and I thought there was something I could do elsewhere. No... the fleet had been rather decimated and there wasn't a lot going on, other than Malta convoys, and they 'd been

done to death for two years solid. So they warned me I was coming home, and, um, eventually I took ship and came round by South Africa, and, in fact, I started to write a book based on a load of experiences, but as fiction. Um, because I was coming home in an incredibly ancient ship with boiler trouble...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** Um, I think it was the Franconia, of whom one's heard more, recently. Anyway, she was only able to travel very, very slowly...and, um...she was going so slowly that in the Madagascar channel, where the knot sets at about three to four knots, we were only able to make two knots against it on the way down to Durban...er...and we then went round Durban and Cape Town. I had to get another ship in Cape Town, I hung about ashore there for quite a while, and I don't know whether it's worth mentioning, because I didn't actually have a camera, and as I said, I refused to shoot in South Africa. But, while I was hanging about, waiting in Cape Town...um, I was alone on a very large empty beach, bathing or sunbathing or whatever...wasting time, filling time, as it were. And the only other occupant of this beach was a solitary Negro, totally innocent, in bathing pants...and he, sort of suddenly appeared into my field of vision and tripped over something, or dug up something out of the wet sand, and it was obviously a very rusty old revolver full of sand. And this beach was empty as far as I could see...I don't know about behind me - the shore line was behind me, but it was empty certainly for half a mile either side of me and probably a quarter of a mile behind me. And almost immediately, the chap hadn't taken more than a few paces, and two South African policeman pounced on him, looked at the gun, and.....although it could never have been used....they picked him up and arrested him. So I shot over, as usual, interfering Prosser, and said "you can't arrest that fella, he's perfectly innocent! I am a witness, in his favour, that I saw him pick that revolver out of wet sand...I might just as well have done it myself. And if you'd arrested me instead there'd have been hell to pay from the British," kind of thing... which meant something in those days. [Chuckles] They were sort of flabbergasted, and they wouldn't let the bloke go. Anyway, they took him off and ran him in, and I thought, well there's injustice for you...and that was under Smuts, not...nothing like the present lot...I mean, Smuts was comparatively mild in his disciplines. Anyway, that's a digression. Coming home...I didn't get a chance to finish the book, because I was still in a very slow ship, without a convoy, without any escort. We were so slow that we figured that the submarines would miss us because they wouldn't believe we were going so slowly! We staggered off home and got home a lot earlier than we'd expected, because the original plan was that from Cape Town we went across to New York, complete with the escort, and then back across the Atlantic, and I thought, right that'll do me... time to finish it about four thousand words a day. And as it was, it can't have been that slow...we got home on our own without attack into Glasgow and then it was just a question of taking a train down and um, trying to get transport, that sort of thing. It was very interesting because, as a Naval correspondent in Naval uniform and rating as a Lieutenant Commander, although not wearing stripes...

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, hmm, yeah.

**David Prosser:** ...only if I was captured...as a Lieutenant Commander it meant that I could ask for all sorts of things that one wouldn't normally get, even ashore in England. And, er, I arrived about two or three in the morning, at Euston, on a long delayed train, and this sort of thing, from

Glasgow, or wherever it was we landed, and tried to get some transport, which I eventually did, through the, er, whatever the Transport Army Office thing was...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh... the TO, yes.

**David Prosser:** Um, yeah...I don't remember the initials for those sort of things. Er, and my wife had moved in the meanwhile and was in a new place, staying in St John's Wood, with a girlfriend of hers, whose husband was abroad in Persia, or something. Um, and I didn't really know where it was. Anyway, I knocked at what I thought was the appropriate door, because the numbers weren't clear at three in the morning in the dark, underneath arches and St John's Wood blocks of flats...and [chuckles] eventually, some bearded Czech answered the door...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** ...which was somewhat embarrassing and, um, I eventually found the right place. Because I hadn't been able to tell my wife I was back and I don't know whether cables were being suspended or whatever, from Glasgow, but I think I'd tried to inform her. Anyway, she was a bit surprised too! And there I was back on the old grind again and the sort of Downing Street nonsense, until they attached me to the Air Force, about three months later or something like that.

**Alan Lawson:** And you were attached to the Air Force as a war correspondent, were you?

**David Prosser:** Yes, with Alan Prentice...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes!

**David Prosser:** ...um, whom you'd remember, no doubt...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** He and I were both pushed off to, um...oh...some airfield. I've forgotten the name of it at the moment. Anyway it was up north east of London...Swanton Morley...

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** And we were sort of going through the business of the issuing equipment and training, and we only had aircraft like [Blenhiems ???] and things like that in those days...and there was one other aircraft, of which I've forgotten the name, but it could barely reach the coast of Germany and drop a bomb and get back...on the range of fuel they had...so it wasn't really much good!

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** Anyway, we went through all this...and, er...at this point, I should say that, prior to the war, about two years prior to the war, I'd already volunteered for, first the Navy, second

the Airforce and third the Army, and they'd all turned me down except in an underground laboratory job, and I had a bet with the Airforce wallah, a chap called Wing Commander Nelson, in Air Ministry...and, you've probably heard this story before...

**Alan Lawson:** No...no, no.

**David Prosser:** ...that, he said "oh, we're not going to have any sort of operations filming anything in the Royal Air Force" you see. And I said "your talking 'cock' mate. I'll bet you one 'fiver'" (which, you know what it's worth today)...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** "that within two years of the outbreak of war, you will have an RAF film unit." And he said, "oh, alright, I'll take you." Well, I never got my money, because the fellow never reappeared again afterwards...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** but sure enough, I met up again with the film unit in the desert, within two years of the outbreak of war.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** So, I was then called up as a result of that volunteer and the fact that I was back in the UK and of age and what-not, but it was an Air Ministry call up and posting, and the bureaucrats couldn't even get their paperwork right then, let alone now! I was posted...instead of being posted as aircrew...I was posted to a sort of ground crew training squadron in Skegness...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs - and continues to laugh through next sentence]

**David Prosser:** ...where one went through all the square bashing that I'd learnt as a boy at school and Officers training unit, or Officers training core, and that sort of thing, so much so, a lot of the time I was telling the less experienced Corporals and Sergeants what one ought to do as regards arms drill...because they weren't very well up in them...they'd never been to any of the operational areas in the war, and I had for two years! And, um... so I was there as a AC 2, sort of square bashing, and every day, almost every day, we had a sort of morning parade and the, um, [coughs] some Junior Officer would come along and say, "Any volunteers for air crew?" And I always used to take one pace forward you see...and they'd sort of say, "Oh no, that's all right, we know about you" and this sort of thing. The Air Ministry had made a 'cock' of it again, and it transpired that they should have posted me to something quite different. Anyway, it took about six weeks to clear that lot, and I eventually went to join, er, [Skeates??] Kelly and Tommy Kimberley, and somebody else I think, at, um...at a place that's now called Black Bush I think...I've forgotten what the...Hartford Bridge it was called in those days.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Anyway, it's on the old Southampton road near Camberley...and, er...joined the operations film unit there. But this is no longer newsreel now...

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, no... you go on...

**David Prosser:** You want me to keep on with this...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes. I mean...well this is...I mean the thing is, the operational film unit, that, in fact, was used wasn't it, by the newsreels?

**David Prosser:** Oh yes, it was newsreel coverage, except when we were doing it for Intelligence as well...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, surely, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Um...but there's not really a lot that I can elaborate. I did a sort of special piece for the War Museum on this, because they weren't very well up with it...but, um...I don't know that there's an awful lot one can do there. I mean, basically, one was installing cameras for aircrew to use in the air and eventually I get to have an airgun's course down at Pembury and pass out as an Airgunner, and officially was commissioned, but they hadn't got a commission space in the operations film unit for me, so I was still going around as a Sergeant, and technically a Pilot Officer, which was rather embarrassing, I thought.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** But the interesting thing about the film unit, which of course you would know from your own experience anyway, about the RAF operations film unit, was that it had no conventional RAF discipline and you wore more or less what clothes you liked and a lot of the time...um...I used to wear khaki battle dress, made of thin [parathea??] in the hot weather, rather than that junk that they issued you with! Which was stuff I'd had from the desert days and that sort of thing, and navy half wellingtons, which were very useful when you were fighting an air raid, because they kept the water out...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...and that sort of thing. And one didn't bother to wear a cap most of the time.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no.

**David Prosser:** The only thing I can remember was, [Skeates??] was technically commanding this particular unit and, (I'm sure you've heard all this before) but I devised a system, or one of us did, but I thought I'd thought of it first and put it in, because I'd used the system elsewhere, of shooting the results of a bombing raid through the after end of the aircraft...you couldn't normally do directly with the camera...through a mirror, which meant having a little faired mirror with a streamlined housing on it...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...poking out through the bottom of the hole we used in the aircraft to put the camera through normally. And, er, then came the question of whether you put the camera facing forward or facing aft, to get the image the right way round and the bombs going the right way. And I said to [Skeates], "Oh well, obviously it would go this way, because I think I've used it before." And he said "oh no, I'm certain it goes the other way." And I said "well you're the CO mate," you know... "do it your way." And that particular first story, [laughing] when it was filmed with [Skeates'] installation, it was a very famous one, you must have seen it many times at the library...

**Alan Lawson:** The bombs coming out [laughs]...

**David Prosser:** The bombs...closing the burst and disappearing back into the aircraft! Yup! So after that we did it my way.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs] Yes. [Continues laughing]

**David Prosser:** Snag was, soon after that, poor old [Skeates???], of course, got shot down...um...I think around, in France.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Because we were mainly operating the second taff over France and the low countries and so on. And, um...we got a message back, [chuckles] I think in thirty six hours, to the effect that [Skeates] was OK, he was working in a photographer's in a certain street in Paris and all was well, you see...[chuckles].

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles] Yes, I can remember that, that message, when...I'd been up at Pinewood and there was absolute consternation about that, even leaking out [chuckles].

**David Prosser:** Yes...er, we got it straight back to the group I think, and the group passed it straight onto the squadron or the wing.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** That was operating in Bostons of course, in those days.

**Alan Lawson:** You actually did eventually go to Pinewood, didn't you?

**David Prosser:** I was never based at Pinewood.

**Alan Lawson:** Weren't you? I thought you were.

**David Prosser:** No. I only went to Pinewood because we had our lads there, as you know...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...and, um...once I'd become an air gunner, I went to joint [Gerry Pullen???] at Lasham airfield and...I don't know...I forget who took over from [Skeates], [Tommy Kimberley] or somebody like that, I think. And, um, [Gerry] very shortly afterwards went sick as well and was invalided out or something. And anyway, I took over command of the unit at Lasham and we were operating in Mitchells. I was operating at any time, possibly two or even three times a day, in the...or the unit was certainly operating up to three times a day in the early days of the unit, because we didn't have very many skilled cameramen. And this meant, in reply to your question about Pinewood, that one of us had to take the rushes back every night to Pinewood, get them processed. And, because I happened to live in Hendon, which was near enough to Pinewood, in those days when you could get there at sixty miles an hour in my little Ford, and I was being paid by the RAF to run this Ford for that sort of official duty purposes, um, I used to take the stuff back to Pinewood, get home about one or two in the morning, having written up the stuff of the day's rushes, um, at Pinewood, and possibly seen the odd rush print, um, get home about one or two in the morning and then take off and go back to Lasham again, which was, I think, only a one hour journey again then, because of the fact that one could go everywhere at sixty, er... and start operating again. By that time, the first (if I'd been doing the early operations the previous day), the first one off, if he had been going off at six in the morning would have been all clued up and briefed and well away.

**Alan Lawson:** [over interviewee] What, what cameras were you using on the operational unit?

**David Prosser:** Well, initially, we had an awful sort of mixture. We had a thing called a [Bodero???], and not many people have even heard of them.

**Alan Lawson:** No.

**David Prosser:** It was a primitive French camera, made by the people who...oh God!...I can't even remember the modern French camera...

**Alan Lawson:** Not the Eclair

**David Prosser:** Um...Eclairs yes, yeah...I think it was made by Eclairs originally. Anyway...[chuckles] it had a motor up front with a belt, a long belt drive...

**Alan Lawson:** Good Lord!

**David Prosser:** And I think two hundred foot magazines...it wasn't unlike the relatively middle term Arris of about twenty or thirty years ago.

**Alan Lawson:** Uh hmm.

**David Prosser:** Two hundred-foot mags and this great belt drive thing...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...which was a bit problematical in the air because the belt used to fly around in the air flow if you stuck it out of the window, you see...so it was usually a solid mounted thing. We also... [Thank you Darling... - (Prosser's wife brings in tea) - interview interrupted momentarily] ...No, we had this [Bodero???] and hundred foot Eyemos and the...

**Alan Lawson:** A single lens Eyemo was it, or a turret?

**David Prosser:** No, I think it was a turret Eyemo not the spider turret.the old small turret, initially...

**Alan Lawson:** Yep, yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** And we were very stuck over this, because...

**Alan Lawson:** [indecipherable, over interviewee]

**David Prosser:** ...in terms of getting the quantity of cameras that we needed, we had mostly fixed focus lenses, which are solid to infinity and there was nothing else you could do about it.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** So doing any cut-ins...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...was very difficult, you see, unless you'd got sort of F16 light or something...and, um...we had a good deal of difficulty about this. It wasn't the fact that, um, we couldn't get them officially...it was the fact that we couldn't get the damn things exported from America and sent over in sufficient quantity, at the kind of cost we were able to pay, or the Air Force was able to pay, I presume. Eventually we did get multiple lenses and we did get longer Eyemos with four hundred foot mags and nuts and motor drives and that sort of thing, but that was a lot later on.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yeah.

**David Prosser:** But basically, it was fundamentally an Eyemo with up to a six inch lens, maximum...and, oh Newmans, I think we had an occasional Newman as well.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm. Er the thing I wanted to ask you about was the little lab at Pinewood. That was Rooney Pilgrim's lab.

**David Prosser:** Yup....er, what do you want to ask me?

**Alan Lawson:** No...I mean...you know...how did it function?

**David Prosser:** Well I think our stuff had priority over your studio stuff.

**Alan Lawson:** I don't think we used them.

**David Prosser:** Didn't you?

**Alan Lawson:** No, no...I think it was only RAF.

**David Prosser:** Oh, well...over the RAF studio stuff. I mean at that time Dickie Attenborough was making 'Journey Together' or something, at that unit.

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, yeah.

**David Prosser:** In fact, later on he was a trainee...an air cameraman trainee of mine at one stage.

**Alan Lawson:** Really? Oh, that I didn't know.

**David Prosser:** Yes he was. He was the star man of my second course actually. The first course I did was a very disastrous lot of army throw outs, we had to scrub the whole lot and start again.

**Alan Lawson:** [chuckles]. Well...we're going to stop now.

**David Prosser:** Right.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2] [Tape 2, Side 3]

**Alan Lawson:** You were saying, Dickie Attenborough was on one of your courses...

**David Prosser:** Yeah. After I was grounded following some injury, for which I was hospitalised in, I think, the winter of '43...I'm not sure now whether it was '43 or '44. No, it was '44. Um, I was taken back to Pinewood...that's when you remembered me being there...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...for a limited period, um, it was more my base then that the Operations Unit was...er, in order to train potential...um...film crews for air work, air film work. And the first one we ran turned out to be a load of ex army rejects, er, whom the army didn't want and had sort of slung over to the RAF and somehow or other, the Air Ministry boobed again and dropped them on us, because they couldn't think of anything else to do with them...and they were a total dead loss...um...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And, I mean, I rejected the whole lot officially to Pat Moyna after about a week I think. And he said, "Well you'd better carry on and see if you might scrape something out of one of them at least." And so, we abbreviated the course from three weeks to two, or something, and cut them off and slung 'em out. And then we started another one, I said, "I think it ought to go for four weeks anyway"...and among the new recruits was Dickie Attenborough, who'd been

acting at Pinewood, as you know, and that sort of thing. And, he was an RAF AC2 as far as I remember, and we had more official RAF personnel in this case and one or two professionals...um...I'm not sure whether Maurice Oakley was one or not, but we had one or two chaps who'd done about three tours as a pilot or a navigator or something like that, and had been grounded anyway because they'd done enough bomber operations you see, and they were due for a rest. And they wanted to come back on flying, so this was the way to do it. And some of them were interested. Maurice Oakley, whom you probably remember, was a professional feature focus puller, or whatever, and an assistant cameraman, anyway in features. I don't know the sort of full details of features in those days, because I was never in it. And, um, he was a Flight Lieutenant or a Squadron Leader...I'm not sure. Anyway, I was a sort of Flying Officer by this time and I had everybody from the Squadron Leader, in rank, down, Flight Sergeants and whatever, um, under my command...such as it was. And Dickie was just one of those on that course...or, when we finished that course, we did... quite a number of them did pass out pretty well, obviously, including Dickie...although I don't know whether he ever went into air operations or not. Because around that time we were not having enormous losses, but having enormously greater demands, as we'd spread out over France, Italy, and whatever...you name it. But I'd been grounded because of this damn silly injury when I fell out of an aeroplane, in fact I've still got the sort of...I noticed it yesterday when I checked it...this rib still sticks out much more than all the others. Because I fell out of an aeroplane, and a lot of aeroplane went up between my ribs and my stomach.

**Alan Lawson:** Good Lord!

**David Prosser:** And this was extremely painful, and I couldn't walk fast or run or anything like that for some time, and [laughs] the long and short of it was, they diagnosed a stomach ulcer and put me into hospital and treated me for a stomach ulcer, and...um...I went on diets and that sort of thing, and, er, I was quite sure I hadn't got one, and it was simply this injury from this falling out of the aeroplane...and bruising and that sort of thing. I had damaged my rib and it had damaged a lung and so on as well. But, anyway, I got out of that. But eventually, against my will, because I was aiming to stay on and become a Wing Commander, they invalidated me out in about April '43, I think...'44!

**Alan Lawson:** Before we go on that...you mentioned Pat Moyna...

**David Prosser:** Pat Moyna, yeah.

**Alan Lawson:** And...a name I'd completely forgotten about. Um...tell us about Pat.

**David Prosser:** Well Pat had been an assistant...Oh God...who was the lead documentary man in those days?

**Alan Lawson:** Grierson?

**David Prosser:** No, no...not Grierson]. After Grierson...

**Alan Lawson:** Um...

**David Prosser:** Paul Rotha!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** He'd been an assistant to Paul Rotha...in what exact capacity I'm never quite sure. Um, but Pat was Commanding Officer of the Operations Unit, and above him was, I think...Teddy Baird, who was commanding both the Operations Unit and the other...and there was another bloke above him as well, I think...

**Alan Lawson:** Dalrymple! Er, no...Twist...Derek Twist!

**David Prosser:** Twist! Derek Twist...yeah. Derek Twist was the sort of CO over the whole Lot of the Wing Commanders.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yes. Teddy was his adjutant.

**David Prosser:** Teddy Baird was?

**Alan Lawson:** His adjutant, yes.

**David Prosser:** I didn't remember him being adjutant. Because I remember when we got a professional adjutant at one stage. Well...Squadron Leaders are not usually adjutants in the Air Force...

**Alan Lawson:** Aren't they...oh I wouldn't know that...I'll keep quiet [chuckles].

**David Prosser:** But we got a professional one, who nearly went crazy when he saw what the discipline was like at Pinewood, with everybody walking around in sort of civilian skirts...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** ...and no hats, and not saluting, and all this sort of thing...

**Alan Lawson:** [Still laughing]

**David Prosser:** ...which you may or may not remember. But, um, that caused poor Pat Moyna and awful lot of trouble...er, because, you know, the whole thing was running very efficiently and very well...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** But, um, it was a very strange... Just to deal with the discipline end of the RAF Operations Unit...I don't know much about the Ground Unit, but they appeared to be much the same, in terms of RAF types of discipline. But, um, on my own unit in the second taff I was working very much as a war correspondent, in other words, I was effectively a civilian...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Unable to ask of anything from anybody, of whatever rank. And on one occasion, um...my driver, a very nice lad, had been choked off by somebody on the station, as opposed to under my control, for being 'out of the rig of the day' as the Navy say...and I've forgotten what it was...he hadn't got his flies undone, but he'd got a tear on his jacket or something like that...or was wearing the wrong kind of clothing for that kind of day, and they slapped him on a charge. And I went straight to the Group Captain commanding this station and said, "You can't do that, he's one of my men, and it's no good doing anything with him, because I need him all the time anyway. And anyway, he's under my discipline." "But you're all under my discipline" says the Group Captain. I said, "Yes, as far as obeying normal"...what where they... 'AFOs', or something like that. Air Force Orders...or whatever... "yes, certainly, Sir, we are. But, as far as controlling my unit is concerned, when and where we go is my business, and that it is up to Pinewood and my CO. But, meanwhile, I'm in command and I need this chap so, therefore, you can't take him off to slap him on a charge!" And the chap saw the point in the end...he was a decent sort of fella. And, er, I duly got the chap off the charge. But equally, it was almost impossible to put anybody on a charge in the outfit at all. I mean we had a very orthodox Jew on the unit, whom you may remember..., Bernie Easton[?]. He was so orthodox, that he couldn't drive in, er, station transport between Friday sundown and Saturday sundown...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...to go on an operation. He was allowed to fly and kill Germans, but he wasn't allowed to go in a vehicle, other than an aeroplane [chuckles] for bombing purposes.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing in background]

**David Prosser:** So he used to spend three hours on Saturday walking round to the Base and back again to the Mess at lunchtime, and we never saw him the rest of the day...because of his strict regulations. Now he smashed up my truck, by driving it on a T-junction into a convoy...and he smashed it up very badly. And I tried to put him on a charge for gross negligence, because he had a Flight Sergeant on board, who was a witness...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing in background]

**David Prosser:** ...er, and one or two others of my crew were on board, for some reason or other. It was one of these great big thirty hundred weight wagons with a loose top. And I tried to put Easton[?] on a charge, and I was told "no" I couldn't. It would be regarded as being anti Jewish!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing]... Er, you were talking about Pat, um, have you any more to say about Pat at all?

**David Prosser:** Not really, except that he was a good CO from our point of view, he knew his oats in the film business and we didn't have any particular arguments or rows. Um, I don't ever remember having a disagreement with him, as such. Occasionally he used to say, "Alright, well we could do with a bit of this and a bit of that", merely passing the word down...but nine times

out of ten, I got my details of what sort of thing to do from Group Headquarters...um, that was under that incredible...I can't remember either the CO's or the [SASO's] name at the moment, but they were both pretty famous. One of them was...the [SASO] was a chap who'd gone in for the Schneider Trophy in his younger days, and, um, the CO, I think was an Australian or something. Anyway, he was - Australian origin - he was a very good bloke, but a frightfully press on type, and both these fellas used to fly on operations occasionally with us, as a navigator or something, just for the hell of it...it was strictly against all sorts of Air Force regulations.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And I used to go up to Group from time to time, a) to act as a liaison when the other chap was on leave, and also to go over certain details that I wanted improvements in, in my Unit, from an intelligence point of view, or something like that. But Pat Moyna I didn't have a lot to do with. I had more to do with, as I say, the Group Headquarters chaps, really...and, um...I can't think of anything really relevant to say otherwise about Pat.

**Alan Lawson:** You...you...were invalided out in '43, you said...1944?

**David Prosser:** I don't... No, I think it must have been '44, because there was an odd situation in the middle of '44. We were suddenly taken off day operations, [second taf] were taken off day operations for D-Day. Er, and at this time, prior to D-Day, er, it happened that Richard Dimpleby was with us, operating with us at the time, as well...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And he and I worked out...by available information and moon phases and this kind of thing...what day D-Day had to be on.

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And we got it right. And, the only thing about Pat Moyna is, that for some reason I've never understood, I was sent on leave...oh, sorry...we'd hitherto been on day operations for everything and we were suddenly put onto training for night operations...which didn't mean anything, we didn't get anywhere. Pat Moyna suddenly sent me off on leave...er, about five days before D-Day, which I think was going to be June 4th originally and finished up as June 6th 1944. And I said, "But Pat! I can't say why, but I have very good reasons for thinking it would be very unwise for me to go on leave at that time." He said "well that's an order!" And it was the only order he ever gave me, if I remember.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** So I said, "Alright," you know, "if you say so, mate - that's it." And I remember so well, Bea and I were staying at Goring in a hotel that's now run by that incredible actor who does drag parts and, again, whose name escapes me. And, on the morning of the actual D-Day...because by this time, I knew it had been shifted...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** we woke up, oh, I suppose about four in the morning or something. I said, "Well, there you are, there's D-Day for you now." And everything was going over, you know, and the air was continually full of trouble, and, um, so I took her home and went back to the Station. And, um, I may have 'phoned Pat, and he said, "What the devil are you doing back there? You're on leave!" And I said, "Well there's not much point, I know what's going on, and I knew when I told you it was silly to go on leave. Now, don't you want me to stay?" And he said, "Well, in the circumstances, I suppose you'd better." And that was the end of that.

**Alan Lawson:** And then, after that, after the...um...D-Day operations, you were invalided out?

**David Prosser:** Well, some time...er, no, sometime, '45 I was invalided out...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh '45?

**David Prosser:** No, it was '44...late '44 I did the damage...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, I see. Ah...

**David Prosser:** ...and I was in hospital around Christmas '44, I think. Um...but...er, no...in the meanwhile, um, we started off on...another intelligence bloomer, you see. We started off on the Arnhem operation...because we were going in gliders, two of my ... myself and some other one of my crew...Doug...Flight Sergeant...can't remember his surname. Anyway, nice chap...knew his onions, knew about camera work...good. Um...we were going in a glider each on the Arnhem operation, and while we didn't know the details, we knew pretty well what it was all about, and obviously, if you were in gliders, you knew it was a drop and it was going to be behind enemy lines. And we went down to Tarrant Rushton I remember, which was the airfield picked out for this. And, again, there was some sort of intelligence boob, because there was a delay on it...a twenty four hour delay after we were due to take off.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And, I know it was certainly in my mind and, I think, most of the others at the time that, if we had a delay on a thing involving so many gliders and so many troops, and airborne troops at that...there was going to be intelligence trouble. Er, and I can give you reason, and chapter and verse for that later on. And, we all got a bit worried about this, because we thought, you know, it isn't going to work, if there's a delay, the [Gerries] will know. And, sure enough, the thing was scrubbed after forty-eight hours, I think. And, they then wouldn't send any Operational Film Unit crews with the gliders at all, I think one went in a tug in the end, um, from some other group, other than my own. But the reason I mention the intelligence bit is...quite apart from the experience at Dakar...in [second taf] based on [Lasham] I used to fly a great deal of the time with a Dutch Squadron, with whom I sort of kept in touch with to some extent after the war as well. And, they were Dutch Navy, flying land-based aircraft, nevertheless. And they were all a very, very good crowd. Now, the odd thing was that while I'm quite sure that none of the officers that I knew and certainly none of the troops, because they wouldn't have know where

we were going, other than the odd Sergeant Air Gunner or something like that...I don't think they'd have broken security in their own interests normally. But, our nearest pub in the evening was at Alton...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes.

**David Prosser:** ...and, they would usually go down there, and sometimes you'd have an operation laid on for a given day and you'd have a briefing for that, which you'd be given altitudes and directions and everything else. And, that might be cancelled, or you might go on it and find the cloud cover was so heavy you couldn't see the target. And this, again, was before the days of radar and all this sort of thing, so if you couldn't see the target, you didn't bomb...ordinarily. Now, the following day, that operation would be repeated, but with a totally different briefing, different altitudes, different directions, different, um, posts on the coast that you'd be passing over. Now the odd thing was that the [Gerries] were so fixed in their minds, that on the following day, when we went on the operation, assuming it was successful and we carried out the new briefing route, they would be firing guns, I won't say always on the old route, but they were firing guns at the altitude we was expected to take the previous day...whereas on the new briefing we'd be at a totally different altitude, two or three thousand feet higher or lower. And all the gun bursts, [chuckles], the flight bursts would be below us or above us...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...never at us. So they very seldom hit us in consequence. Occasionally it happened, but that's...what I'm trying to point out is that somehow or other [Gerries] knew what the briefing was the previous day. And one can only assume that somewhere in our group there was a quisling. I mean there were occasions when we even had notes coming out from 'Lord Haw-Haw'...

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...actually mentioning our particular group, or our particular unit, with the Dutch Navy and that sort of thing, so it suggests that there was a leak somewhere. So one was even more worried about a thing like Arnhem, you see.

**Alan Lawson:** Now...coming back now to, um, you were invalided out...what happened then?

**David Prosser:** Oh, I had a few weeks' leave. Um, I went back to Movietone. They'd been paying me very fairly, I must say, considering the way I treated them, and they treated me later on as well [chuckles]. They paid me a retainer of three pounds a week throughout my Air Force service, which was a total of only about two years I think, anyway...'43 April, or something, or May to April or May '45. And I went back on the job of Newsreel man.

**Alan Lawson:** What was your first job? Do you remember?

**David Prosser:** No I don't! But it was sure to have been Downing Street or something like that...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing in background]

**David Prosser:** ...you see, the old standing thing with a Newman outside Downing Street. But I don't remember being able to very much. I couldn't carry a camera and all the gear very easily at that point...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh really? Really? Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** ...I was limited. I didn't actually have an assistant, because Newsreel men didn't have assistants, period.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, no, no.

**David Prosser:** And if it involved a lot of humping around, in the wilds or up mountains, or something like that, I didn't do it. Um...(sorry I thought I heard to bell).

**Alan Lawson:** You must have been on the, um... the VE kind of celebrations?

**David Prosser:** Oh yes, too right! On the wedding cake, yeah, I think I was.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh were you on the wedding cake?

**David Prosser:** I think so, yeah.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes? Yes?

**David Prosser:** Hmm, pretty sure I was.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes. That was for Movietone?

**David Prosser:** With Movietone, yeah. I was still with Movietone. In fact, but September or August that year, I was slapped back as Middle East correspondent in Palestine for the Zionist terrorism...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...at that point. They'd just blown the King David, whatever date that was. Er, Norman Fisher was already out there, and he hadn't...I don't think he'd actually got the blow, he may have been somewhere else in the Middle East. Anyway, he was in the Middle East at that time, he might have been in Egypt. Er, and I was posted out there forthwith for three months.

**Alan Lawson:** Still silent camera?

**David Prosser:** Still silent camera...again I had all...

**Alan Lawson:** [Over interviewee] Right, but still your Newman.

**David Prosser:** Still the Newman, and an Eyemo this time.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha...you had two...two cameras? Ah ha, ah ha.

**David Prosser:** Yeah, I had an Eyemo with a spider turret that time. I've got a picture of it somewhere, on the bridge that's now the border between Palestine and the other place.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, Jordan, Jordan, hmm.

**David Prosser:** Jordan. No...er, that started pronto. I mean the day I arrived, the Arabs showed me their courage, because there were some Arab Palestine policemen outside the Jaffa Bank, I think in Jaffa...may be it wasn't the Jaffa Bank, but a bank in Jaffa which had been raided by the Zionist terrorists. And, er, they'd set up a machine gun post outside the bank main door. And, of course, the surrounding people were taking cover or getting shot from this machine gun, and an enormously courageous Arab policeman walked across the road, facing this machine gun, being shot like hell all the way, and managed to shoot both the operatives behind the machine gun before he died of eighteen bullet wounds himself.

**Alan Lawson:** My God.

**David Prosser:** And I thought well, you know, if these boys, um, are that good, it's their side I'm on. And previously I'd been in Haifa...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...during the war and been terribly sympathetic with all the Jewish refugees and that sort of thing. I mean, one knew ex violinists from lead orchestras in Austria and places like that, and other people selling papers, who were leading actresses and that sort of thing, and one was totally sympathetic with them, but I never believed in Zionist terrorism at all, and so I had a fair amount of prejudice, but a degree of balance in trying to cover the stories.

**Alan Lawson:** Uh hmm.

**David Prosser:** And I was always invited to parties by either side in vast quantities, of course. Do you want me to go on about Palestine?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, surely. Certainly, certainly.

**David Prosser:** But the thing that turned my view totally, was...early one morning...I don't remember the date, I heard a vast explosion within sight of the balcony of my room, and I was staying in a Jewish hotel at the time, but I alternated between Jewish and Arab ones from time to time. Er, and called up my taxi firm, which was an Arab one and said "do you know where it was?" And they thought they did. And I said well, you know "Pronto - one up here." And I shared a room with another correspondent from another newsreel, er, Metro News, but he was away that night with his girlfriend or something. Um, and so he wasn't available, and I was the first one to get there. And it was in a square surrounded by oldish buildings, residential buildings

on three sides, of up to three or four stories, with people living there, aged anything from eight months from eighty years old. On the fourth side was a kind of factory or office building of five or six stories high. And in the middle of the square, where in London there would be gardens or something like that, was a little shut off bit with some semi-ruined buildings which had never been completed, actually. And it was the place where the kids from all these surrounding houses used to play. And what the Zionists had done, was to booby trap this building, or this ruin, and then call the Palestine police and tell them that they thought there was something funny going on, they'd better go and investigate it. Anyway, they got caught by the booby trap. The upshot was, that six of the chaps I'd been drinking with the previous night, no, four out of the six, I was drinking with four of them...six chaps went there and I don't know what happened to the other two, but four of them were blown into shattered pieces. For instance, one was a leg hanging without trousers on the railings outside the factory building. There was a very shattered torso with no legs or arms or head, in the middle of this square, er, and that kind of thing. We found the brain box of one of the chaps on the roof of this factory building, with no skull round it.

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm.

**David Prosser:** I'm sorry to go into unpleasant details but this, to my mind, was a story against the Zionist terrorism and you name it. The thing that horrified me was, that when we were scraping up the remains of this poor chap's torso and bits and pieces all over the square, into sacks, the population, again aged from eighty to eight months were around there, laughing at the idea of being photographed while this sort of thing went on, because I was doing the crowd shots as usual. And this put me off so much that from then on I'm afraid I had very strong prejudices. Now when I sent that story back, in very considerable gory detail, Movietone were terrified to run it. In fact, the whole of the Newsreel Association dare not run it as being anti-Jewish and I thought, well, this is not justice.

**Alan Lawson:** Hmm, hmm.

**David Prosser:** So that was my, sort of, first reaction. I covered plenty of other similar things. The only one that's amusing though, and possibly worth mention, is the fact that, thanks to the fact that I had an Arab taxi firm that had an office nearly opposite, or very close to the Income Tax building in Jerusalem they rang me up one morning in the hotel, again early on, and said "shall we send a cab, David?" And I said, "Well I bet there's a story, yes please." They said "well they're wheeling the explosives into the Income Tax building, we've just seen the trolley going in!"

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs].

**David Prosser:** So I went down and set up outside, opposite the Income Tax building. Apart from a few civilians running out of the place, looking frightened to death, nothing much happening. At any rate, I kept turning and, sure enough, in shot, the Income Tax building blows up, you see!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing in background]

**David Prosser:** Which was a sort of minor scoop. Well, the pay off is...and the poor chap's dead now, so it's unfair to tell the story...but I think Ronnie Noble borrowed this story for one of his books. Standing behind me on the corner of a building, just behind where my camera set up was...(and I think I'd tipped off my room mate about this as well as the time, so he'd got a camera set up as well)...was Ken Gordon...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes! [Laughing]

**David Prosser:** ...with no camera, just standing looking, wondering why we were set up there, you see. [Chuckles] And it wasn't 'till the building blew that...'cos he wasn't in the same hotel as us, he was living in the YMCA to save money or something! [Coughs]. Ken sort of ran off at the end of the explosion, when the bricks stopped falling, and realised he'd better go and get a camera!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs a lot!] That's a nice...a very nice story, that. Um...then from Middle East, what?

**David Prosser:** Oh...thinks! Um...oh, one other slightly amusing story was...I said earlier on that my territory extended, in the earlier run in the Middle East, from South Africa to Turkey to Iran.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** I kept cabling, during this period in Palestine, when things were occasionally a bit quiet, kept cabling the office with some story about the Shah in Iran...I can't remember what it was about. But at any rate, I wanted to get over there and get this story, you see. And it took about three weeks to get a Visa. And I figured that I'd just about got time to get a Visa, get out there and get back again...or even drive out there, because I'd got a marvellous Arab driver who was a personal friend of mine and had been a courier for the [Mufti??] and was completely non-political and had a Jewish girlfriend as well. And he could have driven me out there, actually, across the desert. And we sort of knew the way, and he was known all over the villages in the Middle East, I mean the children used to come out and wave and say "Hello Abul Said," every time they saw him driving anywhere out in the sticks. And, um, I cabled the office and said, "Look, I think I'd better get out there," and they said, "no." And about six weeks later when the story was nearly dead, the office cabled me to go to Tehran - tomorrow - and do such and such a story, which was a very minor story by comparison with the one that I'd told them about. It only meant going to the British Embassy and interviewing somebody or other...filming them or something like that, like an interview with no sound. And, er, you know...there was all this effort wasted. So I cabled the office back a very expensive collect cable, pointing out the futilities of their actions. And this sort of thing went on throughout the Middle East period, you see. And they cut my expenses a year after I'd been there, and things like that without telling me, and that sort of thing. So I wasn't in very good shape vis a vis office relations, and I was getting a bit fed up with them, and then, in the end, I sent them a few snorty cables, again pointing out various other idiocies and how I hadn't had a neg report for six months and this sort of thing. And I kept asking for comments on stories and getting nothing. In desperation they sent poor old Ken Hanshaw out...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes.

**David Prosser:** ...to relieve me. Well you probably know about Ken Hanshaw and his present condition.

**Alan Lawson:** No.

**David Prosser:** Yes, he's got...Oh God! If I can remember the name of the disease...that ghastly senility disease.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, um...Alzheimer's!

**David Prosser:** Alzheimer's!

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes.

**David Prosser:** Er...poor chap. There was an announcement in the ACT Journal about it...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh that's right, that's right!

**David Prosser:** ...so I rang up Peggy...I wrote to Peggy first, I think, and said, you know, anything I could do? Because as she said, "would anybody of his old colleagues contact him?" And she put me onto him on the 'phone. And um... and I said, "he relieved me in Palestine, I wondered if he remembers," and we mentioned this, and he could go straight back to that territory, without trouble, in detail.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes. Oh yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Um, and that's why, I sort of wonder if I'm not getting Alzheimer's, because I've lost the intermediate memory period now.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, no, no no...

**David Prosser:** Poor old Ken! Then he suddenly died, you see, in this conversation. But was so sorry that that should have happened to him, because I thought he was younger than me.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yes, yes. So, he replaced you and you came back?

**David Prosser:** He replaced me and I came back. By that time, I was in, you know, a right state, and having a right, real, rip, or snorting row with Sir Gordon Craig. Um...and I had the row about the fact that they'd cut my expenses and this sort of thing. And, I'm a reasonably honest sort of chap with expenses, because although I might not put down the exact thing that I'd had to pay for, I was only recovering money I'd spent on behalf of Movietone - a lot like later in the BBC. Reno Wideson was shattered to find that that was my belief. And I never really tried to con them over expenses, or anything. And it annoyed me particularly with Movietone because I was

getting paid less than any other Newsreel correspondent, and getting a less expenses allowance, on a daily rate, even.

**Alan Lawson:** What...um...yes...that's one thing I'd like to touch on. What did you start off at, you know, going right back before the war, how much a week were you being paid?

**David Prosser:** Oh, initially, my first contract, which I think was three years, was about five pounds a week, increasing by a pound a week per year, for the first three years.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha. And as a war correspondent?

**David Prosser:** A war correspondent, just the same.

**Alan Lawson:** Really?

**David Prosser:** When they offered me a new contract at, I think, eight pounds a week, but no details, I said "it's not good enough!" I don't remember the detail of this exactly, frankly, and I've got no records of it now, because I've destroyed all the paperwork. Um, I think I said "well give me" ...it may have been nine or ten pounds a week, I don't remember... "and I'll go without a contract." I mean, I could always have been fired at a week's notice anyway, at any time, even when I had a contract. I mean, their contract didn't mean very much, so I said "give me that, and I'll take it." And after a lot of argument, they gave me that and I just stayed on that salary.

**Alan Lawson:** And after the war? Still ten pounds?

**David Prosser:** I don't remember what I went back to after the war, but, again, I said "I won't accept you're contract, it's not good enough" you see. So there were no increases involved or anything like that. If I got one, it was as a result of a good story or something, good luck, and that was about it.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes. Well, did you ever get bonuses...for stories?

**David Prosser:** No, not directly, as a rule.

**Alan Lawson:** When you say "not directly"...

**David Prosser:** Well, all I got was a bonus for a story...all I remember, was a bonus for a story...oh, before we were married, so I must have been pretty green!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Er, so it would have been '37 or '38. I got a scoop. Do you remember a chap called Maurice Ford?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Is he still...I don't know whether he's still alive?

**Alan Lawson:** Um...yes...he was the man...who used to do close ups with the one-inch lens.

**David Prosser:** With Paramount...on an Eyemo, yes.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]. Yes, that's right...

**David Prosser:** I mean he was the first walking shot cameraman...

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, yes.

**David Prosser:** Great bloke. Very good Newsreel man.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Well, Maurice had lost a story of a keeper...a zoo keeper in Paignton, had been severely injured by one of his inmates...a tiger or a puma, or something like that.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And everybody tried to get this story, and I was sent down on it. And, you couldn't get much else except for an interview of close-ups of the bloke in bed, you see, with all his bandages and everything else. Nobody else was able to get into the hospital. And I spun a yarn which enabled me to get in, and light in! So I went in, borrowed some photofloods from the local chemist or something, and lit him, and was able to get a certain amount of gesture and facial movement and expression, to show he wasn't just a dead still, er, and got the story. Well the only...this was a scoop over Maurice Ford, I mean, everybody was, sort of...thought, "God, you know, if he's beaten Maurice Ford, he must have something!"

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And I remember meeting Maurice at the station when he was shipping his rushes back, and sort of saying "oh, I haven't had any bloody luck!" you see. So I didn't say anything at all at the time.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Anyway, the bonus for that, if you please, was the weekend off. I think I finished that on a Thursday...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing in background]

**David Prosser:** ...and at that time, Elizabeth, my wife, was in 'rep', in Penzance. So I said, "Alright, well I'll have the weekend off and go down and come back on Monday." And, "she's got some digs down there, I could probably get a room." And, um, I don't remember whether or

not they paid for that directly or indirectly, but they may well have done for that, but that was about all it was - the train fare from Paignton down to Penzance, and back, and may be a few rooms at three and six a night, or something like that, you see!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And that was about it. I don't ever remember getting any bonuses like one used to with the BBC.

**Alan Lawson:** So really, when you had your row with Gordon Craig, it was still ten pound a week...roughly ten pound a week, something like that.

**David Prosser:** Well, I honestly couldn't tell you. It might have been more, but not a lot more, anyway, I just don't have any records...as I say, I've destroyed all those records now...I've got too much paperwork, I've been having to clear the previous stuff.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah...did you part company then?

**David Prosser:** Not quite, no. I made it perfectly clear where I stood, and I'd been looking around a bit for jobs, and I'd also gone to Paul Rotha, but he wasn't offering me any more, so I was getting, presumably, whatever the rate was.

**Alan Lawson:** Uh hmm.

**David Prosser:** Oh, and I had joined the Union in 1943, after I'd returned to Movietone, because prior to that we didn't...nobody at Movietone belonged to the Union at all. And we all joined as one man, we walked across...again after a row with Craig, in the theatre one-day, over some rushes!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** We all walked across Soho Square [chuckles]...to Soho Square, when we were in number 22, and, er, joined the union as one, sort of, body, and so on. But, no...I was probably therefore getting whatever the minimum union rate was, and Paul wasn't offering anything much in advantage...Paul Rotha. So, er, I tried one or two other sources, and there didn't seem to be anything with very much future, and then suddenly the BBC advertised that job, starting the newsreel...Television Newsreel, before news division took it over, I must emphasise. And, that of course, is when I came across you again, on the Board.

**Alan Lawson:** [Mumbles] I think the early days of television newsreel is quite an interesting period of television...I think.

**David Prosser:** Too true...too true!

**Alan Lawson:** I think...er, you know...go through that in a bit of detail, I think.

**David Prosser:** Well, it was officially managed by Harold Cox. I don't remember what he'd be now...all I remember was that his wife used to breed dogs.

**Alan Lawson:** Actually, he'd been in the Navy, Harold.

**David Prosser:** Oh, that's right, he had been on Naval...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** But he hadn't done anything like newsreel or film work per say.

**Alan Lawson:** Well, he had done.... er, yes...he'd been a...I think, a Production Manager pre-war, or something like that, um...

**David Prosser:** I didn't associate him directly with the film business...anyway, he didn't seem to know the first thing about newsreels.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh no, not a thing, no...not a thing.

**David Prosser:** He had a girl with him who was vastly valuable and whose name still jumps to mind...Ann Thornton, who joined the staff at Buckingham Palace later.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Now she was of enormous value because, in dealing with any foreign contacts, she could speak their language.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And I knew this, and got to know her quite well, because I used to stand in for Harold quite a lot when he was on leave or away sick with his ulcer trouble and that sort of thing, and run the Newsreel myself, as I thought it ought to be run! And, um...however at the outset, we started off...I remember, I think you gave me the choice, when...I don't know whether it was...yes, it was before, because they forgot to tell me I'd got the job! And I rang you up to say, "when is one likely to hear about this job?" And you said, "Oh haven't you heard?" And apparently I'd got this newsreel man's assign...this newsreel man's post in the BBC. And that was the first I know about it! So then I went to Craig, and I...I'll come back to the BBC part, the newsreel part.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** I went to Craig and said "I've been offered a job at (this that and the other)...um, and I'm leaving. And I believe I have to give one week's notice, I'm not even under contract." "Oh!" he said, "damn it! What do you think you're doing going to the BBC? You must be bloody mad!" He didn't like me also, because of course, I got married without telling him, as well, he never forgave me for that!

**Alan Lawson:** Oh really...really?

**David Prosser:** And, um...I mean for many other reasons he didn't like me, but the fact remains he never saw fit to fire me, in spite of the rows we'd had, you see, so I must have been turning in reasonably good stuff! Anyway, they gave me, I suppose, some sort of adequate report to the BBC, because otherwise the BBC wouldn't have taken me on, and um...I believe at one stage I did, by my devious spy routes, discover actually what they'd said about me, through somebody in the BBC...I forget how. But at any rate, it wasn't unflattering. And, so the Newsreel started off and, I think, you gave me the choice as to whether I would have a Mitchell or a Vinten camera, a sound camera. Now technically I had never worked as a sound cameraman in Movietone regularly before, so I thought this was taking a chance...although, I mean, I knew the form and I'd used our old Waugh cameras and things like that, but not as a regular effort. So then I remember choosing the Mitchell because I knew it's history. That had come from a Newsreel business, that Mitchell. And, um, (my sound man was Mike Lewis)...my silent man was Mike Lewis, my sound man was usually Bill Welch or Bill Cheevers...more generally Bill Cheevers. Bill Welch I'd known from my Pathe days.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...

**David Prosser:** The only other sound cameraman, I think, was Cyril Page...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...

**David Prosser:** ...and Jimmy Balfour was his silent man. And...I can't remember...well the other soundman would have been working with Cyril, not with me.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Ah...so there were only basically four of us on the sound crew and two silent men. Um...otherwise organisationally...the cutting room, from what I remember was Dennis Edwards[?] and...

**Alan Lawson:** Monty!

**David Prosser:** Monty, that's right.

**Alan Lawson:** Monty Redknapp.

**David Prosser:** Monty was the...Monty Redknapp was the...

**Alan Lawson:** The Pathe...

**David Prosser:** ...senior editor...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, from Pathe wasn't he?

**David Prosser:** ...or cutter, as they called them in Newsreel days, yeah.

**Alan Lawson:** He was, in fact, you know, he'd been a cameraman.

**David Prosser:** Oh yes! Oh I knew that. Yes, yes, I had forgotten about Monty actually, it was so far back, yup.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Er...but I was trying to remember the chap who ultimately became an assistant up there, before I moved out, anyway, was Dick Cawston[?]

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...who'd been a...er...sort of pushing film tins around on a trolley beforehand.

**Alan Lawson:** I see, yes. Library! [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** Library, yeah. And, um, Jack Newark[?] was a mere non-entity, below me in level, um...salary level and everything else, and so on.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...[Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And he used to have a hard time sometimes from me! Well, he used to give me a hard time for no good reason! We sent him out to South America on an allowance... well, the South American trip was a thing that I'd contacted incidentally, but the allowance was about five pounds a day below what it cost you to live in South America, let alone anything else!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** So I had a fearful row with him about that and charged everything... er...actuality. It caused no end of trouble with him and the treasury afterwards! Um, but that was really the sole entity of the sort of staffing of the Newsreel, as I remember it.

**Alan Lawson:** What kind of...um...talk about, what kind of assignments did you get? Were they different to the normal...you know...run of the mill, outside newsreel?

**David Prosser:** No, very much the same as newsreel. The difference was that we used to hire a lot more stringers[?] for some jobs and we had one or two stringers[?] up north, or wherever, or in the extreme west...like we used to in the newsreel business. Um, and I probably gave some of their names to Harold Cox, for purposes of doing jobs that...just silent jobs, that weren't worth travelling for. What was interesting was...I do remember one that sticks out, I was given the job, because I knew it of old, of covering the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, yes, yes, yeah.

**David Prosser:** And of organising the crews. And I was trying to remember the other day...I don't remember how many crews we had on that, but we had a hell of a lot. I think...I met two of them recently...Ray Dencham[?] was one...I can't remember the other one.

**Alan Lawson:** It would be Charlie Parnell[?] I expect.

**David Prosser:** It was a bit before Charlie Parnell's day, I think. He might have been there as a stringer[?], but I don't remember him particularly there. No, they were mostly more old hands like Ray Dencham[?] and people like that, you see. They're old newsreel hands, primarily.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** And I was responsible for posting all these chaps and giving them their details as to what they were going to shoot, and I know we had about ten cameras on it. I don't know how many jumps now there are on the Cheltenham Gold Cup, but we had, sort of, one on the start, one on each jump...er, and two at the finish, probably, and that sort of thing. And it all worked out quite well, actually, from what I remember. I don't remember having any great trouble about it. But I thought it was a bit of a load...sort of, put a new stringer[?], new bloke whose only just come on to sort of, organise that job.

**Alan Lawson:** Tell me, what was the, er...what were your relations like with the, er...the commercial newsreels? Were you accepted?

**David Prosser:** For the most part, I was accepted by them quite reasonably, and they used to joke with me and kid me, and that sort of thing.

**Alan Lawson:** Because the, um...going back a little bit....were you ever...you remember, before the war, there used to be this incredible newsreel war between some of the newsreels, you know, um...on exclusives like the Grand National, or ...

**David Prosser:** Yes! On one or two things...that and football matches...they used to put up balloons in front of each other, or block each others cameras, and that sort of thing. But, in fact, that, I think had...except on possibly jobs of that size...I never came up against it, with one exception...um, and that wasn't a matter of anybody's newsreel, this was a personality thing.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** There was a boy, whose name you will know very well, now, anyway. There was a boy around the cutting room when I was in Movietone in the early days after the war...David Samuelson.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Now because he was Jewish, he used to get a lot of stick from some of the camera crews and that sort of thing, and the rest of the crowd there, and I always used to defend him.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, uh hmm.

**David Prosser:** Er...and I, once or twice got into trouble with the crews, because I stuck up for David, simply because I felt he was being unfairly treated. Now, I never forgave him for something, I'm a very unforgiving character when it comes to something like that...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** At an election in Bradford, I think it was...years later, after the war, after I'd joined the BBC. I was up on a rostrum, doing, something to do with this election, I don't remember what the shooting was, but I'd got the Mitchell up there, with long lenses, and you name it. And David Samuelson made a point, (quite unnecessarily, because he was only shooting silent so it was quite unnecessary from his point of view...unless he wanted to get a long shot, in which case he could ask my permission), not only of jumping up onto the rostrum, but, knowing I was shooting on a long lens on somebody talking about an election speech or something like that, he would come and shake the rostrum, six foot rostrum...shake it like that and then jerk my tripod leg and this sort of thing. So when I had a moment I said "Look! One more!" And he'd do this the same when I was on the ground on some other occasion... "One more time like that..." and I think it must have been winter, I was wearing fairly heavy boots or something... "One more time you do anything like that and not only I will kick you right in the face but I'll kick you in the bracket as well!" And he never bothered me again after that.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yeah.

**David Prosser:** But, er, that was the only time I'd had any sort of trouble like that with any of the other Newsreel boys.

**Alan Lawson:** I'm going to turn over...

[End of Tape 2, Side 3] [Tape 2, Side 4]

**Alan Lawson:** So, now...we're back now...

**David Prosser:** Back with Television Newsreel...

**Alan Lawson:** Television Newsreel...

**David Prosser:** Um, the interesting thing about it was that at this point, again, because I was acting both as a camera man and, what later became at the BBC, a film operations manager, in other words I was standing in and running the Newsreel from time to time. Two things happened. One was that while this was going on, the Berlin airlift arose...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And Phil Dorte, for whom I have nothing but admiration, the greatest deal...the greatest amount of time...asked me, not ordered me, asked me if I would go as the Berlin

correspondent on the air lift thing. And I said, "well, if it's not actually an order, no I won't, because I don't think there's anybody else here that can run the Newsreel, that knows enough about it." And, I said, "if you make it an order, obviously I will go." And he didn't make it an order, and I said, "alright, I'll stay on the Newsreel." And I thought, "well I'll be taken off tomorrow...but who's he going to get to do it?" Because there wasn't anybody, Jack Mewick[?] couldn't have done it, Phil was too busy. Um, and, er, anyway he left me at it and, all right, maybe I suffered as a result of...slower promotions or something like that afterwards, I don't know. Anyway, he didn't appear to bear me any malice. And I turned down another job, um, later on, which he offered me, quite a while later, which was a director cameraman in Northern Ireland, in the film unit up there. Now at that time there wasn't very much in the way of terrorism in Northern Ireland, but I had just, after endless struggles, got my daughter into a certain school locally, which we'd been trying to get her into for years, and I wasn't going to break that set-up. So I told him so and said, "no, I'm sorry, I'll turn it down." In a way it was a pity, because director cameramen at that time were not recognised as such in the BBC, and I'd been a director cameraman, officially, with the Union and everybody else since 1941 or whatever it was, when I made that first submarine film, which I wrote, directed...oh and I forgot to say...I cut that as well, in Cairo, and sent back the commentary and the cutting copy and everything else. So, I was officially a director cameraman. Um...anyway, um, nothing much happened...nothing materialised from that...as I say, it probably slowed down any sort of subsequent promotion, because I'd turned down two good jobs and that director cameraman's job was worth quite a bit more than I was getting, two or three hundred a year, anyway. The amusing...talking about salaries though, the interesting thing is that...you may well remember this...my recollection of the Board for my selection to the Newsreel...I don't remember who in detail was there, apart from the fact I'm sure you were.

**Alan Lawson:** I was...yes, I was on that, yes.

**David Prosser:** You were?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Now do you remember the fact that I spent about twenty or thirty minutes questioning the Board, and I laughed in their faces when they told me what they were offering me initially...and they spent about ten minutes questioning me.

**Alan Lawson:** I don't! [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** You don't?

**Alan Lawson:** No, I don't remember it.

**David Prosser:** Well I've got records of it...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh really? Oh marvellous, yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...which I turned up, actually, because I didn't tape it, because we didn't have them in those days...

**Alan Lawson:** No, no, no...

**David Prosser:** ... but I wrote the records up after that, because I thought it was extremely interesting. Because, when I said, "what are you offering me?" I think they said something like, "seven hundred fifty or eight hundred a year."

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah...I'm not sure, I can't remember what it was.

**David Prosser:** That was the figure of those days, I think. Anyway, I said, "you've got to be joking!" And I did, I laughed out loud. And Harold Cox's face dropped and Phil Dorte looked pretty surprised. And the Chairman of the Board, whatever admin wallah he was - I remember who he was, but I can't remember name - Er... he looked absolutely shattered. And I said, "look, you know, it's not really worth me bothering." I didn't know at that time how much I'd earned the previous year, which was well over twelve hundred. Because I'd been getting fees and side effect things from foreign correspondent's work and Sunday duty and things like that, because I was working seven days a week in Palestine, you see. And I literally didn't know until I checked up with my bank to find out how much I'd really earned that year. And I said, "well anyway, that's ridiculous! What are you prepared to offer?" And we argued about this for quite a while.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...

**David Prosser:** And in the end, I think I was on the top of Grade B1, or whatever it was...whatever the level was... but it was quite a bit more. Er, and I said, "well, yes, I suppose...well, in the circumstances." And I didn't question - this is where the questioning came in - is about the Pensions Scheme.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Because I said, "one of the reasons I applied for this, apart from anything else, was because I understand you have a Pensions Scheme." And I went into great detail in enquiring about that...that's where the notes came in, at the end, and I did spend a long time over that, and that's what convinced me that it was good idea, because Movietone still hadn't established one then. So that was one of the basic points. Now, going back to...you asked me about what sort of jobs I covered then. I don't remember anything except, as I said, the Cheltenham Gold Cup and [chuckles] things I turned down!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Apart from the everyday Newsreel stuff...um, I didn't even do the Roman gold mines in Wales thing...I'd done that before, it was one of the first jobs in Movietone.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Um...they were just opening up again. Yes I did!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Yes, I think I'm right in saying, it was for them and not for Movietone. They reopened the gold mines in Wales, um, there's two lots. There's one near Pumpsaint which, I think was the one they reopened at that time, and there's another one up, nearer my territory, and off the Mawddach estuary. But, er...the Pumpsaint one, I do remember.

**Alan Lawson:** Well...wasn't the wedding ring for um, er...Elizabeth made from that gold?

**David Prosser:** Could well have been.

**Alan Lawson:** I think so.

**David Prosser:** I don't remember about that...but I think I remember...because I did the other one, with Norman Fisher as a trainee, and I remember going back there and thinking, "Boy! I've done all this before too" so I knew the value of having been a newsreel man. And I sort of knew what to do about the mines and everything. So I think I covered that, but otherwise, nothing sticks out in the mind, without going through all the years of diaries...and I've still got all the diaries up there.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...you were saying, you worked on Television Newsreel before, er, News Division took it over. Um...tell us about that event.

**David Prosser:** Right, well I can't tell you directly about that event, because I saw it coming and I got out smartly to children's programmes.

**Alan Lawson:** I see, I see...

**David Prosser:** But what I did know, which was again, because of me having been a quisling in the office...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** ...um, and because of my [chuckles] tendency to work on other people's intelligence...I mean Intelligence with a capital I, in this particular case.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Um...there was a character there whose name I can't remember at all...who was a foreigner to the television service. He came up from Aykton House[?] or whatever that place is, opposite BH, where News Division used to exist years and years ago.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah yes! Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And he'd got white hair, very good looking, clean-shaven, always very good suits. And he was always reading the Racing times, or the equivalent.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And he sat at the desk opposite mine, you see...but with Ann Thornton between us. And, he never seemed to say very much, except to ask the odd question about the odd story...and he'd come along and watch rushes. And after a couple of days there, I said to him, "as a matter of interest, what is your function here? I believe you come from News Division? It suggests you're a quisling?" He said, "you're quite right, I am!" And I said, "oh, 'Tarhoo' [?] Hole's trying to take us over is he? That'll be the day! Ruin the thing, it will!" And, he took this all in quite good form, because he realised that I wasn't making a personal attack on him...I mean, he was under orders, same as I was. And...anyway, as a result of questioning him from time to time, and we used to have the odd drink together and I'd get a bit more out of him, I mean it was just like working as a newsreel man in the Middle East, or foreign correspondent or whatever, in a way. I realised that Tarhoo [?] Hole who was then editor of news BBC...was aiming to take it over, he didn't hold with having all these over off-shoot news people running their own thing, and beating us...occasionally beating 'em to a story. I mean we...I think...no, Children's Newsreel beat the main Newsreel and Tahoo [?] Hole on a story one night...which could come later. And, um...so I thought, well, this is time to get out. And around that time they were forming Children's Newsreel under Don Smith. And I'd upset Jack Mewick [?] again over something or other, and he had it in for me...he thought, right, I'll fix the beggar! I could see this coming again, you see...again, the old Newsreel man, could see it coming. Er...he said, "you're being posted for Children's Newsreel." I said, "oh great"...you know... "that's Don Smith isn't it?" And Peter Sergeant I think. I'm not sure whether Peter actually started it on that time or not, he may have done.

**Alan Lawson:** I think he had, yes, yeah.

**David Prosser:** Yes, I think he was there just ahead of me, that's right. Anyway, I was duly posted, officially for six weeks, to see how we got on. And, long before the end of the six weeks, I thought, "this suits me fine," and Peter and I got on very well. And Don Smith said, "would you stay on?" And I said, "yes, fine, thanks... But make sure you clear it with Mewick [?] and make sure I don't go back, because I don't want to go back to News Division." And by that period, it was just on the point of changeover, you see, and then everything really did change.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And, um, so that, really is the sort of point at which I left with the intention to better my value...or better myself, as it were, with Children's Newsreel. To become a director cameraman again, too.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes. Had, um...had commercial started yet, by then?

**David Prosser:** No, not 'till 1955. This was about 1951, I went to Children's. And, um, commercials were merely...oh...Collins hadn't even left then, you see.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** And, er...anyway...

**Alan Lawson:** That's right! Norman Collins was, er, yes...controller in the...

**David Prosser:** Yeah! Because you see, previously...who was that marvellous...he was only controller of television before Collins...marvellous chap.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...very tall...I think, wasn't he a New Zealander?

**David Prosser:** I don't know. His name began with 'E' I think. Anyway...he was the kind of chap, he was the kind of controller of television I've never seen since...whose office you could knock on and get in straight away to see him...

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And he'd give you a clear... Now I did...yes...now...what sort of stories I covered (this...this comes under that heading really). Ah... again, owing to my personal contacts, I was offered a trip to Madeira for something like ten days or possibly more, to shoot whatever I wanted there, with all facilities, free trip out, free hotel...and, not free transport...but with a camera. And this was in the days of Aquila Airlines, the old flying boat service for South Africa, you know, or whatever.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** And, um, I went to...gosh I wish I could remember the name of the chap...anyway, before Collins, the controller...and said "I know the BBC is not supposed to accept gifts, personnel are not supposed to and that sort of thing. But..." I said, "how would it be if I can make around four of five Children's Newsreel stories and possibly"...because we used to make longer films in Children's Newsreel as well, if you remember.

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, yes.

**David Prosser:** I mean, we used to shoot on a ratio of 3:1, with the result that we covered it enough, we had enough for a sort of ten minute film, plus a Children's Newsreel story... Er, so I explained all this to him, and he said "damn good idea!"

**Alan Lawson:** [Over interviewee] Gorum?, Gorum?

**David Prosser:** No, it wasn't Gorum.

**Alan Lawson:** It wasn't Gorum?

**David Prosser:** No, no. No, that was before that time, I think.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** Anyway...(I couldn't even look it up in the BBC handbook which I've got over there, because it's the wrong year). Anyway, um, he said "yes." He said "yes" to one or two other similar things which involved 'gifts' rather like that, in a way, which I thought was very reasonable, because, I mean, there was no skin of my nose. But what I did say was, er, to the contact man, the Aquila Airlines contact man, PRO whatever he was...was, "can I take my wife with me, will you book double rooms?" you see. And he said, "yes, sure, no trouble." All paid for. So, Elizabeth came along with me for a holiday, and she acted as my lighting girl, my script follower, my dope sheet writer, and everything else.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And she did work on it, in all fairness. And she came around and we did, I think, ten stories out there. On, oh, everything from the wine business to the children sewing and learning to stitch and make lacework and...oh, heaven knows what. And the mountain men on the toboggans, and everything else. And it's all there on the record, and I've still got a copy of the final ten minute film...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...in 35 mm now and, fortunately, it's on acetate film too!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs over interviewee]

**David Prosser:** It's up in the cupboard somewhere, I think, in the other room. But, er, that was one of the things that...Cecil McGivern.

**Alan Lawson:** McGivern yes, yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** I was wrong about the 'E'.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes... yes.

**David Prosser:** Yeah, Cecil McGivern, that was one of the sort of things that Cecil would permit, you see.

**Alan Lawson:** He's a nice man.

**David Prosser:** I forget whether I...how I bypassed Dorte, or whether I did, because I think Dorte was rather agin the idea. But anyway, you could go and knock up Cecil and do it straight

**Alan Lawson:** I don't think, er, I don't think Dorte in fact was against the idea, because, er, I did, um... 'Speedberg to Jauberg'[short for Johannesburg???]....

**David Prosser:** Oh yes

**Alan Lawson:** Which was a similar kind of deal, really. I mean, I got a free passage, I think we paid for the hotel out in 'Jo-burg.'

**David Prosser:** Did you? Oh...I don't think we had to pay for even that.

**Alan Lawson:** I'm not sure, I, um...

**David Prosser:** Anyway...

**Alan Lawson:** Anyway, yes! [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...the principle was, you know, I don't think it's ever been allowed since. We tried it on one occasion, before I left the Newsreel. We were doing something involving BEA and we expected the same treatment as we'd had from Aquila... And, in fact, we went to quite a lot of expense, thinking that they would have been paying and, they didn't even give us a free flight in the end! We found we were paying right, left and centre. And we were conned over the whole thing. So we rather under-wrote the film in the end and, sort of, um, cut it right down to the bare minimum, whatever the story was...I don't remember.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** I was just trying to think, whether it was...there was one other story and I can't remember whether that was a BBC one or a Movietone one...I think it was a BBC one. There was a South American millionaire called Dolvero[?], who opened the Flying Boat Service...yes, it must have been BBC, because it would have been before the time...it would have been before they closed them down in Movietone. Anyway, a lot of the old C Class flying boats were being sold up by British Overseas Airways to this chap [Dolvero]. And being a millionaire in Argentina at the time, under Peron I suppose, he got the clear to open an airline across the river Plate - a ferry service to Montevideo...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yeah.

**David Prosser:** And I was on that story for weeks! Flying around with [Dolvero], and every coffee break you had, sort of, pheasant or smoked salmon sandwiches, and this sort of thing! And brandy laced coffee, and, you name it! Fantastic trip! I went over to Northern Ireland with him. And I remember being a bit shattered, because the captain of the aircraft flying us over to Northern Ireland, who was the, sort of, star captain of BOAC at the time...I was up in the - for some reason - up in the control cabin with him, not the cockpit as they call it nowadays, and we were landing on Belfast Loch. I don't know whether you know it, but if you're landing there on a flying boat, they've got six foot posts sticking up, or six feet at high tide and a bit less at low tide, obviously...sticking up alongside the approach run, which [you] use as a runway. And to my horror, this captain said, "I can't really see those posts, so I don't know how far away we are from the surface" you see. "Can you tell me, Prosser?" Why he didn't ask one of his crew, I don't know, but he was dead serious. And I then discovered that he, in fact, wore quite strong glasses, as strong as I'm wearing now in the ordinary way to read with.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing] Oh God!

**David Prosser:** About three and a half, four diopters.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** [Laughing] So I said, "alright" you know... "it happens I'm used to trailing distances" and that sort of thing, and I gave him, sort of five feet, four feet, three feet...near it now! And cut-off points and everything else, and I was rather surprised - he was expecting a civilian. Well he said, "have you ever flown?" I said, "well yes, only in South America, I'm not officially a pilot, but I've flown aircraft." (And I had for the British too, for that matter.) [Chuckles] That rather staggered me! I thought, God, here's their chief pilot...he probably had an admin job normally, but there he was, flying a flying boat and, you could have been in dead trouble if he...hadn't had somebody...he hadn't got a spare crew, I suppose with him, to do it. I was distinctly shaken. But that Dolvero[?] story was most interesting, and I eventually, I think, went out there...yes I went out to South America for the BBC in '51. That's a propo of stories covered.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Er...and the contact man with BOAC was the chap who put me onto the Aquila Airlines thing...he'd shifted houses or, this was...in '51...this was before it...the Aquila Airlines one must have been afterwards...the PRO. Ah...and this time, we had to pay, and I remember it was four hundred and eleven pounds, seventy five pe...er, not seventy five pence...fifteen shillings, was the fare out to Buenos Aires, via God knows where - halfway down the African coast and then across...and it was the first flight...when British South American Airways took over from that incredible... again, RAF Air Commodore or Air Vice Marshall, who launched the Pathfinders... Bennett!

**Alan Lawson:** Bennett...yes...ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** He launched this airline and he kept on loosing aircraft in the...oh, whatever the gap is over those islands in the West Atlantic...er, you know the area, I'm sure. Anyway, it's a well known place for loosing ships and aeroplanes...the 'something' gap...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh!

**David Prosser:** It's very well known...

**Alan Lawson:** Really? Ah ha...

**David Prosser:** ...well, we'd lost about three of these aeroplanes and in the end he more or less had to give up, because the British South American airways took over his aircraft and launched newer planes...I can't remember what they were called. And I went out on the first flight with one of these, and I had carte blanche for six weeks I think (this is where I fell foul with Jack Newark[?], because he wouldn't give me enough money to run it), to cover everything from the

meat story in Argentina, which was big in those days, because we were importing enormous quantities of Argentine beef. Anything I could get in Uruguay, which was corned beef, or something else... something else similar. Something in Chile...I don't know what the story was there...and, the same in Brazil, where I remember doing Butant snake farm, and not much else...and being terrified by an adder that came out of a dustbin and nearly nipped me on the bottom!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And wasn't supposed to be able to escape! Um...apart from those, I don't remember the detail. I remember being very nearly lynched in Buenos Aires...is this sort of thing worth it?

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes, yes...it's um...yes...

**David Prosser:** Again, freehand, solo man, hardly sleeping at night, working...[chuckles] sort of about twenty hours a day and then taking a flight to the next capital, you see. I was doing the meat story, and one of the parts of that meat story was, apart from the cattle being driven with electric probes up the ramp into the factory, where they were carved up almost alive... coming down the other end, they were frozen up and put into a frozen meat ship, and they came down a corridor, covered in canvas, which had very strong steel girder frames, as a sort of corridor, between the factory and the ship. And, they had the mataderos, which were the, sort of meat handlers, chaps...er, passing these things down the gangway, these corpses or whatever it was, down the gangway, frozen meat down the gangway, and I was wearing a red beard at that time, and I knew very little Spanish, but enough to understand this chap...and one of these, rather thug-like mataderos said to his mate, the equivalent of, "that silly so-and-so in that red beard looks like an orangutang!" you see. So I rushed up to him, put my fist in his face, and he'd got a very sharp big girder behind his head, you see...and I would have split his skull open if I'd hit him.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And I said something to the effect that, "if you don't apologise for that statement, I will smash your skull!" And he realised that I could do it! Anyway, he apologised and I got out of it, no trouble at all, but the interpreter chap, who hadn't been close while this went on, and I told him about it later... the Embassy fellow or the consulate fellow... said "My God! You were lucky to get away with it!" He said, "the last chap who said infinitely less than that to one of the Mataderos spent three months in hospital...you'd better get out tonight, over to Montevideo!" So I took him at his word, he was dead serious, obviously, and he gave me chapter and verse [chuckles] about the other chap who'd been nearly lynched for this...er, so I got out to Montevideo. But it was all rather interesting, because in fact, I'd got old school friends, two brothers, out...one in Buenos Aires and another in Santiago, and I'd already been to Santiago...I think I went there first of all, and one brother met me off the aircraft there and took me out to dinner. He became secretary of Shell, South America, eventually. Um... the other one's now working in Mexico...he met me off the aircraft in Rio...in, um, Brazil...er, (sorry), in Buenos Aires.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha. [Coughs]

**David Prosser:** I kept track with them...and we still keep in touch by letter, actually. The Santiago one's dead now, unfortunately...

**Alan Lawson:** Now, after, um...how long did you stay with Children's Newsreel?

**David Prosser:** Until they dragged me out of it, about '57, six years I suppose. Six or seven years.

**Alan Lawson:** Er...can you, can you remember the effect, um...commercial television had on the management at the 'Beeb'?

**David Prosser:** Yeah. Not too much on the management, apart from the fact it put them into a flat spin!

**Alan Lawson:** But it did...did it do, um...

**David Prosser:** In terms of improvement?

**Alan Lawson:** Did it...in terms of improvement of conditions, did it affect you?

**David Prosser:** Yes, up to a point. Um...financially, because I'd stuck out for all sorts of things and, um...went along with the various offers and that sort of thing, that I said I would be going to be getting, if they didn't do something about it. They didn't come up to my standards, but [chuckles] they gave me an extra...I don't know...six or seven hundred a year, or something, to stay with them.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Er, that's the only technical effect.

**Alan Lawson:** Were you were you rather surprised, actually...with their attitude?

**David Prosser:** That the BBC were prepared to keep me?

**Alan Lawson:** No...yes, suddenly to say to people, you know, "if you stay, we'll give you 'this much' more money."

**David Prosser:** No I wasn't, because nearly all of us that I knew, at any rate...I don't think I had much communication with you about that particular part of it this time. I forget, were you then senior film cameraman, or what?

**Alan Lawson:** No, I'd moved on.

**David Prosser:** I thought you might have done, yes.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes... moved on...

**David Prosser:** Anyway...um...no, a lot of us were on the verge of doing this, that and the other...and I rather think Cyril Page went...

**Alan Lawson:** He did, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...eventually. But, er, I was in a different kettle of fish down at Lime Grove, you see at that point. And I was still with Children's, and, really I wanted to stay with them, because they were operating the kind of way I liked, and I still was a director cameraman, I was still largely a one man band with a sound crew when I wanted it, and a silent crew or more, when I wanted them, you see. And I more or less...and again, I used to stand in for Don Smith when he was on the news, and manage the outfit, which all suited me very well. Um...so I didn't really want to go to what I regarded as a back to a sort of short-term contract, kind of thing... in the circumstances. But I was prepared to pull in every offer I could make, or...grab...as evidence so to speak...to try and get them to up my rate, that was all. And, I think, by that time, I'd been upgraded anyway...um, in spite of me, they.... Um, so...I don't remember any other particular thing, apart from trying to smarten up some of the documentary programmes and things like that, um, and improve their rate of output. But...is it of interest to mention the time we beat the News and the Newsreel?

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes! Most certainly! Oh yes!

**David Prosser:** Um, there was some occasion...I don't remember actually what it was, but I think it was something to do with the Duke of Edinburgh. But...at that time, children's Newsreel used to make drama...in fact we did more drama work, film work for drama...

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...than adults did...much more. And we used to get a budget for a children's programme, officially drama...and it would be made as a potential adult drama on the same budget. And...the same thing applied to one or two news stories. We were going to do something...I think it was on the Duke of Edinburgh...who, by this time, I knew anyway, because I'd been both with the BBC Palace attached royal correspondent and the newsreel one, I think.

**Alan Lawson:** Now that's a point we haven't touched...any rate, carry on...sorry...

**David Prosser:** I mean...I knew the Royal Family personally, from quite early on...put it that way. Um, not 'KG5', but from his son onwards, basically. Er...anyway, we covered this story and I remember we had no sort of proper organisation in those days for handling a thing of this [???]. I remember taking the story direct to Den[ham] Labs myself, waiting while it was processed and coming back with a graded print for immediate screening. And I just sort of got back in time for Children's Newsreel at whatever time it was...quarter to six, or half past five, or something like that. Anyway, it was about quarter or half an hour before the main news went out on television...this time under News Division. And we got a beat on the story - and it was a better story, although I say it myself. All right, several of us shot it...it wasn't just me, but it was a better

story, it gave better Royal coverage, and it was more intimate, in the sense that, because I was known, and whoever else was doing it for the other outfits weren't so well known...(Graham Thompson may have been one of them, I forget whether he'd joined us or not by that time), anyway, the Newsreel Association royal correspondent wasn't so well known to Edinburgh, who was inclined to be a bit stropy with strangers, particularly press men. So we got good coverage on it and we put it out with half-hour or quarter of an hour beat on the main news.

**Alan Lawson:** You mentioned something which you haven't mentioned before. Accreditation to Buckingham Palace.

**David Prosser:** Hmm. I don't remember when this first started officially as part of the NRA, it must have been after the war, I suppose. But, in fact the first film (...I forget what...yes, I think I did mention this...) that I ever made on my own, called 'Britannia as a Woman' was about the WVS - now the RWVS. And that was made, very largely, around the WVS in southern areas and one or two places in the Midlands...mainly with the, then, Queen, but now the beloved Queen Mum. And, I would like to mention this, since I get no opportunity and I really should have written to her about it on her eightieth birthday...she did me the greatest kindness that anybody has ever done to any Newsreel man, on one of my first jobs. At the beginning of this thing, I think probably to do with 'Britannia as a Woman'...and I was only a greenhorn, still basically a trainee. She had to enter a long line of display boxes with glass covers, like museums or something like...textiles, or something like that were in it, and probably things that the WVS had done, in it. And she had to walk for about fifty yards towards a sort of 'L' junction in this thing, where she'd go round a little corner and walk along a few more of these stands. And I set up the camera so that I could see the entrance where she came in, film her in long shot as she came around...er, and then swing the turret to a mid shot as she came in towards close shot, you see. Then she'd walk into close shot, if she walked the way I wanted, and finish up in about a four foot close shot...which one didn't do normally, with the Royal Family, unless you were known, you see.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** Anyway, she took one look at the set-up when she came in and, because I was making this film myself, er...the others weren't involved, I suppose...the other companies weren't involved. Anyway, she walked this exactly as I wanted her to, walked into close shot, and when she heard me switch off she said, "was that alright, or would you like me to do it again?" And [chuckles] I've always felt so grateful to her for that. I said "Oh thank you Ma'am, that's absolutely marvellous...couldn't do it better!" And, er...from then on, you know, I developed an enormous liking for her and, er...I had the same sort of experience at Windsor Castle. That was when Maurice Ford dropped a clanger, because he started calling the King "Your Royal Highness." We were doing something or other...I don't remember what or why. But anyway, the entire Royal Family, complete with girls was out on the terrace at...yes, it must have been before the Royal rota business. Anyway, Prosser was stuck in there again with it, and - wandering about, with the Royal Family, getting close-ups here and there...nice, sort of, three shots and two shots, and whatever... and having done all the long shots with the Castle and what-not beforehand, and one or two long shots with them coming out onto the balcony, and running around like a BA fly, in weather like this, you can imagine - and, um I hadn't really had to ask

them to do any, because I just moved into where I wanted to get, you see, and this was largely hand held with a Newman which wasn't hay in those days (still isn't with a Newman, for that matter), and um, Maurice was just sort of milling about and people were falling over him rather, because he was getting in the way so much.

**Alan Lawson:** With his one inch?

**David Prosser:** That's right, yeah.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And, um...he wanted the King to do something different, so he walked up to him and sort of...almost seized him by the lapel and said "Your Royal Highness, would you do (blah, blah, blah)?"... He got an awful glare from the King, you see...who just turned his back and walked away.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Which I thought, well fair enough, if the fellow doesn't learn how to address the King, it's a bit hard! [Chuckles] But, er...there were numerous occasions like that. I mean, the same King, I was working with during the war at some point. Um...it was a Southern Command exercise which he was driving around looking at. And, one of the shots was him standing watching a load of pre-commandos bailing out of the back of a moving truck at about eight miles an hour, going up a hill, and they had to rush down below the hill and take up machine gun positions. And, the King was standing with...General Alexander, as he then was (later Commander of the Middle East...crowd), and I was standing within three feet of the two of them and, one of these troops bailed out, passed us - most of them were uphill of us you see - but one of them went below the level of us, set up his machine gun, pointing uphill, rather in our direction!

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And I was always so touched, because the King turned to Alexander...and this is perfectly genuine and said "I say, Old Boy, I think I should move a bit, you've got a machine gun right up your arse!" [Laughs]

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Which for a stammering King, I thought was particularly...reasonable!

**Alan Lawson:** This was before they ... um... there only became the one accredited correspondent?

**David Prosser:** Yes...yes, I think it must have been. I don't remember being accredited during the war, as such...because I was mostly in...I might have had a short spell of being accredited...I

don't really know. But there were no other cameramen there, anyway...at the time. Maybe they didn't think it was worth covering...but, um...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** ...I did an awful lot of work with the Royal Family. But I never did what Graham Thompson did, which was, sort of...making them and exclusive job, so that he never did any other kind of work.

**Alan Lawson:** That's right, yes. After, after Children's Newsreel...um...did you stay with children's on sequences, or...

**David Prosser:** No, no, it was all one piece of ...the Children's Film Unit only did the sequences and the Newsreel...nobody else, unless they were sort of hired in from the drama lot, but we didn't do that much, because they'd got less experience than we had on drama really, with all due respect to that lot.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes [chuckles]

**David Prosser:** I mean, it's perfectly true, because we were shooting far greater footage on a far better ratio than any of the others were. And, of course we were still director cameramen, you see, and so when they had a 'green wand' director, we used to put him right...you could afford to do it in those days. Whereas, Peter and I were both director cameramen. In fact, we didn't even have an assistant to start with, because we used to assist each other alternatively on 'Watch with Mother'...alternately, rather.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm. Talk about 'Watch With Mother'...which ones did you work on? 'Bill and Ben?'

**David Prosser:** 'Andy Pandy', 'Bill and Ben'...the, er...I can't remember the other...there were three mentioned in the paper yesterday and I can't remember... I only saw yesterday that Frieda Lingstrom died about a week or more ago...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Head of children's programmes... (ex-head of children's programmes.)

**Alan Lawson:** At that time, yes.

**David Prosser:** Er, no...we, um...there were all three of them, but I can't remember the third one. Which was...there was a different one from the 'Andy Pandy' lot. Er...they worked at shoulder height, with, um...I suppose glove puppets, but they were sort of rabbits doing something or other, and it was in depth, much greater depth than the 'Andy Pandy' lot, and that sort of thing, too. And I can't even remember the names of the operators. But that one involved a, sort of, much greater studio set up.

**Alan Lawson:** That wasn't, er, Jan Bussell was it? No, it wasn't...

**David Prosser:** Might have been, I can't...er...I don't remember.

**Alan Lawson:** He was, er...he was the puppet king, actually, Jan Bussell.

**David Prosser:** Yes, ...it may well have been him. I don't remember his name at all, though. I only remember one of the Christian names of the two girls who used to do the others...do the 'Andy Pandy' things and what not.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...yes.

**David Prosser:** But um...No, about them...they were... Yeah, Peter ...we had the old thing, whatever that thing was called...that strange Vinten

**Alan Lawson:** The big box? Oh the big one? Oh, the Everest

**David Prosser:** Not the Sinclair.... Everest yeah. We used to alternate on that, focus pulling for each other and one would light and operate and the other would focus pull.

**Alan Lawson:** That was the one with the mirrored shutter?

**David Prosser:** That's right, the mirrored shutter, yeah. Um...turned out a bit of a dead loss in the long run, I remember. Um...but, er...no, I did most of those puppet things. I know I was talking with Peter a year or so ago, about this when they announced that they were flogging them all off again, external services were flogging off all these puppet films and Peter and I were saying, you know "My God, what a shame we don't get a rake off...and there's old Frieda, coining money!"

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yeah...

**David Prosser:** And I gathered...I've only since learned that 'Ma' 'berg may have died in the meanwhile. But Frieda must have finished with a hell of a fortune from that.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** I think she was a good type! A lot of time for her!

**Alan Lawson:** Well...yes, she was very good on merchandising [laughs].

**David Prosser:** Well I think she was a very good head of children's films, don't you?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...Children's programmes, don't you?

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, she was.

**David Prosser:** I mean, she more or less launched it...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...as such, and expanded it. I mean, in terms of your query about the arrival of ITA and whatnot...er, I think that's when children's programmes probably expanded...more than the others, because I didn't know much about the others. I wasn't working so much with the adult programmes at that point. And, it was about that time that we...people like Rex Tucker, for instance, were producing these dramas, of a very, very high standard, for both adult and children consumption. I don't remember whether they used to have a, sort of, slight cut in the output version for adults, from the children's one...but I well remember, sort of, very major studio set-ups with Rex, er...doing one of those, which was 'Miss Nightingale's Man'.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** Er...and I think it was a series...I may be wrong. But at any rate, it was about some boy associated with Florence Nightingale, obviously. And I remember thinking, fairly recently, in terms of, sort of...one thinks in terms of how much it cost to put on a drama today on television, compared with then.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** Especially BBC costing in those days. And thinking, the effort that's gone into this and the kind of expense there is, is enormous. Because, while I was shooting, on the stage, in the hospital scene, was a long shot of this Sevastopol hospital...I've forgotten the name of it now...um...seeing, coming up in my left eye...I generally kept my left eye open while I was shooting...and coming through here was somebody's horrible mangled arm that was hanging by threads on a stretcher. It was one of the injured of the chaps who were just coming in bottom left of the picture.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And I suddenly thought, My God, they've done a good job on that chap! I can't believe it! It must be a genuine casualty, or something like that...and I sort of took my eye of the camera for a moment, to make sure there hadn't been a crack somewhere...it was so good! Well, all that kind of expense was the sort of thing they couldn't afford to do on drama, on adults...at that time. I mean, there were more talking heads and two shots...and who was that director that always used one camera only on the thing?...On adult drama?

**Alan Lawson:** [Sighs] [Pause] Oh, I'm not sure...

**David Prosser:** ...He didn't last all that long, but I remember he used to do practically everything on about one camera.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...really? Yes.

**David Prosser:** I'm sure there was. [Are you about to break me in the reel

**Alan Lawson:** No, no...no, no.

**David Prosser:** I thought you were looking apprehensive.]

**David Prosser:** Um...no, that's the only thing I can think of in terms of the changeover... because it wasn't until two years after the ITA thing that I went over to adults in ... I don't know...odd forms. Because I think it must have been about... I can never remember whether it was '59 or '69, that I went to work for external services. I should think it was probably '69...I hadn't had had much experience later than that

**Alan Lawson:** I would have thought '69...

**David Prosser:** Well I don't know...maybe I was...no, I...because I... did 'Sports View' after that...no, that's right, it would have been '69, it must have been '59 I went to 'Sports View'...

**Alan Lawson:** Ah ha!

**David Prosser:** ...against my will! Um...so I hadn't had all that much experience in lighting, except for Children's at that time, and I must pay credit here to Peter Sergeant, because I learned a hell of a lot from watching him. Er...and then I went over to this external services thing, which meant lighting all the best stately homes in England.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And, nobody said, "well you've got a budget to keep to," or anything like that, so I [chuckles] had anything up to two or three generators and brutes, and you name it, and this sort of thing, for these enormous shots! None of this stuff that Tubby did on 'Civilisation'... one turn, one picture or anything.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...Er...you were talking about 'Sports View'...yes...

**David Prosser:** Well 'Sports View' was just a bette noir.

**Alan Lawson:** Really!

**David Prosser:** I mean, I've always loathed having to cover football matches as a newsreel man in the early days...and, um...I was slightly impressed because...one of the jobs I did on 'Sports View' was some appalling football match in a blinding snowstorm, and I hadn't really seen the ball very much, I used to just sort of see which way the chaps were running and follow that way and hope for the best, you see! Anyway, when it went out that night, Reno Wideson rang me up, much to my surprise, and said, "I thought you did a marvellous job on that football match!" So I said, "what football match?" He said, "well, the one this afternoon, you silly ass!" I said, "well, I

didn't see it, really!" He said, "well you were absolutely marvellous! You got every goal!"...and that sort of thing. I said, "well, you know," I said, "with a Newsreel man, one expects to get every goal! What else do you expect?"

**Alan Lawson:** That was, er...Paul Fox wasn't it? 'Sports View' at that time. Do you remember, do you remember Paul Fox?

**David Prosser:** I've a lot of time for Paul. A great deal of time...I've seen him quite a bit since too.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Oh no...um...oh no, I hand it to Paul, and I think...I forget at which point it was that Ronnie Noble joined him...but quite early on I think...in 'Sports View'. Um...I don't remember much about 'Sports View'. I learned a lot about how to deal with it from Alan Prentice, who used to shatter me by covering a football match with a mobile tripod, by which I mean that he would, sort of, tend to lean on one leg on a tripod...

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs] Yes...!

**David Prosser:** ...while the match was (and he was on a longish lens sometimes) ...match was in progress, and he'd suddenly, sort of, move the entire camera about three feet, stick it down again and keep shooting, regardless of whether his camera was level, or anything like that - which was, sort of, rather bette noir type of action, to me!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** But, er...no, box fights...galore! I remember doing some, salmon fishing thing with 'Sports View', which got a very commendable credit from somebody or other, like Paul. I don't know what it was all about. The rivers had all dried up, or something, and it was some story of salmon fishing, or trout fishing, or something like that, but it wasn't my scene, so I just used to do it under protest. And, the more I disliked the job, the more, it seemed to be, the congratulations I got for it, which I found rather a [chuckles] strange...contrast.

**Alan Lawson:** Then, um...you were saying about Paul...I mean, I, myself have a lot of time for Paul. Um...he was a man who, er, had very strict ideas, but when you came up with something, he was very, very appreciative, I always found.

**David Prosser:** Yes! I didn't really come up with ideas for Paul, because it didn't apply. He knew perfectly well that I disliked the job and I wanted to get off it as soon as possible, and he... I accepted the fact that he was prepared even to tolerate me in those circumstances, having said it. No...in effect, he said, "well...never mind, David, you're doing very well at (you know) what you are doing, and...I've no objections, and...you'll have to stay for a bit as that what the film unit wants."...Or something.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** And I admired him for taking that kind of attitude from a, sort of, heretic like me for sport.

**Alan Lawson:** Then, from that, you worked for external services. What were these...do you know what these were made for? These were made purely for enterprises, was it? Or...

**David Prosser:** Yes, they were made for enterprises. Er, what countries they were sold to outside of Australia and America, I wouldn't be knowing.

**Alan Lawson:** Who was...er, who were you working with, on that? Do you remember?

**David Prosser:** I'm trying to remember his name... Duncan Beale[?].

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...was the director. He was the, sort of, local manager in Bush House of the external services, the film unit part of it, anyway. Nice chap! And I'd know him, I think as an editor in the old days, somewhere up at AP or somewhere like that...

**Alan Lawson:** From...yes, I think...he'd come from one of the Newsreels, I think, hadn't he?

**David Prosser:** May have been.

**Alan Lawson:** I think...I think...

**David Prosser:** I didn't think of him as a Newsreel...or I don't think of him as a Newsreel man, you may well be right, but... No, Duncan and I always got on very well, but, I think...I mentioned the budget earlier on for that because, nobody had mentioned any question of budgeting, and I hadn't done my paper, which reorganised the entire BBC costing system, you see, by that time. Um...yes, it...it couldn't have been...because I think I wrote that in about '59, and it didn't get operational until '61, by which time we'd had to threaten to strike against the union, rather than anybody else. That's another story. Ah, but the problem about that [sighs] series was - I don't remember how many films there were in it - it was a very, very expensive lighting job and it was a long-term thing as well, and, I think I always had on the spot lighting crew as well, who were very good and very quick. Um...I mean one example of this costing business was rather amusing as far as the BBC were concerned, because I charged for lighting Blenheim Palace, in very freezing cold weather, with snow on the...frost rather, on the inside of the panes of Blenheim Palace, er, just beginning to thaw...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And there was no heating on inside Blenheim Palace at all...certainly not the public part. And we had quite a lot of light in there, and in spite of that, the stuff was only just beginning to thaw, and the 'sparks' were absolutely frozen, as were we all. And, so I broke, at about half past twelve because we'd been on it, at it, since about nine, and said, "look, you're all coming down...I happen to know a pub in" whatever the nearest town is, Woodstock, and I said,

"you'll all come down and have a double brandy with me." And they said, "oh, thanks very much David!" And I duly charged this, you see because, otherwise it would have meant going into another day, because we couldn't really work much more. So anyway, gave 'em all a double brandy and we had lunch and went back and everybody was perfectly happy. And we finished the job...I don't know...sort of close ups which didn't involve the daylight windows, I suppose we finished, sort of, late on in the day, but it would have meant going into a second day otherwise.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** So I saved a penny on that. And Mary Sutherland, who was AA Films or something at the time, tried to stop my charge of double brandy! because I'd put it perfectly straight...charge double brandies to each of the crew, you see...to keep working. And I said, "you try and stop that!" And I said, "next time, the crew will need to work another day when that sort of thing happens, and it's gonna cost a bomb! because all that kind of lighting effort and about ten 'sparks', generators, you name it...(you know), it's ridiculous!" And that went up to, I think...I don't know whether...no, Jack couldn't have been head of films then...Oh yes, I suppose he would have been...Phil Dorte had gone...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Yes he was! Anyway, it went up to him and I took the same argument to him. And I said, "Alright! I'll make a thing about it, if you like!" And I said, "in future, we just shut up shop at the normal time, I won't work on...none of us will. You can't go on in that sort of condition, unless you keep the crew reasonably warm!" So he said, "alright...passed!"

[End of tape 2, side 4] [Tape 3, side 5]

**Alan Lawson:** Um...now, you were talking about the work you were doing for external services. What happened after that?

**David Prosser:** I'm getting a bit vague, you see. One's lapsing into the near mid-term memory here, now...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Um...the first thing I remember, apart from odd documentary 'Horizon' and microscopy jobs, and things like that...really...was, being shot suddenly into drama, er...and I think that must have been children's drama, because it was 'Dr Who.' And the girl who was directing it is now a terribly, terribly, terribly big shot in everything to do with communications, television and, you name it, and I can't remember her name. She was very well known at the time. And I was blessed with a marvellous operator, or assistant rather, he was officially... Tony Emy[?], who is now a big feature writing man as I'm sure you know. And whom I was delighted to re-meet some years ago at a BSC meeting, to which I was invited. Er...and Tony was quite fantastic, in terms of general helpfulness and whatnot. But, of course, we were also struck, as a punishment, on the same day... the opening day of this drama shooting in the studio, with, either some sort of transport strike or something... with the result that, despite all my efforts to get

there... (I don't know whether... can't have been petrol rationing I suppose) ...anyway, I was slightly late and I'm normally always ten minutes to half an hour early on everything, as you probably know. And Tony had got everything nicely set up and...everything was ready for me, in fact, I'm not sure he hadn't even lit, half lit the first set for me, or something. But I don't remember why I was late...oh, it was snow! That was it! I'd driven in myself, but the traffic was blocked absolutely solid, because nobody in Britain seems to be able to drive with half an inch of snow on the ground for some reason! And I was taught to drive on ice at the age of about fourteen. So, er...one started off on this 'Dr Who' stuff, um, and all I remember after that was going onto things like 'Z Cars' and...I'm trying to remember the name of...marvellous drama director with whom I got on very well, with whom I did a number of...

**Alan Lawson:** Rose?

**David Prosser:** ...pieces. I worked with David Rose but I regarded him more as Documentary, I made a piece in Birmingham about the Fire Service with David Rose, if you mean David Rose?

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, I did mean David, yes...

**David Prosser:** Um...became head of Documentary in Birmingham, or something like that.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm, Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** Um...no, he's got a Scottish name, and I'm blowed if I can remember it...

**Alan Lawson:** McGrath, not...?

**David Prosser:** Not McGrath no. Er...it'll probably come along in due course actually, with any luck!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** But anyway...we worked, again, I shan't be able to remember her name, on several programmes which were written by an astonishing female lawyer, of considerable youth, who married a murderer...after he got out of gaol.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** I can't remember her name. Very nice girl, always had a lot of time for her, until she married that bloke!

**Alan Lawson:** Um...she married Boyle.

**David Prosser:** I wouldn't be sure... I only remember... her surname.

**Alan Lawson:** Jimmy Boyle!

**David Prosser:** Yeah, I wouldn't remember her...

**Alan Lawson:** Her father was the...um...the censor...the secretary of the British Board of Censors.

**David Prosser:** Ah...well that's not the recent one, yes, it must have been an earlier one, because the only chap I can think of is still Head of the British Board of Censors is some ghastly drama director who was too expensive to use by the BBC.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh no, no, no, no.

**David Prosser:** No names, no pack drill, but I worked with him too. Anyway, this girl wrote some very, very good scripts indeed, and she always used to come out on location with us. And I remember working with...Jim McTaggart!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, uh hmm.

**David Prosser:** I remember working...that gels it, you see! I get the location, get a picture and then I get his face and name. Er, I know we were working around the Law Courts on something or other, and we used to do some fairly 'way out stuff' with Jim, which I very much enjoyed doing. And, er...I can't remember the names of any of those programmes. I can remember some of the locations, again, because of this only visual memory problem of mine. Er... there was one marvellous location in a graveyard somewhere, which was a rather expensive lighting job particularly, I recall...night job. Involving some policeman who's now a sort of, er, well he's almost on his way out as a star, but who was then a very young actor, um...just working up to lead part, he was only in a bit part, very, very tall chap, not very good looking, bit of a 'thug looking' face. And an awful lot of stuff of him, sort of wading through this graveyard apropos of whatever the story was, which I can't remember. I just remember that it took an awful long time, [chuckles] it took an awful lot of light and, these tracking shots through this graveyard and all sorts of strange angles on this graveyard, and trying to get high shots of it at night, and this sort of thing. And, er, that was very stimulating, indeed...working with a chap like Jim. And, that particular film... that particular thing I was talking about, er...was a lot of trouble about something or other...again I can't remember the name of the real lead actor, who I think is recently dead, but his stuff still appears on television occasionally. Er...there was something which, in this case, I don't think was written by this girl, it was written by another leading drama writer...again with Jim McTaggart, and we'd shot practically the entire programme, and I'm not sure whether or not this graveyard bit came into it. But, we had...he'd gone right down to the, sort of, final stages of recording or output, or whatever it was that they did in those days. And all the filming was well complete and the programme was ready to go out, the author saw it and said, "I can't stand that actor!" And this was the lead actor! You know, if he didn't appear in every shot, he appeared in nearly everything.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** And we had to re-shoot the entire thing about four or five years later. By this time, lighting had changed...

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah.

**David Prosser:** Brutes had gone out, and this sort of thing, do you see?

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah.

**David Prosser:** And poor old Jim was stuck with this, because he was determined to get this programme out, and presumably the contractual agreements as well, with the author. So he had to get it out. So we then had to try and do a re-shoot which matched in with the few shots that didn't include this lead actor, but with a similar lighting, which was practically impossible to reproduce without using Brutes and things like that.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Er, with the new forms of lighting, with no doubt you recall. I can't even recall...apart from HMI, I can't recall the names of any of the more recent lighting systems. And, er...we finally got it all worked out [chuckles], and sort of dragged the Brutes out from on the spot and got all the old tackle out [chuckles] and this sort of thing...and made it. And the programme went out all right in the end, and it was all right. But I didn't like the other lead actor nearly as much as the original.

**Alan Lawson:** It wasn't Beryl Bainbridge, was it?

**David Prosser:** No it wasn't.

**Alan Lawson:** No...all right, no...

**David Prosser:** No, it was a man.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no...the writer!

**David Prosser:** The writer I'm talking about...the writer I'm talking about.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes...

**David Prosser:** No, it wasn't Beryl Bainbridge.

**Alan Lawson:** No...I see.

**David Prosser:** No, it was a man!

**Alan Lawson:** Oh, I see. I beg your pardon.

**David Prosser:** ...whose done a hell of a lot of dramas, before and since, actually...for television. Um...he's dropped out in the last four or five years. [Coughs] Sorry...I should have covered that mic. Does that make any difference if I cover it up with the [thumb]?

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah...right. [Chuckles].

**David Prosser:** I beg your pardon.

**Alan Lawson:** That's all right.

**David Prosser:** No, that was the great thing about people...working with people like Jim McTaggart. Now, there was another chap who was also a children's producer that I used to like working with, immensely. Who, poor fellow, went to Scotland, and I think before he went to Scotland, as a producer, became wheelchair bound with ME or something like that.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes! Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** Hell of a nice bloke.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, delightful man. Um....McLaren[?]

**David Prosser:** McLaren[?].

**Alan Lawson:** I think it was McLaren[?]...

**David Prosser:** I thought...yeah...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Farrick McLaren[?!] That's the chap!

**Alan Lawson:** Farrick McLaren[?], yeah...Farrick

**David Prosser:** Well, he and I used to get on very well...except for one thing! And the first job I ever did with him...it's not strictly relevant, I suppose...but for some reason, it was done in the, sort of, South East end of London. And, they were all pretty 'dungy' sort of set ups that we had, and I used to kid Farrick[?] that every set up was always on top of a dung hill!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** [Chuckling] Or at least had a dog's mess underneath the camera!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Um...in spite of that, we got on very well for a number of years, and I'm very sorry when he went north. I'm not sure I didn't do one programme with him when he went north, actually, eventually.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** I can't be sure of that, but as I say, I'm now beginning to impinge on the mid-term memory which is lapsing, in that territory. But for the seventies it was nearly all...drama and, um...oh, whatever the early seventies, sixties and seventies anyway, er... 'Z Cars' and that sort of thing. And whatever the thing was that followed 'Z Cars', as well...I can't remember the name of that programme either, that series even.

**Alan Lawson:** No...

**David Prosser:** And a lot of... intermediately, with a lot of, um, 'Horizon', the occasional 'Panorama' and other documentaries...quite a bit of microscopy and stuff like that.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes...um, on the, um...on those...on the 'Panorama' stories, um...what was your relationship with the, well they call them 'producers' but they weren't really producers...

**David Prosser:** Directors...yeah.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, directors. They weren't really directors, they were journalists, weren't they, mostly?

**David Prosser:** Um...it was usually OK, except for one chap, whose name I can't remember, and he was completely new to me at the time, and he must have thought I was an absolute... 'clod'...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...because I was unable to focus, for very odd reasons... and it was all, nearly all hand-held walking camera stuff.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah.

**David Prosser:** Er... we started off... it was something involving the arrival... it was probably the first... ferry from that western coast port of France into somewhere like Plymouth.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh Roscoff

**David Prosser:** Roscoff.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** It was one of the first of those coming over, or something involved, as far as I know. Anyway, it involved standing by, originally from three in the morning, er...and it was all delayed until about five in the morning, and meanwhile we were standing about freezing to death on the dockside. And eventually this ferry came in at about eight or nine o'clock, I suppose, by which time, you can imagine, everything, the camera, everything was darn cold. And we didn't have heated eyepieces or anything in those days.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no...

**David Prosser:** Well, the problem about this was...and I was very ashamed about it, and I told the chap this was going to happen, because I couldn't see any other way round it, because you've got no de-mister that would cope with that kind of misting. And it went...the misting went as far as the lenses themselves, as well as the eyepiece of the camera. We then immediately had to go inside to a heavily populated room with about forty people in it, which was overheated!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** And very high in humidity! And, I could not see a thing. So all I did, as far as possible with this walking stuff, was to set the lens scale on an approximate distance and hope for the best, and if he wanted me to move in closer, (he was, sort of, standing with his arm on my shoulder all the time...and, half the time I'd shake him off because I'd say you're moving the camera...) And I reckon the whole stuff must have been out of focus, I should think. I know he'd never ask for me again! [Chuckles]

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** But, er, it was a ridiculously...impossible situation, I mean, you hadn't got time to get the camera warmed up before you went in there.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** And until they produced heated eyepieces and heated cameras, you know, I couldn't see any way round it. But, otherwise, I don't remember having particular difficulties with any, um, 'Panorama' chaps at all. The first job I ever did for 'Panorama', oddly enough, was with a Dick Cawston,

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes.

**David Prosser:** ...before Panorama started.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** It was probably title sequences or something like that, I expect.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, probably, yes, yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** That takes it back a bit. I don't even remember when 'Panorama' started, but it must have been...early sixties?

**Alan Lawson:** Oh no, before that.

**David Prosser:** Before that?

**Alan Lawson:** I think so...

**David Prosser:** I thought it was before that, yes.

**Alan Lawson:** I think so, yes. I think it was before that, because...surely, um...Dimpleby did 'Panorama?'

**David Prosser:** Yes he did, that's right, um...

**Alan Lawson:** Richard...Richard did 'Panorama', I think.

**David Prosser:** Yes he did, um...um.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** I've a great...enormous amount of time for him, always have had. because I'd known the chap in the desert as well.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** And he, poor chap...it's not strictly relevant to Newsreel, except that he and I were in, I think, Tobruk on some occasion, when we were trying to break out in Tobruk.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Er...should you be interested, there's a story, if you remind me to tell it, about Arthur Graham, apropos breaking out of Tobruk. Er...no, Richard and I were there and he...it may have been the entrance to Benghazi, going up from Tobruk to Benghazi...anyway...Richard came back and did this story and got a colossal rocket...er, I don't remember what the story actually was or why he got the rocket, but Richard, I remember, was practically in tears over this, because he'd got this terrific rocket and they said...somebody said that he'd been beaten to the story by some American newspaper or something like that, like the entrance into Benghazi, which was deserted anyway, because I went in there.

**Alan Lawson:** Yeah, yeah...

**David Prosser:** Er, Derna rather, not Benghazi, Derna. And, um...I went in there with the first troops myself. And, anyway, he was terribly upset about this and somebody had broken the story and there wasn't anything much really to it, or any reason for him to be upset, but I remember thinking, poor fellow, you know, that he should be so hurt, or his bosses should treat him so abominably, in those circumstances and blame the chap! They've no conception of what it's like, trying to work out of a desert, especially without satellite communication and that kind of thing, I mean, they didn't even had radio communication in those days, you did it on disc! Your recordings, you know.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** And I don't think people back home even realised that sort of condition.

**Alan Lawson:** No, no.

**David Prosser:** You know...

**Alan Lawson:** You were saying something about Arthur Graham...

**David Prosser:** Arthur Graham, yes. Well on this occasion, um, a friend of mine called Brigadier Willinson[?] who, also in his way became famous, or possibly was famous in advance of that...was commanding the troops, who were trying to break out of Tobruk when it was surrounded... and I used to go up and down there quite a lot during those days, by destroyer or whatever or... high speed mine blower. And, um...there was a chap called Geoff Keating who used to be a still photographer in Fleet Street...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** You know him, do you? Well, he'd become a conducting officer for the army. And by sheer chance, Arthur Graham and I got stuck with him when they wanted to do a story about the Eighth Army breaking into Tubruk. When we were in Tubruk hoping to meet him on the other side, you seen. So Arthur and I took off, talked Keating into taking us out in some truck to a suitable point, where we were on an escarpment, overlooking the plain below us along which, hopefully, the Eight Army would break through the German lines, which were not quite in sight, but below us. It wasn't a very high escarpment, but it gave you more than the usual sort of three-mile range at six feet height. And um, Arthur and I said, "well, we'll go down and see if we can meet up with the Eighth Army" you see. And there were only about three machine gun posts between us and the Germans at that point. And they were in slot...in slip trenches. And um, Arthur wanted to do it and I wanted to do it, and Keating said he wasn't coming. And I said, "what's the matter, lost your nerve, or something? All right, you stay here!" So Arthur and I went down and we went out, way out beyond these things, and we were out of sight of even the machine gun nests, and still hoping for the army, and there wasn't much sound of anything. And suddenly we heard tanks, and we thought, Boy! Here they come! You see, and we hadn't even heard any gunfire appreciably, apart from very very distant stuff that we weren't that bothered with. Until suddenly there was some much closer gunfire, and bear in mind that we could only see a maximum of two miles on the flat, you see...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** ...from our height, and I'm not even six feet! I was only five, eight and a half then! And, Arthur, I don't think is much taller than me either. And we heard this gunfire, and to our horror, shells started to burst just short of us and immediately after that, you'd have one burst, and immediately after that, as though it was the same shell, it would burst behind us. Well, we let about five of these go and we, sort of, moved about a bit, obviously [chuckles] from side to side, thinking, "well there's not much point in going forwards or backwards if they're going to be bracketing us." Because, initially it was just like ordinary bracketing the gunfire, you know. And in the end, er, I said to Arthur, "well, [chuckles] I'm not sure if it's a good idea...it obviously isn't our people, it must be the bloody Huns!" Um, and he said, "well I think it's time to get out!" And I said, "well, you know, I'm inclined to agree with you, but I didn't like to be the first to say

so [laughs] in the circus...!" Anyway, we sort of belted off on a zig zag course and got back behind our own machine guns. But this gunning only stopped when we got virtually within range...within reach of our own machine gun nests...and they're only single machine guns and probably .5 mm, er .5 inch guns, and nothing else. And, um, we couldn't understand it, because we never saw a tank, and we couldn't understand how it was that you'd have a single shell that burst with apparently a bang and then burst again behind you, and nobody had ever heard of this before. And we got up top, eventually, up the escarpment...and this is why I mentioned [Geoff Keating] in the beginning...the blighter had cleared off with our truck!

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** So we'd got no transport and were left up there, you see. Well, by walking a fair distance, I knew where the headquarters was and Brigadier Willinson[?] was up there, so I said, "any news?" And he said, "no, I think we've lost it, you know, the boys won't be coming through today." And he said, "where have you been?" So I told him, and he said, "you silly so and so, you hadn't got a bloomin' chance down there, how did you get out of it?" I said, "well have you ever heard anything about these shells bursting like that?" He said, "no, never heard anything like it." And quite often, he and I used to go to parties in Alexandria and I'd drive him home afterwards, and that sort of thing. But, er, that was Arthur Graham and me, and I recognised him the moment I saw him at Pinewood...

**Alan Lawson:** Oh yes.

**David Prosser:** And remember...recall this scene. He said, "yes, you're quite right, perfectly true." And I thought, Keating! I never saw the beggar since! Cleared of and 'bunked' it!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** We got arrested by the Poles on the way back, actually.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** If it hadn't been for the fact that I knew the Polish Commander, or Polish Major in the Polish camp...er, and that he spoke a bit of English and French...we would probably have been shot. Because we hitch-hiked a lift back, with some other war correspondents in a thirty hundred weight truck, standing in the back of it...back to our camp in Tobruk...which was down in a waddy[??] the other side of the town from where we'd actually been, on the west side. We'd been on the south east side. And, suddenly...a truck drove up...and four very 'horsey' looking army characters, that we thought were Germans, came out with machine guns, or submachine...what are they called? Not, not the current Russian ones, but the old...

**Alan Lawson:** The tommy-guns....

**David Prosser:** Sten guns, things like that...you know, that kind of thing. And we thought, "God!" you know, "they're Germans!" They thought we were Germans...because we were all in very peculiar uniforms, you see. I mean, Arthur might have had a moderate army uniform on...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** I was wearing tropical-riding britches, a navy cap, probably with a khaki cap cover and different epaulettes from anybody else. Um...there was another chap there, whose name I can't remember, who was a Telegraph correspondent...Desmond Tighe[?]....

**Alan Lawson:** Yes.

**David Prosser:** ...he was wearing a battle dress made of, sort of, camel hair material. It was very sort of arty and [chuckles] peculiar. And, again, had something totally different on. Willie Forrest[?] was there in an Italian Greatcoat, um, with no 'flashes' up at all.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckling in background]

**David Prosser:** I don't know what sort of cap he was wearing! But we were all dressed very differently and peculiarly. So, this group, who turned out to be Poles, thought we were Germans, and we'd landed by parachute, you see, or...boat landings, rather, were expected at the time.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** So...they said, "Hans oop!", you see, and I said, "bloody [Huns]!" to Arthur, or somebody on my left...Desmond Tighe I think it was, actually. And, um, he said, "no they're not, they're Poles!" And I said, "Christ! That's worse!" Anyway, I was just measuring my distance, because the bloke who was holding me up with a gun...there were only four of them and there were about five or six of us...was just to my right hand here and I figured, I'd learned, I think, somewhere or other, a little bit of unarmed combat. And I thought, well, if I'm quick, pivoting on my right foot, I can just about with my right arm knock that bloke's gun up and kick him in the bracket before he can shoot me, you see! And I was just about to do this, when I saw out of the corner of this eye...fortunately I've got one hundred and eighty degree vision...[chuckles] you see, there was another bloke with his gun, sort of wavering between the two of us on my left, so I decided to give it a miss! Anyway, they disarmed us. I had a Unipod!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Which he disarmed me of, and, er...you know the old Newman Unipod with the strap and just a spike on it! And, um... the camera, I think, was probably on the truck. Oh, we'd got out for a 'Jimmy,' that's why we were out...all out of the truck when they arrived.

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** ...Er...on the way back. And, um, they herded us into their truck, including the driver of our truck, and, took us all back to the Polish camp. And we knew very well that the Poles had a sort of standing gag, particularly in Tobruk...whereby they never took prisoners...at any time. And, um, they used to joke, because when they shot down a JU88 or JU87, or whatever, from bombing Tobruk, we always used to catch up with them, and they'd come back

swarming with lighters and binoculars, and everything else. And you'd say, "what, no prisoners!" "No prisoners!" And this was the standard game with the Poles, you see.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** And we were convinced they...they knew we were Germans. And, as we entered the camp, fortunately, I saw this Major, whom I knew, in this Polish camp. And I called out to him in French, you know, "for Christ's sake, tell 'em we're British!" Or words to that effect. Which he duly did, and he had us stopped. Um, and I'm quite sure that otherwise they would have taken us out and shot us! Anyway, we all had to produce our war correspondent's licences, and...the Eisenhower one hadn't come in then, which would have been a super pass...

[Prosser calls to wife: 'Leave the door open, Darling. Let the breeze through, thanks.' 'Sorry to interrupt with that.']

**David Prosser:** Um...no, the thing was, this chap said, "well, we must get this checked with the Commanding General. I've forgotten his name, chap who was commanding Tobruk as a whole. Er... "Can any of you identify yourselves directly to him?" And I said, "well, you've only got our licences. But I happen to know the chap, he might know my voice, as I've got rather a peculiar one." So he said, "all right, well let's try him with the first one." And he tried...of course, you imagine 'TIGHE' being pronounced by a Pole...it's gonna sound rather different from what it sounds in English!

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yeah...

**David Prosser:** So, he spelt this name over the thing to the General and called it, "Te-herr!" Or something like that, you see. And, of course, the General didn't know. Then he said, "well, I've got another one here called 'Prosser.'" He said, "oh, well that names' familiar." And he pronounced it reasonably well. So, I said, "Look! Can I speak to the General? He know my voice." And he let me speak to him. And the General did actually recognise me, fortunately.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** So he then got back to the Major and cleared us all, so he bought us all a double whiskey all round and took us back to the camp! [Chuckles]

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckles]

**David Prosser:** But we thought we were very lucky! And that was the follow-up to the Arthur Graham [shelling] bit.

**Alan Lawson:** Um...looking back, you know...over...over the years you've been in the business...is there anything particularly...you're, what should I say...proud of or, if you like, is a highlight for you?

**David Prosser:** Do you mean as a story or from a personal point of view?

**Alan Lawson:** From a personal point of view really, I suppose.

**David Prosser:** Well, from a personal point of view...I am extremely grateful, because I think it's the best education anyone could have had in the world and you'd never get it today. But apropos of that, I'd like to site a case that I mentioned to you earlier on. Why Newsreel, per say, is such an exceptional thing in this day and age, and particularly from the historical point of view... I mentioned...the business of costing...crews to do the same sort of job today...

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** ...well there's one case in point. Again...this time Tobruk was not cut off, but I had got up there by ship and been taken to Derna, done the capture of Derna, filmed it and got back to Tobruk with a lift...and, then had no transport. And the only way to get back for a Malta convoy, which it was my job to cover in a couple of...two or three days time was to drive back through the desert. Nobody else was prepared to do it, nobody else was going, there wasn't a ship going. I'd...managed to capture in Derna, a 'Fiat 1100' car, which was about the same as something a bit bigger than a 'Panda' today, and...like a smallish 'Fiat' anyway. And it was a pillar-less saloon, first of it's kind. It was an Italian vehicle, which was shot up a bit by machine guns, when we captured it. And I'd managed to draw this as an official vehicle, to help me get round Derna and do the filming there after capture, and all this sort of thing...with the [Sheikh[?]] regiment. And...took it back to Tobruk and said, "well there's only one thing...I'll have to drive this back through the desert" (which I'd never done before) "to Alexandria." Well, to cut a long story short, everybody said, "you're bloody mad!" I had no tools on the car, I had a spare wheel, no compass, a speedometer that didn't work! Well, it showed speed but not distance. I had five jerry cans of water on it...and only two of petrol, which wouldn't take me two hundred and fifty miles of desert. But the radiator leaked like a sieve anyway. So I said, "well I'll go." And there was a South African camp I knew fifty miles south of the river... I turned south near the Egyptian border, er...near the German lines, so to speak. Um... "and I'll pick up something in a South African camp and pick up some petrol, hopefully at a petrol dump on the way as well." And, this I did, and to cut a long story short, a South African repaired the car a bit over Christmas day, '42...I suppose it would be. And, um, I went on back through the desert. Had rather one 'hairy' night, when I stopped the car for the night, to brew up and get some sleep, on the south side of a sand dune...bearing in mind that at this time, the German lines were all to the north of me and I was hoping that I was still south of them.

**Alan Lawson:** I see, yeah...

**David Prosser:** And, there were no tracks or courses or anything to take, and I'd been given a compass, fortunately, by the South Africans at Christmas, which I've still got. And, er, to my horror, just after I'd cut the engine - and, of course engines, as you know, when they're cooling down, make clanking noises - I heard somebody else draw up...what sounded like an armoured car or a tank, on the other side of this sand dune. I didn't even know whether it was one or two! So I was, obviously, somewhat petrified. It meant keeping dead quiet all night, and wondering how I was going to get started in the morning, if they didn't start up first. Well fortunately they did, and I got back, and I lost my coil on the way back, just as I'd got to the... lost my ignition coil, just as I got back up to the road out of Alexandria, but fortunately I was carrying a German

one because of my 'raven habits' of picking up anything I can on the way. And, taped that on with camera tape, got back, wrote a story, er...which a motor magazine gave me a centre page spread on, praising an enemy vehicle, for having got back through the desert on my own. I don't say this in any credit to myself, but I tried costing that operation, of one man getting back to Alexandria from an isolated cut off area, round the German lines, today, with helicopters. Because it's the only other way to do it if you haven't got a ship.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** Because of the crewing systems today, and...all right, you may think this is a knock at the union, but it isn't really, it's just a matter of fact, and...it applies to BBC staff and filming staff for television anyway, whatever they're filming for...you would have, at least a cameraman and a sound man, and quite possibly an assistant or a light boom swinger, or something like that as well. Plus a director, plus a PA or script girl, or somebody like that...to do that with, instead of a one-man band. To lift that lot, and the gear...unless you had a very big helicopter, which wouldn't be in very cheap supply in those conditions...you would probably need two if not three helicopters. That means two, at minimum, of two crew to each helicopter. If you tried that, bearing in mind that you've got no air support whatever and you've got no fighters of your own within range, and the only aircraft available are a couple of [chuckles] sort of, First World War Swordfish, on the nearby base at Tobruk...

**Alan Lawson:** [Chuckling] Yes, yeah...

**David Prosser:** ...er, which were told not to dive at more than one hundred and ten miles an hour, so you can imagine the kind of speed we cruised at, in those! Er...it would cost a great many lives and two, or three rather expensive aeroplanes... and you wouldn't get the story. As it was, I got back, joined the Malta Convoy and did the job!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughing] Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** But that's the contrast between working on that kind of basis and today, you see... Oh, I forgot! You'd have a reporter as well, of course. Whereas in our case, we used to write or own commentaries, or something, you see... where necessary.

**Alan Lawson:** You've obviously enjoyed your life.

**David Prosser:** Oh yes! Couldn't have been much better really.

**Alan Lawson:** No regrets?

**David Prosser:** [Pause] Things one might have done...and didn't. That's all. Not in connection really with the story, but...no, I don't think so. As I say, I'm glad I left university because I don't think I could have had a better education in life, um, at a university, it wouldn't have taught me how to cope, adequately with people and things, and, stories and...learning, really. I mean I learned more with the BBC than I ever learned with Movietone, probably. I learned a great deal with the Navy, which is still with me...a great deal! Um...no, I think...um, it's been a very good

life. I've been very fortunate. It's just, um, a snag really, that it sort of, tends to fold up, and as I said earlier on, nothing really seems to get any better now, socially. Um...there's more trouble, more starvation, more horror more human misery, than ever there was in those days, which I find most regrettable, and unjust, to say the least of it.

**Alan Lawson:** Did you ever take part in any, um...other than joining ACT en masse, did you ever take part in...did you ever become a shop steward or anything?

**David Prosser:** I was at...at Ealing I was...I wasn't chairman, I was general secretary or something of the ABS.

**Alan Lawson:** Oh you were...ah ha...ah ha...

**David Prosser:** I was extremely active in ABS.

**Alan Lawson:** ABS? Ah ha.

**David Prosser:** Not so well in ACT, I was always having rows with Sapper.

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs over interviewee]

**David Prosser:** [indecipherable] I got on all right with his predecessor, but Sapper and I were always having rows at meetings.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes...George Elvin you mean?

**David Prosser:** George Elvin was all right, yeah. But, no, Sapper and I were always having... so much so that, because he knew my kind of attitude to his kind of attitude that I used to be able to get him out of meetings when there was a big 'do' on, to talk to him on the telephone and warn him about something.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** because that was the one thing that I'd 'boobed' with union-wise, was the fact that I tended to treat him in the same way as I used to treat all my colleagues, and that was that they were always told everything.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes.

**David Prosser:** Um...I never kept secrets. Er, other than for Intelligence purposes, or anything like that, obviously. Um...but, er...no, with the ABS, I drafted this scheme, which probably I think was after you'd moved on...as a result of many meetings with management and with the crews, mobile crews as well, for proper total costing... for the BBC. Largely because I'd been working on all sorts of documentary programmes, including one particular one, I think on housing, with the chap who subsequently became Editor of News at AP, whose name again has escaped me, but he was a very, very 'way out' director at the time. And, with whom I got on

extremely well, er...but we were called, not only on his jobs, but on many others, for nine o'clock in the morning and we'd be lucky if we started shooting before three, and sometimes hadn't even had lunch.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** So I drafted a scheme, whereby the programme would be charged with the time and services of that crew, plus all the equipment and everything else, and I drafted the whole scheme, which subsequently went into operation about three or four years later...or maybe five years later. It cost the BBC three quarters of a million for financial consultants to check up on my scheme and put it into operation, you see!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs]

**David Prosser:** Anyway, I spent three months as Vice Chairman, or whatever it was in the ABS, I really don't remember...going around all the mobile crews, with a written paper saying, "these are the conditions we would like, have you any comments? Agree or disagree." And, from memory, 99.5 or 99.9 % agreed and wrote a few comments in with mere modifications of what we wanted. Meanwhile, I knew, because of meetings with management, not on an ABS standard, but because I was involved with other management meetings for some reason or other, I don't really recall...possibly as an acting [faung??] or something like that...no, I wasn't a [faung??] by that stage...I don't think. Anyway, it doesn't particularly matter...because of that, I was fully aware, having discussed it, at length, with management, that this would be the only efficient way to operate and it was all costing the BBC an awful lot of public money, which I regarded as totally wasted.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** And I'd always been very conscious of public money, oddly enough! Which was probably why I was honest with my expenses and everything else. Um...well they were all in agreement. And they said, "yes, damn good idea! But you'll never get it past the unions." So I said, "well try me" you know. "I'll have a go." Which I did. Now, the only objections we had were from the electricians, and...I think Tubby had got a copy of this paper, or something like that, and showed it to them in the studio, or something, and they said, "no" they wouldn't have any part of it. And it meant paying...the compensating factor was...it meant paying, for the first time, overtime or EDP, as it was called, to staff who had to work more than normal hours. And, the other thing that I suggested was that, as an alternative at the whim of the individual member of staff, as alternative to EDP he should be able to take compensatory leave at the rate of, whatever it was, on half an hour or one and a half hours for an hour...I forget now. Anyway, the upshot was that the moment ABS heard about it they said, "you can't possibly do this, we can't have it!" So, I consulted with the members again and the committee and everybody else, chatted with the boys. And, they said...they agreed. I said, "well the only thing we can do is to offer ABS the alternative of having this story blown in all the National newspapers, and I'll file it... I'll file the story, to the effect that we're striking..." (It'll be an overtime ban rather, not an actual strike...it'll be an overtime ban) "...against the Union. No problems with management, all in agreement. No problem with staff, all in agreement. Just the union says no." And that stopped

'em. And in the end they had to put it into operation. And, they didn't want it because they didn't want to put it into operation for all the other crews like OBs and people like that, and ultimately, as you know, it went through everybody.

**Alan Lawson:** Ah hmm, ah hmm.

**David Prosser:** But that was finally...I only tore up the papers for that a year or so ago. That original draft. But that's, I felt, was a certain amount of achievement in the interests of public money rather than anything else.

**Alan Lawson:** As it were...you've left a monument...[chuckles]

**David Prosser:** Yeah, that's what...in a way, what I meant by not having won anything by promotion, because I caused so much trouble you see, because the moment I arrived in the BBC I redesigned the transport system for the film unit, and read the paper on that, which was agreed by Dorte and put into operation.

**Alan Lawson:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David Prosser:** And, there was something else... I can't remember what it was, but I wrote another paper, and whenever Prosser wrote a paper it was, "oh it's dead trouble!" Big changes were in the air, and they happened! And that...that financial change, I think, was an incredible thing. The thing that horrified me, I've only received 'Ariel'[?] for the first time for about five years today. And I was staggered to look at the low salaries...I don't wonder they're on strike, I'd probably join 'em now...I've never been on strike before, never.

**Alan Lawson:** Well, I think, I think we've finished, I don't know?

**David Prosser:** Good!!

**Alan Lawson:** [Laughs] Thanks Dave, very much!