

# Peggy Gick (art director/production designer) b.1911

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**BIOGRAPHY:** Peggy Gick trained at the Architectural Association. She began working in British films as an assistant to Art Director Edward Carrick on *Lorna Doone* (1935). She worked on various features during the 1930s including *The Amateur Gentleman* (1936) and *Midshipman Easy* (1935) often as assistant to Carrick. During WW2, Gick did graphic work for the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and on *The First of the Few* (1942) before joining the Crown Film Unit, where she worked on designs for films such as *Close Quarters* and *Western Approaches* (1944). She was Art Director on many films made for the Children's Film Foundation during the 1960s, including *The Magnificent Six and a Half* (1968) and then later *Here Come the Double Deckers* (1970) for television. Gick also worked on a number of post-war films, sometimes alongside her husband, the Art Director Scott MacGregor. **SUMMARY:** In this interview Peggy Gick talks to John Legard about her career as an Art Director. She talks in detail about the planning and design skills required for the job, and recalls the working practices of various colleagues including Peter Proud and Edward Carrick. She discusses the importance of advance planning, particularly for television work, and she recalls her husband's experience, particularly working for Hammer. Gick talks in detail about the production of films such as *The Day They Robbed the Bank of England* (1959), *Khartoum* (1966), *The Vengeance of Fu Manchu* (1967) and *The Secret of My Success* (1965), reflecting on the crucial relationships between the Art Director, the Director and the Producer.

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Tape 1, Side 1

**John Legard:** Now Peggy, perhaps you'd like to tell us a little bit about your early life?

**Peggy Gick:** My father was a civil servant who, curiously enough, worked for the Navy. Because the Navy didn't do it's own store...it did it's own catering, it didn't do it's own supplies or fuel or anything. That was all done by the civil service, called the Naval Store Department, and my father was in it and finally got to the point when he was head of it. But his work took him around the various dockyards, from Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth...up to Scotland, and we tended to travel round, according to which one he was attached to. At the beginning of the First

World War, when I was three...I was born in 1911 in Weymouth. My brother was born a year and a half later in Portland...in [an] official residence [laughs] which he lived in, and as soon as the war came he was shot straight up to Scotland. And so we moved and for the whole of the First World War we moved around Scotland, from Invergordon to Aberdeen to Edinburgh, and we came back to Weymouth for a bit when he was travelling, and then came up to London. First of all we lived down in Kent and went to school there. I went to art school...I left school at the age of fifteen...

**John Legard:** In Kent...Canterbury or somewhere?

**Peggy Gick:** No, we lived in a place called Westgate which is near Margate. And at the age of fifteen, I'd just managed to pass my School Cert., and my mother said, "well you're not going to waste your time at school any longer" so I went to art school. And I was [singularly] lucky because there was an art school that worked two days a week in Margate and three days a week in Ramsgate, and I used to get the train over. And we had two really super art masters. One had come down from the Royal College because the old head had died and the other one had come down because he had bad health. They were both very good art masters...they fought because they disagreed...which was very stimulating for the students! [Laughs.] Two years training there, that I've always been grateful for, from when I was fifteen to seventeen. Then we moved to London because [the family said, well quite rightly you know,] my elder sister also used to want to go on the stage, and I went to the [Architectural Association].

**John Legard:** Did your interest in art start right from an early age?

**Peggy Gick:** Well I was always drawing and I was always drawing houses. I didn't know quite what I wanted to do, but my mother curiously, she was very bright, she said, "I think you ought to be an architect." [Laughs.] This is why she sent me to art school! And I wasn't at all sure about it, but she was dead right, because as soon as I went into it I realised it was exactly what I wanted to do, you know. And then having finished my training, it was just at the time when we were really in the deep depression in the late twenties, early thirties, and the only jobs one got were odd jobs. If an architect got a bit of work he took you on for three or four weeks and then you were out. And at the end of one of these I came back to the secretary at the Architectural Association [who] used to act more-or-less as sort of employment help for us. I said, 'what's going?' And he said, "well the architectural world's a bit quiet but three film companies have rung up." So I thought, well let's give it a go.

**John Legard:** So really the films started at a very early age then? While you were still...

**Peggy Gick:** [Chuckling.] Yeah...1933, '34. The first one I went to see was out at BIP, which was Cameron Menzies who was doing...what was it... ['The Shape of Things to Come'] wasn't it? I think...

**John Legard:** Yeah...about that, yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** And he said, "well I've just taken on somebody but come back in a couple of weeks." Meanwhile I went down to Ealing who were also asking for somebody and there I saw [Teddy Carrick] and he took me on at once! [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** Oh really! So you started at Ealing then?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. And I finished on the last six weeks of 'Lorna Doone' and er...

**John Legard:** So what were you actually doing? What was your job there when you first started those first few weeks?

**Peggy Gick:** Well actually of course I was a draftsman. Most of the time I was...I seem to remember at one time I was busy popping tulips into some grassy bank for Lorna's bower! [Laughs.] I was doing all sorts of odd jobs!

**John Legard:** Hmm. So you were like a trainee really, weren't you?

**Peggy Gick:** Suppose so...

**John Legard:** Because I mean, although you had your architectural, your art experience, you were nevertheless having to tackle the film thing, which is...

**Peggy Gick:** I remember Edward saying, "now the first thing you've got to do is forget all you know about architecture, because film sets are designed differently." Which was perfectly true, because the whole thing on a film set is your detail has got to be at eye-line. Now normally in architecture the columns of interest are up there! [Chuckles.] And I've always remembered that one...and er...

**John Legard:** Hmm...different ball game altogether isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Absolutely. Anyhow I finished six weeks and then I left and that was it. And then he rang me up again, sometime later to start a film called ['Mid-Shipman Easy?'] which was Carol Reed's first film. Because he'd been Basil Deane's first assistant and Basil Deane had gone off to Austria to make ['Whom the Gods Love'], and Carol Reed was given his chance of ['Mid-Shipman Easy']. As it was a 'C' film and as I knew about boats, because my brother and I owned a boat...

**John Legard:** Your connection with the Navy!

**Peggy Gick:** Yep! [Chuckles.] I was taken on to do the drawing. I was [only] assistant. [Wilfred Shingleton] was, I think, on another film...I think he'd gone onto the Mozart film - otherwise he was Edward's assistant then. And the only help we had was an old seaman who helped us technically over the ship, and I did all the drawings, and then on very first week of shooting, Edward went down with flu! [JL laughs] And there was I left to cope with this film. [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Now...sorry, this was being shot at Ealing?

**Peggy Gick:** At Ealing.

**John Legard:** At Ealing Studios, yeah, hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** And we built the deck of the ship right up on scaffolding so we [were] above the height of the [local] building, so by shooting low we got a skyline, and we shot all that deck stuff out of doors, which made it look very good.

**John Legard:** So how many were you in the art department?

**Peggy Gick:** Me and Edward! [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** Apart from the fact that you...oh I see, yes, hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** [Chuckling.] We were two!

**John Legard:** And he'd gone down with flu like everybody else...

**Peggy Gick:** He'd gone down with flu and I was left to cope. And they would call for me on the floor and I used to [ring] their marvellous old Irish master carpenter, who was a lovely chap. And I used to ring him up and say, 'Ted, meet me on the floor.' And I'd take the old expert down with me and I used to go down there and [anybody that] asked a question I'd look at Ted and he'd shake his head or nod it and I'd give the answer. They said, you know... "Can you put a dolly up?" I didn't even know what a dolly was! [Laughs.] Anyhow I got through the week and when Edward came back he said, "you look ten years older" and I said, 'I feel it!' [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** God! It's a baptism of fire that, isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** God, it was a nightmare! But somehow we did get through. And it wasn't...we had a very nice production manager, whose name I forget...and it wasn't until the end of [the summer?] that he came to me and said, "by the way, how much experience have you had?" [Laughing.] He never asked me before!

**John Legard:** Six weeks in fact, wasn't it? Wasn't it...

**Peggy Gick:** Six weeks...six weeks is all I'd had.

**John Legard:** ...six weeks with 'Lorna Doone' or whatever?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh it was murder!

**John Legard:** Well I suppose that's a very good way of learning but I'm surprised [that it wasn't anybody else]...I suppose...what about the...

**Peggy Gick:** When we started the next [one], out at BIP...um... '[Dear/There but a Gentleman]'...that was a big film. But there was me and Edward, and we did take on a junior draftsman for that...but that was all we had, you've no idea how small the art departments were!

**John Legard:** What about from...

**Peggy Gick:** [???] did their own set dressing!

**John Legard:** ...from an ACT point of view...had ACT started at that time?

**Peggy Gick:** They barely existed actually.

**John Legard:** 1934...they probably hadn't really started had they?

**Peggy Gick:** No...

**John Legard:** And I suppose people were coming in on an ad hoc basis...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, hmm. And he used to drive me mad on the way he worked, because Edward would not...

**John Legard:** [Edward Carrick] we're talking about?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** He wouldn't draw anything until he'd got it totally fixed in his head. And I was desperate for the working drawings and so, no...he'd be walking around the garden thinking about it or [???] somewhere. And he said, "oh it's all right, it'll only take you half-an-hour" and he'd come in...he knew it was going to take me four hours to do these drawings. But at that time at BIP we had four films in...we were doing ['The Amateur Gentleman'] with Douglas Fairbanks. Um...I've forgotten his name...the [outlet] was [Mearson...Mr Lazir]...

**John Legard:** [Lazir Mearson]...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, that's right...

**John Legard:** ...that painless name, yeah, from Korda days.

**Peggy Gick:** He was doing it with Bergman. And there was a film called [Abdul the Grand]...[Johnny Mead] was the art director, and there was another film...

**John Legard:** Who was the art director?

**Peggy Gick:** [Johnny Mead].

**John Legard:** [Mead]...

**Peggy Gick:** He was very good on Middle Eastern stuff. And there was another film going on because I think, at that time, they had a resident art director at BIP, because they used to make their own films, apart from anything else...

**John Legard:** This is Elstree of course, isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** Yeah, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** His name was something [Elder] and he had four art directors under him. One of them, I think, was [David Drawnsley], one was [Peter Proud], the other one was [Cedric Dawes]...I can't remember who the fourth was, but all people who...you know, became very big art directors afterwards. But that...you had night gangs working, all the time...so you always stayed 'till eight o'clock to see the night gang on.

**John Legard:** What was the scheduling like? I mean, I imagine...how long did they have between the time they received your drawings to...you know...was it working on a knife-edge all the time or did they allow a sensible amount of time?

**Peggy Gick:** Nothing was sensible! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** For the big pictures? I imagine that with Cameron Menzies probably he would...

**Peggy Gick:** I can't remember. Well I don't know him because I didn't work for him. I don't remember how much preparation, I know we had very little, always. And everything of course was done in the studio, there was practically no location work at all in those days...a lot of the exteriors were done interior, and all the Lorna Doone stuff was.

**John Legard:** Was that in...yeah...studio?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm, yes. They built this great outdoor scene.

**John Legard:** What about ['Mid-Shipman Easy']...that had a certain amount of location work didn't it, I imagine?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, a little there I think.

**John Legard:** I remember the film quite well, it was on television not so long ago.

**Peggy Gick:** The deck stuff was all done, as I say, on this deck that was built [up].

**John Legard:** That of course, ['Mid Shipman Easy'] was Hughie Green was the star, wasn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** That's right, yes.

**John Legard:** Because funnily enough I got to know him slightly, 'cause he lives down the road here, you know, near Baker Street and I met him in the wine bar occasionally. We were talking about those days once, I remember... But anyway, sorry, that's a slight digression. So we're at BIP, Elstree...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh it was murder! Edward would come along at about six o'clock in the evening... "This is the plan for this set you're going to do." We didn't even have printing machines in those days!

**John Legard:** Right...

**Peggy Gick:** So everything I drew, I had to take a tracing of to keep for reference. I was trying to get...I remember one time...I was trying to get a big set out and I had the carpenters and the plasterers and everybody coming up saying, "what have we got? We must have some work to give the night gang!" And I said, [chuckling] "Look, there you are, there's a couple of arches!" to the carpenter, "and get that lot built!" And I could say to the plasterer, "Look, we want these columns [by that time]" so they'd get on with the...and I was literally working like that, until we got the stuff all sorted out for the night gang to come on. And we usually...oh God knows...we stayed 'till ten o'clock very often at night.

**John Legard:** This is again because you were short staffed...I mean normally speaking you would have had, or in latter days, you would have more people working with you wouldn't you?

**Peggy Gick:** Well they had to have a night gang because you had to get the stuff built because of the stage space for one thing, you know, you've got to get the stuff up...

**John Legard:** Strike the set?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm, 'cause this is the problem of course, I remember, coming to later, but to digress for a moment...doing a film up at MGM, when we had a lot of quite big sets with one day shooting each and only two stages! This was murder, because you'd got the one day on that, they're going to be the next day on the next set and you haven't been able to strike it 'cause they were on it yesterday. [Chuckles.] It got very difficult! And I think that's what...with so many films on at BIP, we couldn't have had much stage space, I can't remember exactly how much we had.

**John Legard:** That sounds quite a healthy period in British filmmaking...

**Peggy Gick:** It was very busy, yes.

**John Legard:** ...in 1935 we're talking about, '34, '35?

**Peggy Gick:** [???] Then I went to [Walton Hall] 'cause Douglas Fairbanks Junior formed his own company, but that was...[Maurice Helman] wasn't it?

**John Legard:** [Marcel Helman].

**Peggy Gick:** [Marcel Helman] that's right. And somebody called...what was his...somebody...American director, I can't remember his name. We did two or three films down there....

**John Legard:** Can you think of the titles of the films?

**Peggy Gick:** One was called ['Jump for Glory']...can't remember the others at the moment.

**John Legard:** What was that like...[Walton Hall]? That's long since...

**Peggy Gick:** It was a nice little studio, I liked it very much.

**John Legard:** Was that one of the London films...that was a Korda...was that a Korda studio?

**Peggy Gick:** I don't know whether it had been...

**John Legard:** Hmm...I think they [???]...

**Peggy Gick:** It was only a small studio, we had the small...it could only take one film at a time.

**John Legard:** Right, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And so we had it for three...as I say two or three films.

**John Legard:** So meanwhile, I mean, you were learning by experience as it were...

**Peggy Gick:** Very much so! [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** But did you get...

**Peggy Gick:** But you see in those days you didn't have set dressers for one thing, and funnily enough I still [and so did Mac and so did Edward], we were always [very cheery of set dressers??] because he said, "the most important thing in the set is the dressing, because that's what you see." You don't see the distance, you know...half the time you're in mid shot and close shot...what you see is this bit here and therefore it's all important. And the character of the set is in the dressing. And so we always liked, when possible to dress our own sets. And I notice this when you look at some television films, I sometimes think, that's not an art director, that's an interior decorator! Because what they've done is a nice looking set but it's got no character, it has no relation to the people. And I've had people say to me sometimes, "do you really like that set?" I said, "Of course I don't like it! It's not what I like, it's what the character likes!" [Chuckles.] They couldn't see it, you know? Particularly people doing commercials.

**John Legard:** And I suppose some directors too had ideas on the subject...I mean, [some of the] more creative directors?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes! Well you wanted to have a chat with your director...trouble is with some of them to get them to communicate.

**John Legard:** And did you have your favourite lighting cameraman to do your work justice as it were? I mean, did you have favourite people then?

**Peggy Gick:** Well I only worked on [such] a lot of small films...I'm trying to think. I've worked with a lot of very good cameramen. [Bunny Onions] was a very excellent cameraman [and he] always worked on small stuff I think. Operators were generally my enemies...

**John Legard:** Why was that?

**Peggy Gick:** Because they would alter things without asking you. If they thought they wanted a bit of dressing somewhere they'd tell the prop man to put it [in]... "What the hell have you done this for? It's totally out of character!" "Oh we had to fill it up." I said, "Well why don't you come and ask me?"

**John Legard:** They wanted...because [there wasn't??] a frame, they wanted...

**Peggy Gick:** They wanted something there...

**John Legard:** Something balanced up, yeah.

I was an operator!

**Peggy Gick:** You were an operator? I hope you weren't one of those! I tell you who was a super man...[Suse Coolley]...he was marvellous. He never would do it without asking you to look through the camera when he wanted something done. And...what's-his-name was another one...[Gus] somebody...

**John Legard:** Langford? No...

**Peggy Gick:** Can't remember...Gus someone...he was a jolly good operator.

Gus [Dress]?

**Peggy Gick:** Probably, yes... The really good ones always asked you and consulted you...it was the bright young sparks who were coming along that were a damn nuisance! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** I remember a camera operator we had at Crown and whom I got to know a bit more afterwards, [Noel Rowland]...do you remember [Noel Rowland]?

**Peggy Gick:** I remember the name.

**John Legard:** Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes!

**John Legard:** He was a very stylish operator, very precise I remember. [Well they would have to be but...you know...]

**Peggy Gick:** I think he turned up for a short time when I worked for [Lyndhurst], the [Uni Lever] advertising agency...I think he turned up there once or twice.

**John Legard:** So now what about [Teddy Carrick]? Because...well you were rejoined up with him when Crown started I suppose weren't you?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** Yeah. But I mean, he gave you your first job on 'Lorna Doone'...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes...

**John Legard:** ...and then did you work with him again?

**Peggy Gick:** No, what happened? I worked with him...oh, I suppose off and on until the war. But there were quite long patches in between times because he wasn't doing film work. He had a studio in Soho Square and we used to do design work apart from films. And then as soon as the war came, the first thing that happened was that I got inveigled into going to Northern Ireland to [Woolfe and Holder?] to do designs for anti-submarine netting for ships. [Chuckles.] It never came to anything! And so after that...that's right I left that 'cause [there was no work]. And then Edward rang up, that's right, he'd got some work for the RAF to do scenic backgrounds for a thing called [the Link trainer], I don't know whether you've ever heard about it?

**John Legard:** Yeah.

**Peggy Gick:** In a drum. And they did preliminary training and all these backings had to be painted. And so he got me onto that and that's how I met Mac, 'cause he was on it too.

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And we worked on that for...Edward left it...he left I think to go to [what was then] the GPO Film Unit. Mac and I stayed on until they'd finished, and then I started a job...

**John Legard:** You say 'Mac'...this is [Scott MacGregor]?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. And then I started a job for the Ministry of Aircraft Production, who wanted a map made of the whole of the [Wear] area, for chaps to practice bombing. Which meant we had to do maps of the whole of the area and then they were going to reduce this down to a slide about [that size] which they then projected down on to the floor. And that took us a long time, we had to do it all in sections and then it had to be all stuck together and er...

**John Legard:** So you were actually employed by the Ministry of Aircraft Production or whatever?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** Sorry...[Ministry of War?].

**Peggy Gick:** And as soon as that was finished I went out to Denham to work on ['Face of the Few'].

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes. So actually it's interesting because you were never attached to any studios specifically, you were always freelance?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, yes, hmm.

**John Legard:** Which gave you a lot of freedom, so you were able to diversify quite a bit within your area of activity. So in between films, even before the war, presumably you were doing other things?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, doing lots of other stuff, yes. And er, then I went...

**John Legard:** Did you do art work; painting in your own right? I mean did you do er...

**Peggy Gick:** Um...well I did a few small architectural jobs. I did a mural for...I was employed at Westminster School for quite a long time because in their huge big school hall which had been bombed during the war, it had the [armorial bearings] of all the [???], all the well known boys. And these all had to be replaced, so I was years doing that work.

**John Legard:** Were you?

**Peggy Gick:** Yeah...in between other things I used to do them. And I've done some other restoration work for them down there. And that fitted in with um... 'cause [when] I left Crown because I was going to have a child, and then we got this house...

**John Legard:** Yeah, and of course that was later on?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes...and that took me all my time...I thought there's no question of doing any work until we get this house in order!

**John Legard:** No, quite.

**Peggy Gick:** [So/Also] we decided, I decided to have another kid, so...[chuckles.] And then I started off just working to amuse myself until the commercials turned up and they were an absolute joy because I could do them...they were two or three days work, and usually in the West End, so I could combine that with looking after children. I couldn't do a long film 'cause I wasn't going to be out of the place...you know, I hadn't got enough um...

**John Legard:** Oh that's marvellous...I didn't realise you had so much diversifying...it's very good. Well now let's just go back to...where were we, 1939 or something like that?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...

**John Legard:** The end of the feature period and getting involved in documentary.

**Peggy Gick:** I seem to remember at the beginning of the war we were all totally out of work, wondering what the heck was going to happen! [Chuckles.] And then I got...

**John Legard:** When you say "we"...was that just you?

**Peggy Gick:** Edward as well, I mean he was out of work too, and then I got into the...first of all into the Navy and then into the...he got this other job and I went with him.

**John Legard:** Oh it was GPO was it?

**Peggy Gick:** No the...no,

**John Legard:** Oh sorry...[you said that you were ???]

**Peggy Gick:** No the first one was with the Navy...

**John Legard:** You were with the Navy, yes hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And then I left that 'cause there really wasn't enough work to do, and he wanted help, so I went to him...that was the Ministry...no that was the Ministry of Aircraft Production, yes...

**John Legard:** Yes, quite.

**Peggy Gick:** I did the map for them and then went back to films.

**John Legard:** Hmm...yes, so is there any way you were er...when did you start work with [Dalrymple] and Crown and all that? [Ian Dalrymple] I'm talking about...

**Peggy Gick:** That would have been '41.

**John Legard:** Hmm. Oh you said you went to Denham on ['First of the Few']...

**Peggy Gick:** 'First of the Few' first yes. And then they wanted me to go on 'In Which We Serve' and I wouldn't, I er...

**John Legard:** Was that the first time you'd worked at Denham Studios?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. [Over next question:] The only time actually...

**John Legard:** How did you find that? What was that like compared with say...[Walton Hall]?

**Peggy Gick:** Um...I'm just trying to think...because I was only a draftsman there... There was [Carmen Dillan] and [Paul ???, ???] and I didn't have much to do with...not a lot to do with the floor, it was mostly drafting.

**John Legard:** What did you call yourself in the early films? You were the Art Director I suppose, were you in some of them? [???

**Peggy Gick:** Well [chuckles] I must say [???] I was assistant until after the war and then I started after the war as an art director, somehow or other...God knows how! It was quite difficult...but I managed to start back as an art director instead of as an assistant. Largely because of Mac working in the industry, I'd kept myself up to date, so I knew what was happening! [Chuckles.] Only I started on commercials, which were pretty easy anyway! [Chuckles.] So that um, you know, I was able to get back.

**John Legard:** Did you get credits on the films before the war?

**Peggy Gick:** 'Western Approaches'...well no, during the war; none of them before the war, no.

**John Legard:** And I suppose then the credit would just go to the art director on the film, or whoever it was when...[???] or...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, I mean that was in the days when the credits would have been the producer, the director, the art director, the cameraman, possibly the editor and that was it. And I think these [rolls/rows and rows] that go on now, I'm totally bored with them, I can't think why we have to have them! [Laughter] And they don't mean a thing!

**John Legard:** They don't mean a thing, they're just...

**Peggy Gick:** I mean why does the cameraman have the same [treads] as the runner? You know it's so stupid isn't it? [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Work for the graphics people that's all.

**Peggy Gick:** I don't [believe]...hmm?

**John Legard:** Good work for the graphics people.

**Peggy Gick:** That's about all. I have a feeling it started with television because the television people [are/were] mad about credits weren't they? Everything to them was...you had to have a credit [and it wasn't a question of how many good credits you...?]

**John Legard:** [Whatever]...you had...although you didn't have credits before the war, you had a lot of good work tucked under your belt so your reputation must have been er...you know, quite [???].

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, well probably it was after the war. It was much easier for me, 'cause Mac had a very difficult time, because he started in films in Crown with Edward. But I left Crown...God knows when...[???] Mac. Because Mac was working as an assistant to [???]....

**John Legard:** So when did Mac start work in films...with Teddy?

**Peggy Gick:** He started...yes when I left. Because he'd been working with a scenic artist and so Edward took Mac on in Crown with a draftsman and Mac did all the set dressing and stuff, which he knew a lot more about. [Well, he was] very well...[slight pause] he was [observant] of life and things so that he was very right for that sort of work. But then when Crown closed, Mac of course was not known at all in films and had quite a hard time. I was known; they kept ringing me up, but no way with two small children could I possibly go and work in films.

**John Legard:** Of course not, no.

**Peggy Gick:** And no way was I going to go out while he stayed at home and looked after the children. I mean things are different now but in those days it wouldn't have worked! [Laughs.] So we had a fairly lean period until he got himself a decent job. And then of course the commercials came along and I was able to get back into films.

**John Legard:** Then you got back in, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** But again, to go back to...['First of the Few'], you were draftsman on that and then I think Crown Film Unit were actually at Denham at that time weren't they?

**Peggy Gick:** No they were over at Pinewood.

**John Legard:** Oh they'd moved to Pinewood had they, by the time...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, yes...

**John Legard:** ...you worked on ['First of the Few'].

**Peggy Gick:** And when ['The First of the Few'] had finished...

**John Legard:** I know they were at...they were in the old um, you know the cutting rooms at Crown...

**Peggy Gick:** That's right...

**John Legard:** When they made 'Target for Tonight' that was at er...

**Peggy Gick:** At Denham was it?

**John Legard:** ...at Denham...

**Peggy Gick:** That must have been before I went there...

**John Legard:** ...and that was probably before you joined them?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. But anyhow when ['First of the Few'] was finishing they wanted me to go on 'In Which We Serve'...

**John Legard:** Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** ...and I didn't, I preferred to go to Crown.

**John Legard:** So you had the opportunity of joining [Teddy Carrick] at Crown?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, for less money but I found they were...well what really annoyed me was [chuckling] when I started off [I think it was Sid Streeter, he always remembers, I really ???] He came along with an enormous...I said, 'what do you want me to do [for/from] a start point?' And he produced a great photograph of a gun on a deck or something and he said, "Make a drawing." I said, "From this? You're asking me to make a drawing so that somebody can build it, from this photograph?" "There's some drawings somewhere." You know...and this is the thing they could never understand; that everything is built as a drawing. I went through...in ['Close Quarters']...

**John Legard:** ['Close Quarters']...

**Peggy Gick:** I nearly went mad! Because I could not get the drawings of the submarine. And I went down to see [Ives]. I said, "Look, over at Denham, 'In Which We Serve', because Coward's a friend of Mountbatten, [so] they're getting everything they want in the way of help. I am making a film for the Navy and I can't get any co-operation at all!" And finally [chuckles] there was a very nice little chap I used to go and see out here, um...[??? Liaison]...[Lieutenant Commander] who was working [???] and he was [???]...I used to go and see him. And he was complaining to his Admiral, and I think it got to the notice of another Admiral that we were complaining about not getting any co-operation or any help and he said, "it's got to a point where [???] in disagreement with two Admirals and they are going to send someone down to assess you. For God's sake tell all your chaps to look really gloomy, otherwise I'm in trouble!" [laughter]

**John Legard:** That's interesting...yeah.

**Peggy Gick:** So they sent this man down. He said, "didn't think I needed one expert, they thought I needed two." Oh God! In actual fact they sent down, eventually one man [for Vickers Armstrong] up north and he and I went through all the things that I'd got. He said, "you want drawings number [so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so, etc]...every single drawing has been sent to the Admiral...we always send them a copy. [But no way did they know about it or were able to let me have them." ] Anyhow this poor chap was sent to me for a month and we'd done the work we needed from him in two days really, he was hanging around doing nothing...getting bored.

**John Legard:** Yeah...so this was your film called ['Close Quarters'] we're talking about now, which was directed by [Jack Lee]...about the submarine service. And that was the equivalent of the one that was...well it was the documentary version of one that had been made by Ealing or someone. It wasn't the one called ['We Dive At Dawn']?

**Peggy Gick:** That was made afterwards!

**John Legard:** Oh that was made afterwards was it? Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** Because when our submarine was finished they took it up to [north] at [Blythes] somewhere for training purposes I think.

**John Legard:** Did they?

**Peggy Gick:** And then [???] used it...I thought, the stupid idiots! If they'd come to me I could have given them the drawings which would have helped them also, but they didn't ask me! [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** Hmm...so it must have been very frustrating indeed. But eventually you got...I remember that interior of that submarine, because I used to go onto the set when I was a trainee.

**Peggy Gick:** When I first looked at it, Edward just gave me the photograph and said, "this is passed to you, I'm going on holiday." I thought, oh God, it looks like a plate of spaghetti! [Chuckles.] Where do we start?

**John Legard:** [Chuckling.] Yes, yes...

**Peggy Gick:** And [they gave us] the accommodation plans, the actual shape, but I couldn't get anything else out of them...

**John Legard:** No, right...

**Peggy Gick:** ...everywhere I went it was, you know total frustration.

**John Legard:** Well there's so much detail!

**Peggy Gick:** I went out with Edward to see Anthony [Kimmons], and we still didn't get any help! And finally by [plugging and plugging] and cursing to this young Lieutenant Commander we got...

**John Legard:** Did that delay the completion of the film?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh no, I had plenty of work to get on with, but I couldn't do the things I needed until I got the details of... And then the great time came when a lot of stuff came up from [Chatham], actual equipment, you know [chronometers] and this that and the other. And great

excitement came when all this stuff arrived in these lorries and we were able to put it into the place!

**John Legard:** There was an enormous amount of...gosh...craftsmanship wasn't there? And those sets and...there was so much detail, they were wonderful, those interiors of planes and submarines and so on.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, hmm...[they were very hard films].

**John Legard:** What other films did you work on at Crown at around that time?

**Peggy Gick:** Well there were so...you see I used to do bits and pieces. We worked for the Army...the RAF had their own art director, they had...

**John Legard:** Yes of course, they were all at Pinewood together weren't they?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, yes.

**John Legard:** Army and RAF?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. The Navy used to come in and want bits and pieces done every now and then. All sorts of [???] used to turn up. But I did so many bits...in fact, funnily enough I turned up, not very long ago, I turned up a notebook [???] you know...[what to do in???] My God, however did you get all that work done? [Laughs.] It was very hard work, Crown!

**John Legard:** Hmm...well particularly in your department because you were obviously having to take on a lot of er...additional stuff.

**Peggy Gick:** [I mean ???] I had only one assistant...I did get a draftsman.

**John Legard:** Who did you have then? I remember somebody...

**Peggy Gick:** Well the first girl I had was called Iris somebody, who wasn't much cop. I said, 'I'm sorry Edward, she won't do' and I think he passed her onto somebody else. So I got on to the [AA] and they got me an assistant who was very good, she was an architectural student and she was bilingual, she'd been brought up in France. So the only problem was when the Normandy landings came, she went!

**John Legard:** Oh I remember that girl!

**Peggy Gick:** 'Cause they took her...[Rae Riley]!

**John Legard:** [Rae Riley], yes, yes I remember her, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** She went back to films afterwards.

**John Legard:** I thought, gosh isn't she lucky! She's going off doing this interesting war work. So what about ['Coastal Command']? Were you involved in ['Coastal Command'] at all?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes! Yes, ['Coastal Command']...[??]

**John Legard:** That was a very, very convincing film wasn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** It turned out very well, I saw it...

**John Legard:** You never think of it as being a set at all, I mean...

**Peggy Gick:** No...I saw it at The Imperial War Museum, they showed that for me and 'Western Approaches' [the new print].

**John Legard:** Yes.

**Peggy Gick:** And I thought ['Coastal Command'] stood up very well...I didn't think ['Close Quarters'] did.

**John Legard:** I'd like to see ['Close Quarters'] again...

**Peggy Gick:** [Speaks over interviewer.] I never did like ['Close Quarters'].

**John Legard:** Hmm...that's one of the few...one of the films that's rather forgotten, ['Close Quarters'].

**Peggy Gick:** Well it's not really as interesting. I think there's an awful lot of 'up periscope', 'down periscope'. And I think [Jack] either was lucky or not quite so clever in getting the people to do it, 'cause you know we used the real officers or the real [??], we didn't use actors.

**John Legard:** Ahh!

**Peggy Gick:** And the chaps he got were rather stilted...

**John Legard:** Oh I see, yes...

**Peggy Gick:** ...whereas the ['Coastal Command'] ones were very much better and, of course, Pat Jackson got an excellent [??] [interviewer speaks over.]

**John Legard:** Yes of course [Jack Holmes] directed 'Coastal Command' didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** Yes. That one, incidentally, we managed to get that into the [Halliwell]...you know, the vast [Halliwell] Encyclopaedia of Films...it's now in that catalogue, with a lot of Crown films.

**Peggy Gick:** I know...I'm trying to get [on to him]...when I get my brother up some time, he wants to see 'Coastal Command' because...

**John Legard:** I've got it on video if you want it...oh you've got it probably, have you?

**Peggy Gick:** No I haven't, [I don't have a video] [over interviewer.] [Chuckles.] But um, [Tony Haggarth] said he'd show it, so long as I gave him sufficient notice but I never know when Philip's coming up for any length of time. Because it does actually just mention...um...what was it...[the Swordfish], wasn't it? The Navy flew...was it [the Swordfish]...flew to Iran...they were Swordfish weren't they?

**John Legard:** The Swordfish...yes they were using...of course in 'Coastal Command' there were [Catolinas] weren't there?

**Peggy Gick:** No but there was one scene when they said, "we were saved by the Swordfish turning up to ..."

**John Legard:** Oh well he said that did he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, it was [???

**John Legard:** Oh I see what you mean, yes, yes...no, I don't remember that line.

**Peggy Gick:** You see I know there was a [???], he was involved in 'Coastal Command' and he was up there for a bit...[???] for some reason, I don't know.

**John Legard:** So we're talking about 1941 now aren't we? Sort of '41, '42...

**Peggy Gick:** 'Cause I left in '43...

**John Legard:** And at the same time there was that well-known director, [Humphrey Jennings] doing some rather interesting work!

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes! Yes I've worked for him...I've forgotten [those]...

**John Legard:** There was a film called 'Fires were Started'...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, yes!

**John Legard:** Were you involved in that?

**Peggy Gick:** I think most of that happened before I got...no, I was involved in that I think, yes...

**John Legard:** Yes, that was about '41 wasn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes I was involved in that. Yes [Humphrey Jennings]...I was working with him quite a bit. Yes, it's so long ago now...

**John Legard:** It's very difficult to get the details isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** ...one's forgotten a lot of it, yes, hmm...

**John Legard:** Yes, I know what you mean.

**Peggy Gick:** Every now and then something clicks... 'Oh yes, I remember that!'

**John Legard:** I think when I joined Crown...I joined Crown Film Unit in 1943 and I remember you were just starting off on a film called ['The True Story of Lily Marlene'] and there were some rather interesting sets there...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes I remember that, yes...

**John Legard:** ...with that girl called [Pat Hughes]. And you'd built a German night-club, and her singing...

**Peggy Gick:** That's right yes, she sang very well [???] yes...

**John Legard:** ...you were probably involved in that.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, yes I remember that one now.

**John Legard:** Hmm. But tell us about 'Western Approaches'...that must have been an interesting exercise for you?

**Peggy Gick:** Do you know I...I really did very little for 'Western Approaches' because it was all done either on location or the submarine stuff I think was...

**John Legard:** [It was/The] a submarine, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** I didn't have anything to do with the submarine, it wasn't done in the studios at all. The only thing I had to I think were some scenes in the cabin of the ship, you know, that they didn't want to get torpedoed so they wouldn't signal that they were there. And I think that's about the only thing I did for 'Western Approaches'...I don't know why I ever got a credit on it 'cause I did so [little on it? Interviewer speaks over].

**John Legard:** Yes I notice you had a credit on it because um...

**Peggy Gick:** Except I think 'cause Edward wasn't around at all I think, [chuckles] so they gave me the credit!

**John Legard:** [Chuckling.] So they gave you the credit, yes, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** But I quite honestly didn't do a lot of work on it...not that I can remember...I may have done more than I can remember. But as I say I did so many different sets for so many different people, all at the same time!

**John Legard:** And [they're] all of course...you see the Ministry of Information were making so many films at that time and I suppose when there were studio scenes they used to come to Pinewood...apart from the Crown Film Unit stuff they used to come...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes...yes. I remember I was doing a landing barge for the army...

**John Legard:** Oh yes!

**Peggy Gick:** And [Roy Boating] I think was one of their directors, he came to me and said, "why have you [made] the whole barge? I only asked for three-quarters of it!" I said, 'look...somebody else is going to want a landing barge; it's just as cheap for me to have the whole thing now. You may be complaining, but you're not complaining that you've got that set for free, 'cause it already belonged to somebody else!' [Laughter] 'So you didn't pay for that one at all...so you pay a bit more for this!' ['So I've got a whole barge, it's handy for the next time we want it!']

**John Legard:** Did you need it again?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, I think so!

**John Legard:** I expect so, yes. Well once it's there then you'll find a use for it.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, it simply wasn't worth not building the extra bit while you're at it, you know.

**John Legard:** So by now you were working with...well there was [Teddy Carrick] who was in charge of the art department, and there was yourself and [Scott McGregor]?

**Peggy Gick:** No he wasn't there with me...

**John Legard:** He wasn't there with you?

**Peggy Gick:** No...only me and [Ray Viley].

**John Legard:** Oh right!

**Peggy Gick:** We did the lot! We had very small art departments in those days...people have got no idea how we used to work.

**John Legard:** I'm amazed!

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...[chuckles.]

**John Legard:** So time went on, the war finished and...well we were at Crown for quite a bit after the war finished weren't we? And then we moved to [Beconsfield].

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...it packed in about '52 didn't it...Crown, in the end?

**John Legard:** Well of course we went to...at the end of 1946 we left Pinewood and we went to [Beconsfield] and...

**Peggy Gick:** That was a terrible year when practically nothing happened 'cause the studios were being [sort of] built weren't they?

**John Legard:** Yes, hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** I seem to remember [Mac] being a bit frustrated 'cause nothing was going on.

**John Legard:** So what were you doing in between times then? I mean, were you er...

**Peggy Gick:** [Chuckling.] Bringing up a family!

**John Legard:** You were bringing up the family, yes, so you were...hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** In those days life was much more difficult...there weren't washing machines or disposable nappies then! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** No, quite, no. But anyway, obviously you went...Crown got going at Beckonsfield and there was quite a lot of work. There were films like ['Out of True'] and ['Life in Our Hands']...

**Peggy Gick:** [Talks over interviewer]...I've forgotten...

**John Legard:** ...The Phil Leacock films...

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...but I did do a few odd jobs between about '46 or 7 and that was working on little filmstrips used for educational purposes...I used to do a lot of drawings for them I remember.

**John Legard:** Those are filmstrips for education?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes and they used to show them...

**John Legard:** Ministry of Education...did you do that through the [COI] or did you do that separately?

**Peggy Gick:** I don't honestly remember who I did it through, but I know I did it...I did quite a lot of them.

**John Legard:** Yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Some of them under [Doomsday Book]...I did one...one electrical one that drove me nearly mad!

Is it the food flashes you're talking about?

**John Legard:** Oh the [food flashes]? Those are those little half minute um...which were shown in the cinemas.

**Peggy Gick:** No I don't [remember] those, no.

**John Legard:** Oh and also there were a lot of...apart from the food flashes there were a lot of what they called government officials...sort of one-minuter's about saving water or electricity and road safety, there were a lot of those.

**Peggy Gick:** Well they were all done up at Pinewood I think...but after I left.

**John Legard:** Oh when...

**Peggy Gick:** Because actually, [Katherine], when she was less than a year was in one, an anti-diphtheria one. Because Edward met some people, disconsolately wandering round the studios at Pinewood saying, "we're trying to find a baby that will smile and not howl when we try and photograph it." And they'd been wandering around London looking [???] [laughs], so Edward said, "go round the corner, across that field and find Peggy with her baby, in the caravan...because she smiles at everybody!" [Laughs.] And sure enough she did, so [Katherine] got a day's work at Pinewood doing this diphtheria flash! [Laughs.] It was quite funny...she used to wave her hands and grin at anybody!

**John Legard:** In addition to the actual sets and so on, were you involved in the graphics quite a bit...you know [main and end] titles?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh God, don't talk about titles!

**John Legard:** 'Cause you did that later on I know, when [you finished encore films]?

**Peggy Gick:** That was when [films were moved]...yes, when Mac...we were having a very hard time, when Mac was finding it hard to get films, and he suddenly came back one day and said, "I've got a job for you." And it was to do the titles for some films...for [Fanthorpe Films?] or somebody, I've forgotten which one...which meant doing these darn titles in the drawing room, 'cause there was no [electrocate] in those days...

**John Legard:** No...

**Peggy Gick:** ...[on sale]. And I said, 'I'm not going to do it, I can't do it!' And then I thought, God, I've got to pay the kid's fees, 'cause she was at a school, [she hadn't] got to primary school

then. So I did it and I did a lot of them for quite a time, but they were awful work! Because you had to do it by hand on this [cell] and the paint would crack off [very easily]...you had to mix soap with it so that it stayed you know? A hideous job!

**John Legard:** I remember that, because you did a number of titles...[main and end titles]...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, for transport and...

**John Legard:** ...[for ???] and you were very much in demand. But this is later on, this is in the 1950's...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes that was about then, yes.

**John Legard:** ...when we were making these rather glossy travel films and they needed rather elaborate titles with maps and quite a lot of camera movement and...

**Peggy Gick:** ...yes, they used all sorts of different tab faces I remember, yes...

**John Legard:** ...you came in on that quite a lot.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, I did quite a few maps too.

**John Legard:** Maps, that's right yes, hmm. But going back to the end of the war, so what happened? You stopped work for a bit 'cause you were bringing up a family, and then you came back into films 'cause you were doing studio work weren't you?

**Peggy Gick:** I came back into films really via commercials I think.

**John Legard:** Yep.

**Peggy Gick:** And also I started doing children's' films, that was the next thing...

**John Legard:** Children's' films?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes I did quite...well Mac started doing children's' films. But I think I started with them because he had one that he'd got another film coming so he said, "Can you take this over and finish it for me?" Which I did and after that I sort of, you know, tended to get into it. But we worked very much together; in fact the commercial people, you know at the time there were so many commercials going on...one firm said, "you know with that couple, it doesn't matter which one you ask for, you get the other! Not that it makes much difference!" [Laughter.] [We were just...] And at one time I remember I was down at Shepperton working on a commercial and somebody rang up and said could I do something next week and I was already busy. And they said, ["do you know anybody?"] I said, 'well hang on a minute.' And I went to the next door stage where Peter [Prout] was and I said, "Peter, can you do one next week?" [Laughs.] [???] It was amazing how the work went like that in those days; there was masses of it.

**John Legard:** So when you [???] I mean, you were actually set building?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes...

**John Legard:** Yeah... 'cause of course there were...

**Peggy Gick:** Well on a commercial of course, you were the whole art department...there wasn't anybody else. There was only one...the drawings were very simple...you took down your drawings and then when they'd got it built you went down and dressed it.

**John Legard:** Yes...hmm. Were you working for any particular agent? Did you go through the agencies?

**Peggy Gick:** No, through the production company.

**John Legard:** Through the production company, yeah...like [Jim Garrett and Partners] or [Film House Productions]?

**Peggy Gick:** All sorts of 'em, yes.

**John Legard:** What about the pressures...pressure of work on commercial? It must have been quite tight at times because...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes...they give you no time at all. Because these wretched people in the agencies spent ages and ages and ages deciding what they were going to do. They then gave the Production Company about three days! You know they used to say, "oh we've booked the studio for two days, and one day build." I said, "There's no such thing as a one day build!" It's ridiculous!

**John Legard:** Absolutely!

**Peggy Gick:** And you go into a studio at eight o'clock in the morning for your day build and they haven't [struck down] from the day before! And so you start to build about midday, if you're lucky, and you're painting at about ten o'clock at night and you're dressing into wet paint about midnight. So you know, it just didn't...it was absolutely non-existent, I wouldn't have it. I said, 'you can't have a one day build.'

**John Legard:** No.

**Peggy Gick:** I did have to do it once or twice but seldom got more than two days.

**John Legard:** Where were you...where would the sets have been built? I mean, you were [building] these in the studios were you...[or in some of the small places]...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh there were all sorts, and some were done at Shepperton, some were done at BIP...they were [dumped/done] all over the place...Pinewood...or sometimes small studios [that

were in] the centre of London...Carlton Studios, St John's Wood, down there. That was very handy...those two I could walk to! [Chuckles.] Of course [it was] very small sets you could only do there. But I worked on...when Camay soap first came out they did what they call the Ben-Hur of commercials, 'cause they used to do a fortnight's shooting [in] about three or four sixty-second ones, which were very long...

**John Legard:** Camay...

**Peggy Gick:** Very elaborate sets...quite big stages we had for those.

Were you involved in the storyboards that they did?

**Peggy Gick:** No I didn't make story...they supplied the storyboards.

**John Legard:** So you were presented with the storyboard...

**Peggy Gick:** Not very often...

**John Legard:** ...and then you [???

**Peggy Gick:** Not very often did you get a storyboard...sometimes but not usually.

**John Legard:** And you had some very distinguished directors didn't you? Well I suppose they still do in commercials...but I mean the people you were working with...

**Peggy Gick:** You had some distinguished directors, you had some dreadful ones! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** You had...didn't [Slesenger] and...

**Peggy Gick:** [Annie Wortlezin??]...

**John Legard:** ...[Joe Losie] used to direct...

**Peggy Gick:** I remember the absolute joy was when I got [Charles Friend].

**John Legard:** Oh!

**Peggy Gick:** Because I'd been working with this terrible director, and they'd written a very, very difficult script. Because when you get these television scripts you know and the commercial scripts they'd written out, you know, seven seconds for that...things like that. And they wanted a scene in which I think somebody had to...a child going to school had to move from where he was having his breakfast to the hall or something, and they'd got seven seconds to do that. I thought, how the hell can I arrange this? I did the best I could and I said to [Charles Friend] "I'm sorry...this is a damned awkward shot for you but I couldn't do anything else." He said, "Oh, no problem at all...I'll do it this way." I thought, "My God! How marvellous to have a director [laughs] who really knows what he's doing." I'll tell you about another one...you won't believe

[what I was doing] at this studio. They had [???] so they wanted to have somebody at a dressing table with some drapes behind, and so I just thought, while they were doing the other set, put the drapes up and just shove the dressing table in front. And they were in long conversation talking about this and I saw the cameraman Gus was sitting up at the other end of the studio and he came to me and said, "Could you move the drapes around that way so that we can get to the shot?" So I said, "Oh yes." And I went up to Gus, I said, "Gus I must be bloody stupid because...why did they want the drapes moved? Why didn't they angle the dressing table?" (because it had only been put up roughly). And he said, "Of course they could move the dressing table but I couldn't tell them that could I? It would have made them look so stupid and I knew you could move the drapes!" [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Ah right yes...[??protect??]

**Peggy Gick:** 'Cause that's the sort of director you were working with, you know. They really were incompetent some of them.

**John Legard:** Yes, they just hadn't got the experience or...

**Peggy Gick:** They knew nothing. And we had another one once...we spent hours into overtime while the operator was explaining what all the various...[break in recording]

**Peggy Gick:** Well I complained about this bitterly at an art department section meeting at the union and we decided that we would ask them if they would have a deputation...or they agreed to have a deputation of art directors go up to see the school and see what we could do about it. But I got rung up the night before the meeting was happening... "Would I go down?" And of course I couldn't because I was doing something else. So I was a bit cross about that and they came back and said, "oh well, there really didn't seem to be any [time for it]...but I believe it has improved now, I think there is some sort of liaison with the art department. Because it seemed to be absolutely ridiculous that you were bringing out directors who didn't know how to talk to an art director, or what an art director did...how the hell could he get what he wanted?"

**John Legard:** This has always been a problem with film schools hasn't it? Because they learn a lot of theory...but I mean the schools vary don't they? I would have thought [Beaconsfield] was good...

**Peggy Gick:** I don't know anything about [the school]...

**John Legard:** ...because they were like sort of workshops and you did learn your...you do learn your trade and you do learn about lenses and the basis things, you know.

**Peggy Gick:** I think it's altered a lot since that time actually.

**John Legard:** It has changed enormously I think, 'cause it's er...

[They're] at Ealing now I believe...

**John Legard:** Oh yes the London Film School has now moved to Ealing...it has actually moved has it?

I think so, yes.

**John Legard:** Yeah. So what happens to [Beaconsfield]? Is that going to be knocked down and turned into a shopping precinct of something?

**Peggy Gick:** They're always knocking down studios and then talking about building new ones aren't they? There's some talk about building some new studio somewhere now isn't there?

**John Legard:** Hmm. But anyway, so that particular period you must have been very, very busy...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh gosh, yes I was...

**John Legard:** ...and this is the early days of ITV and they were mostly shot in black and white weren't they? I mean, we were still in the black and white days virtually, 'cause colour didn't come in until the early sixties...

**Peggy Gick:** No...

**John Legard:** But then, how long did you carry on with doing the intensive um...

**Peggy Gick:** Well I went back into features at the end of '59...

**John Legard:** Ah right, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** ...to do...oh what was the film? 'The Day They Robbed the Bank of England'... And then after that I did quite a few children's films...

**John Legard:** This is The Children's Film Foundation?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm.

**John Legard:** And they were shot at different studios and...

**Peggy Gick:** One we did on location up in Manchester I remember and one I did at Pinewood...I forgotten what [???] that was. And then I did...the last sort of film job I did really was in '69, '70, when I did that long television series for children called 'On The Buses' or something...was it called 'On The Buses'? That was um...

**John Legard:** No, 'On the Buses' was er...

**Peggy Gick:** No, with the...oh I've forgotten what it was called.

**John Legard:** And it was these children...

**Peggy Gick:** It was all these children and it took place in a scrap-yard mostly...it had this great set-up that was up at Elstree...something...

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** They had a great derelict old bus that they used for their gang headquarters I know, but I can't remember what [???] it was.

**John Legard:** Can you remember the director?

**Peggy Gick:** The director was Harry...Harry something...[Roy Simpson] produced it. Harry somebody was the director, I can't remember his name. We had these seven children. Good God, what were they called, what was it called? Isn't it ridiculous I can't remember?

**John Legard:** Shall we stop while you think of it? [Break in recording] Running again...now tell us about ['The Magnificent Six and A Half']...

**Peggy Gick:** Well it was a film about a gang of children...and you know there had been a big film called 'The Magnificent Seven' and so this lot called themselves 'The Magnificent Six and A Half'.

**John Legard:** Oh yes, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** I can't remember an awful lot about what the film was about, I know I did it at Shepperton. And then they decided on making a television series from that...

**John Legard:** Based on that idea...hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** It was called the...

**John Legard:** Well no matter what it was called, but anyway that kept you occupied...

**Peggy Gick:** Oh God that really was a hard chore.

**John Legard:** And where did you shoot that mainly?

**Peggy Gick:** Up at [ABPC] as it was then. And that was great because when I went up there, when I was going to start to do it...in fact I started to look round [when I'd just been taken on] and I discovered that there was practically no stock in the studio, very little. So I rang up Roy and I said, 'I can't do this film Roy, there's no stock! They've burnt it all.' And he said, "what do you mean?" So he rang up Bryan Forbes and [he said, "well they haven't burnt anything for three months."] I said, 'what are they talking about? It takes thirty years to build up stock, not three months!' [Laughs.] And they had literally burnt masses of stuff that was really good stock that we really needed. Anyhow we managed to get through it, but I had seventeen thousand...we had

seventeen episodes. I had seventeen thousand I think was my budget or something, and I had to build a set on this awful [stage five], which was a junkyard in which these kids had their derelict old bus which was their headquarters.

**John Legard:** Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** And I built a set which had literally three hundred and sixty degrees, and you could see. And it was built out of rubbish [laughs] that we could find around the studio...bits and pieces here and there, and a little vista down there with a seagull just [painted in the end] and...all sorts of stuff I used. And then I found to my disgust that...everybody said, "oh you won't fill that stage for less than fifteen thousand." In fact I filled it for six thousand! [Chuckles.] Which left me the eleven thousand for the extra bits for all the other episodes...it was a crazy budget. And then the scriptwriters were writing in scripts which we [did] out on location because the cameramen and the director preferred doing that to working in the enclosure. And so I went to the producer, he was complaining about [???]...I said, 'look, they're wanting more money for this...I have built a set, there is that angle, that angle, that angle, that angle...they have never used!'

**John Legard:** Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And I'd built one little thing which was called 'The Royal Box'...you know, these old... And another place where there was a runway along the top...so they had all sorts of angles and bits and pieces they could use, which they didn't like to. Curiously enough, sometime later when Mac was doing a film with the unfortunate [Seth Holt] who died at the end of it...

**John Legard:** Oh Seth, yes [Seth Holt], yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Well just before, he was desperate because he desperately needed some money to do a [coast/case] scene. He said, "they won't give me any money, I can't do this, and [I'll deliberately??] go out on location..." And Mac said, "well hang on a minute...I don't think they've pulled Peg's set down yet...[I'll just finish this]...let's go and have a look." And he looked and he said, "Good God...[???] I could make a whole film in this set, [without even an experienced director who can lose something!"] [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes...hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** [???] inexperienced directors [who/you] just don't know. And the great difficulty...again, this chap particularly...to get him to see...because we had to build a few little extra sets, we had another stage. To get him to come at the end of a day's work to look at the next day's set, so that he knew what he wanted, in case, you know...if he wanted anything you've got the half-hour, eight 'till half-past to alter anything. To get these people to come and look [sometimes]...they don't want to! 'Cause some of these directors, they just don't want to look at the set overnight, because if they haven't done their homework when they come in the morning and don't know what the hell they're going to do, they find fault with the art department, the art thing...you know. So that's going to give them an hour or an hour and-a-half while you do what they want done. [Chuckles.] Oh dear! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** But would you say that his er...

**Peggy Gick:** It's a tough life!

**John Legard:** ...these so-called, well these inexperienced directors...

**Peggy Gick:** Well exactly...

**John Legard:** ...would you say that they were um...they came in from a different area of filmmaking? They weren't feature people obviously, because the feature business was always, you know...people...a tough training.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, very rarely [???], you very rarely got feature directors in.

**John Legard:** And these were probably people who'd sort of come in through television who were from a different [side]?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes a lot of them had come from television.

**John Legard:** But you talk about [Seth Holt]. You know, when he said he could make a whole film or whatever...was that a whole episode [to that] series, or was it...?

**Peggy Gick:** No, [he just]...there was so much...he said, "I've never seen a set like it!" Because you know, it is unusual to have a set where everywhere you look you're not off! [Chuckles.] Well I worked it out, with children's films there's no dialogue, it's all action...

**John Legard:** Right.

**Peggy Gick:** ...therefore the camera has got to move all the time...therefore what they want is to be able to move around without having to say, "Oh God...give me something here because I'm off the set." And um...so I provided it, but they didn't use it half the time!

**John Legard:** But at least they had it all there...all the ingredients were available.

**Peggy Gick:** Yeah, but they...it was easier for the scriptwriters to write scripts somewhere else; they didn't have to use so much imagination. They didn't come and look at the set and say, "what can I write around this particular bit?" And er...

**John Legard:** Would you say it was a time factor, that it was all done in rather a rush and to be fair to them, you know...? Whereas if it had been on a solid basis and there was a reasonably big budget they would have been able to plan it better? Or was this one of the hazards of the business?

**Peggy Gick:** I don't honestly know. I know at the end of one episode [we] started another, and I walked along to production office and the production manager had his feet up and [they were all sitting there]. ["Oh thank God we've got one out."] I said, "Can I have the next script?" And he

said, "Oh God it never stops for you does it?" And I said, "No it doesn't and if I haven't got the next script now, you're not going to have one next week are you?" [Chuckles.] They gave it to me! But they didn't realise that I had to think a bit further ahead than they did!

**John Legard:** Extraordinary isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** It really was quite extraordinary.

**John Legard:** So did the series continue? [???] You said they made quite a number of episodes.

**Peggy Gick:** They made seventeen episodes.

**John Legard:** Did they? Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** And there was some talk of doing another lot but it didn't come off.

**John Legard:** Where was it...

**Peggy Gick:** 'The Double Deckers'...that's it!

**John Legard:** Hmm?

**Peggy Gick:** 'The Double Deckers' that's what they were called.

**John Legard:** 'The Double Deckers' hmm...oh right. I don't think I remember that...

**Peggy Gick:** It turns up occasionally on television I believe still...I don't think it was wildly successful.

**John Legard:** That was made for what...like a sort of associated...

**Peggy Gick:** It was made for, as much as anything, for American television...

**John Legard:** Oh was it? Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** I don't know how well it did out there. Because 20th Century Fox had some money in so they had something to do with it.

**John Legard:** So were you involved in further features around that time then? We're talking about 1959 aren't we? '60?

**Peggy Gick:** No I don't think I did much more except I think...well I did another children's film after that...I may have done a couple. And then mostly the odd commercial, and then by about the middle of the seventies I'd packed it in because I'd taken on this little shop [I've] got.

**John Legard:** Sorry?

**Peggy Gick:** I'd taken on this little antique shop...

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes...

**Peggy Gick:** ...that Mac and I were going to retire to nicely...then of course he died...

**John Legard:** Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** And then [Tatty's] nose had broken and she was working in the shop selling old clothes and things, so I thought well I'd better run the shop 'cause it provides her with an income as well...

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** ...and um, so after that the films more-or-less fizzled out, I didn't do any more. Well I think the commercials changed...I mean I couldn't...when I look at the commercials now I think, oh thank God nobody asked me to do those [laughs] because I...well I wouldn't know where to start. But I think it's mostly done by special effects now anyway so [??? Interviewer speaks over].

**John Legard:** There's so much er...yeah...computerised effects.

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm.

Did you have much to do with special effects? [??? Bubbles and things]?

**Peggy Gick:** Well not very much because on the films I was making we couldn't afford them! [Chuckles.] And then of course I was having trouble; I did have an assistant on 'The Double Deckers' who was very ingenious...he did nice ingenious drawings for little things they wanted made like fancy carts and things. But then I said, now [Mike] you look after that and get that done, and I found he was going to the special effects because he didn't like having to deal with it himself, and that was mounting our bills up, so he had to go! [Chuckles.]

Hmm...'cause I was thinking about back projection and things and building [in front ???]...

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...no we never had any of that, no. But we had a very funny situation once because Mac was working at the same time for Hammer, when I was up there...

**John Legard:** I was going to ask you about Hammer, yes, that's right, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** He worked with them from...

**John Legard:** Mac worked with them didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, until the end of the sixties, until he died. But um...yes he was up there doing a film while I was doing 'The Double Deckers' and we had one scene...we'd been up to [Nebworth]

House and shot there...we were the first film company [that was let in] actually. And then we wanted a scene in the dungeon and I was cursing 'cause I couldn't afford...there wasn't a dungeon up there and I couldn't afford to build a dungeon. And Mac had a dungeon on his Hammer film. So I said, "Mac can I use that [now]?" He said, "No I'm afraid you can't, I've got to pull it down because I've got to build my next set for the next thing." I said, "Well look, I'm not using my stage F at the moment...would you like to put your set in there and let me have the dungeon?" So that was agreed...we got a marvellous dungeon set for nothing. The studio [were] furious! "This bloody husband and wife!" [Chuckles.] "You don't know where you are!" [Chuckling.] We weren't doing them any harm!

**John Legard:** No!

**Peggy Gick:** But they weren't making money out of it, but both our producers were [taking it]! [Laughs.] That was really quite funny!

**John Legard:** Oh that's hilarious, yes, hmm. But did you work yourself at Hammer at all...with Mac?

**Peggy Gick:** No, no I never worked with him [at all]. The only film I ever did with him was 'The Day They Robbed the Bank of England'...

**John Legard:** Ah...

**Peggy Gick:** ...we both worked on that.

**John Legard:** Now tell us about that.

**Peggy Gick:** Well that was...it was very sad really 'cause it was a very good film and we knew the producer 'cause Mac had worked with him on a television series called ['O.S.S'??] years before and...

**John Legard:** ['O.S.S']...

**Peggy Gick:** ...[Jules] was desperate to get this film made, it was a very good script...through MGM. And they held him up and held him up and wouldn't give him the OK, and he had various stars lined up to use and various directors and of course he couldn't employ any of them. They finally gave him the money and set a completion date about three months later...absolutely no time at all. He said, "Look, hang on, I've got to get a star to do this, it's got to be a..." [???] sent him a bank robber...they sent him [Aldo Ray] which wasn't really the chap he'd wanted at all...but anyhow he turned out to be very good. [Chuckles.] But this was, you know, very inadequate money for the film we were doing...we had a budget I think, twelve thousand or something. And we were determined not to use just the MGM stock 'cause it was boring, so we worked by cannibalising one of the big sets for the um...we had to [dress the interior] of the Bank of England of all things in those days...[???] days. And of course they had these great big arches [like that] which we cut down afterwards and [we had] to use for the vaults [in the bank]! [Chuckles.] And by cannibalising our sets all the time we managed to get through. But again we

had this terrible problem with only two stages, and all these big sets to build. And people said to us, "well which one is the art director and which is the set decorator?" I said, "We don't work that way. I do the architectural ones, [inside] the museum, the Bank of England [???]...Mac does the sewers, the pubs and that lot!" [Laughing.] We used to just carve the sets up between us that way...and it worked very well. But one day we really had come unstuck and we were not going to be ready the next day, and it so happened that Aldo Ray had a love scene with Elizabeth Sellars that he was very nervous about. Aldo had a clause in his contract that he was not to drink...he had a carafe of water on the set all the time which was actually vodka! [Laughs.] He got really sort of tanked up a bit to try and cope with this Elizabeth Sellars...she panicked and ran off the set! [JL laughs in background.] So we didn't shoot the rest of the afternoon! And so the next day when we started I said, "Aldo you just saved us yesterday, because we just would not have been ready!" He said, "Any time you like, let me know!" [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Isn't that nice?

**Peggy Gick:** He was a really nice chap.

**John Legard:** Tell me, what year was this made then... 'The Day They Robbed the Bank of England'? I've seen it in the past but I...

**Peggy Gick:** '59 I think...

**John Legard:** '59 was it? Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And we had...[oh who was the director?] He was a devil...

**John Legard:** Who was the director?

**Peggy Gick:** [John Summers, Stringer...something...no??] I said to him...he was set on making a big film. Mac had worked with him on a children's film and he said, "he's an absolute curse, they'll never control that man, he's a mad man!"

**John Legard:** Was he an American director?

**Peggy Gick:** No he was English...he did things like 'The Blue Max' and things afterwards. [John String...something, was it?]

**John Legard:** You'll think of it in a minute.

Guillermin?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm?

**John Legard:** John Guillermin? No...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes I think it was; John Guillermin...

**John Legard:** Was it?

**Peggy Gick:** I think so...

**John Legard:** It could have been John Guillermin couldn't it? Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes I think it was, yes.

I thought, when you said he was a bit mad!

**Peggy Gick:** Oh God yes, he was a stinker, he really was. [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** He did some rather good films. I remember he started off at [Group Three] actually, I remember him doing the films there.

**Peggy Gick:** But he really was difficult and er...

[Chuckling.] Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** ...drove me absolutely mad.

**John Legard:** So how did it turn out in the end? I mean...

**Peggy Gick:** Well it was very sad, 'cause it was a good film, but unfortunately, having [made it] and they insisted on it being made that quickly...MGM didn't show it, they didn't release it for a year. Now meanwhile there'd been two other bank robberies done. There'd been Bryan Forbes's 'League of Gentleman' or something...

**John Legard:** Yes...

**Peggy Gick:** ...and there'd been something else, so when it came out they said, "what, another bank robbery?" You know...and it was sad 'cause it really was very good...it didn't take on the way it should have done, but it was a very good story, very well done. And we had a marvellous cameraman...we had...the old Frenchman...what was his name? Who worked with um...you know, with [Rene Clair] on [one of his] films...lovely French cameraman...

**John Legard:** Worked with [Rene Clair] you say?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...famous French cameraman...God he was good! And er...John didn't really appreciate him at all. And we had one incredible shot, and he complained. We had a midday changeover, which is always difficult, as you know, because you've got to get all the lights changed over and everything. And this was a shot where this chap is robbing the bank and he's dug a tunnel and he's coming up through the vaults of the bank...

**John Legard:** Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And it's all dark with the vaults like this. And then suddenly there was a little bit of light and a little wisp of smoke came up like this and then some light came up and then a lantern appeared in the shadows, and the man came up and you got the shadows from this lantern in the walls...

**John Legard:** Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** And it was an amazing shot and it had taken...this cameraman's name...from two until four to do it. I'd seen it 'cause I'd heard the director complaining to the producer...John was complaining to [Jules] that what's-his-name was taking so long to light this set. It had to be on the stage when it was just...when it was happening. So I stormed up to [Jules' office], I said, "Do you know [what what's-his-name] was lighting all that time?" [Laughs.] And he said, "Oh...had I better go and apologise to him?" [Laughs.] But it [???]...I said to the electrician, [???] "[???] if we'd [???] we couldn't get [the dinners]?" You know...it was an amazing shot that he'd done, it was so atmospheric and so good...this director was totally uninterested in it.

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** He was not interested in anybody's work except his own... "My name's got to go on this picture!" But the fact that other people's names [weren't/went] on...he was destroying their work...

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** like the cameraman's and like the art director's, um...didn't matter to him.

I know he drove a continuity girl to tears.

**Peggy Gick:** I can well believe it.

We had to complain! [Chuckles.]

**Peggy Gick:** Mac nearly hit him once! I know there was a terrible row, [then I got out there], and I went into the producer's office, he said, ["get down to the stage!"] And I said, "Well Mac's down there." He said, "I know he is and I don't want him to hit that bastard! [Just go down and keep the peace?? will you?"] [Laughs.] Oh dear!

**John Legard:** Did you have much difficulty with directors over the years? I mean he sounds exceptional...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes he was, he was the only one I really disliked. He was a really quite nasty man I think. I said, "I reckon he's going to make a lot of big films but I don't think [he'll ever] make any very good ones."

**John Legard:** I don't think he did actually did he? He made a film called 'Towering Inferno' in Hollywood which became quite a [???]...

**Peggy Gick:** And he made 'The Blue Max'...

**John Legard:** And he made 'The Blue Max', [???]...

**Peggy Gick:** As I say; big films, that's all he went for...size...

**John Legard:** Yeah, big, yeah, hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** But not the sort of...no sensitivity of feeling at all in them.

**John Legard:** Hmm...oh well you always get them don't you, in amongst the others from time to time?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm, hmm...

**John Legard:** But I suppose one of the disadvantages of your work is that...

**Peggy Gick:** I shouldn't be talking about this, my God...[talking about people!] I forget this; I'm so indiscreet aren't I?

**John Legard:** No, no, it's all right, this is all part of the fabric...

**Peggy Gick:** [laughs.]

**John Legard:** ...of filmmaking.

[??? publication??]

**Peggy Gick:** [Laughing.] I shouldn't call directors stinkers...not if it's going on record!

**John Legard:** No I don't think it's libellous or anything...it's just that it's your point of view.

**Peggy Gick:** [Well you ought to turn it off anyway!]

**John Legard:** But do you think in the days when you had a solid studio production, like Michael Balcon making film after film after film, and you had your units, the same cameramen, directors and editors and so on, working as a team...that probably worked better than the sort of ad hoc productions, where people came in from all sorts of different [sources] and they didn't actually know each other or know their weaknesses...

**Peggy Gick:** Well of course it was good, I mean...

**John Legard:** ...and their advantages?

**Peggy Gick:** ...[???]. And I mean, when Mac took over from [Bernard Robinson]...he only went to [Hammer] because [Bernard Robinson] died and so he came in...

**John Legard:** Oh right!

**Peggy Gick:** At that time they didn't [??? Up] their studios...where was it they worked?

**John Legard:** At [Bray] didn't they?

**Peggy Gick:** [Bray] yes...they [???] them up and moved over to BIP, [APPC] as it was then...

**John Legard:** Oh right, yeah.

**Peggy Gick:** And he was very sorry to have... 'cause I think he'd [made one small film]...to have missed out on [Bray]. And also they were not any more employing Terry Fisher who was such a good director. He managed to do one film with Terry...he said, "you really want to work with him." [And they] were using other directors who hadn't got quite the flare I don't think that Terry Fisher had had.

**John Legard:** Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** And I think that was a very good set-up...God knows why they gave it up!

**John Legard:** What down at [Bray]?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...

**John Legard:** Yes it was a nice studio that, wasn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** And the plasterer they had there, a very clever chap...um...who was construction manager. He came over with them but he was very sorry to have...[chuckles.] And when we were making 'The Double Deckers' and I was cursing about the lack of stock, he said, "what they think is rubbish is what we make films of!" [Laughs.] But I did a...yes one film I did, which I had to have a...a children's film this was, I was doing out at Pinewood. And they wanted me to take on...it was a very small staff as usual...take on some draftsmen that they'd got under contract there, and I said, 'no I'm very sorry, I can't really [teach him] this job, he's not going to be any use to me.' Mac had just finished a film and his chief assistant, lovely chap who was deaf, called Don...somebody...he was an art director in his own right really, but as he was deaf he tended to prefer to work with somebody. So I said, "Give me Don for a couple of weeks at twice the money we were going to pay him...it'll be a fill-in for him, he'll do it." And it was amazing! We wanted this barn set so Don goes all round to the prop men... "Give me those [bales??], give me this, give me this, give me the other." And we worked out we could do the sides of the thing by using rostrum tops on their sides, like that...[with some] planking across. And we found some horse stalls left over from some film. And the only thing we had to get was...in order to fill in [these], we got fifty bales of hay that they could move around when they wanted to. [Chuckles.] Otherwise it was all filled with old barrels and God knows what! And I said to the cameraman, 'look, if you put the [odd pup??] behind these rostrum tops you'll get these little flicks of light come through which you get in a barn' and it really worked a treat. In fact I was really pleased, somebody said to me, "where did you find that marvellous barn? You never would have built it."

I said, 'we built it for two hundred pounds!' [Chuckles.] What you can do, you know, if you've got people who know what they're about, like Don and er...

**John Legard:** Yes and they've got the resources there, the stock as it were, which has been built up over the years, er...and you can make a...a silk purse out of a sow's ear, in the true sense of the word.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, hmm.

**John Legard:** Well I suppose that is very much an art department um...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes and I think in places like...

**John Legard:** ...skill isn't it...craft...

**Peggy Gick:** ...Ealing, where they had their own art department and down at [Bray] they had a really efficient [art department]; well of course the films were better.

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** They'd got to be better...you'd got a team working together, doing [the odd lot coming in when...] Oh yes, and I did some work I remember with Mac. Before he went to...because he [chuckles] worked in Khartoum and I went out on holiday to join him, I hadn't had a holiday for years and I thought, well I'll go and join him. And I got out there, and I'd been out there with him for about a week...

**John Legard:** Where was this?

**Peggy Gick:** In Cairo...

**John Legard:** Cairo, hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** Or Khartoum...and he said, "oh you're going to be on your own 'cause I've got to go out to Abu Simbel." And I said, "Oh that's OK." And he came back the Saturday evening and he said, "no, no...you're going." I said, "Sorry, I'm here on holiday. I don't know how this unit works or anything." And he said, "Well you'll have to go, we can't send anybody else, we haven't got anybody to spare, they're starting a third unit." And they wanted...they'd been using a paddle steamer down at the Cairo end of the Nile and they wanted one up at Abu Simbel, and of course they'd got the dam in between which was being built at that time. And they said, "You've got to go to Aswan and pick up this paddle steamer and take it up to Abu Simbel." The funnels were on, we got the photographs of it. I said, "Well who are you sending [them] then?" He said, "You can't have any of our boys, I can't spare any of our construction boys...you can have [Remzies], production man...he's quite useless but he speaks very good English...you'll have to keep him off the bottle!" [Laughs.] I thought, well that's a great help! Anyhow...and also [from Leizor] I had an old retired Egyptian General...he was an awful old man. Anyhow, we were flying down to Aswan, [Remzie/Ramsy] was coming down on the train [with the] funnel. And we got down on

the Sunday evening...and er...oh the old General, he arranged...that was quite fun...he arranged for me to go around the building of the dam, by the Russian engineers. It was amazing, I'd never seen such muck shifters in my life...

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** Anyhow we did that Sunday evening. Monday morning [arrived/arrival of? With? Remzies, having lost the funnel on the way!] [Chuckles.] It had somehow got lost. Go round to see the paddle steamer, it only has one paddle...it's in a hell of a state, everything is on the deck on the quay. And the old General throws up his hands... "oh my God, we'll have to tell them...we'll never get this going!" So I said, 'well hang on, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute' you know. I said, "What's happening?" He said, ["the funnel would be here at midday and this will be done and that will be done, and yes we can start off at about five o'clock this evening"] [he thought.] So I thought, oh well I don't know, we'll be lucky if we get away at all. And we had to build a funnel so I sent [Ramziz?] to get...I said, 'we'll have to take some boys up with us, engineers, and build it on the way.' So we had to get these engineers and get their visas and the materials and to my amazement we did start off at seven o'clock in the evening.

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** And it turned out [Ramziz] hadn't got enough material for the boys to build the funnel and I was cursing, I was absolutely furious the night before we arrived. And the captain of the ship was very worried, he said, "Madam is not very happy." And so [Ramziz] said "no, she's fed up because she hasn't got this funnel." And the old Captain said, "what will happen?" And I don't know why, [for some reason] I said, 'they will laugh.' And this horrified them, the thought that they would be laughed at. So he said, "I know the engineer at Abu Simbel, when we get there we will [go]." And sure enough, he went up and got the engineer in charge of the cutting...[at the time] they were cutting [the temple] in half...and he built the funnel for me. But it was quite...[chuckles]...I started off to go on this [holiday?] and there I was left with all these Arabs and nobody at all. [???] and I was sitting down on the quay waiting for this paddle steamer to be ready to go and at midday suddenly a table appears like this with a cloth... 'what's this for?' "Madam's lunch." So Madam's lunch is served on it, and then there were blue drapes and things... 'what's this?' "Madam's State Room." [Chuckles.] So Madam had a State Room on deck...no windows, no doors, no locks! [Laughs.] [I thought, oh well, that's it!] But oh they were all very nice, very pleasant. But of course, [there again] the unit was crazy...

**John Legard:** The unit was crazy [was it/you say]?

**Peggy Gick:** Well this third unit location manager...because they were coming up...we had to be ready for them because they were coming up on the Wednesday on the hydrofoil...

**John Legard:** Right.

**Peggy Gick:** But the hydrofoil...they omitted to find out the hydrofoil didn't run on that day...it came up on the following day! But as soon as they arrived they said to me, "now you go down to Colombo because [you'll find] there's a temple there just on the edge of the river and in front of it

are six telegraph poles. They have got to be disguised as palm trees." I said, 'have you got permission for all this?' "Oh yes!" So I went down...no permission had been given. So we had to get over to the Post Office who fortunately did give permission. And so then we had to build these wretched things and [Ramziz] started it...he got a collection of people together and the palm leaves and things. And dear old [Ramziz] started giving them directions and after twenty minutes what he'd told them to do had all fallen down again and I was going nearly spare. So finally I said, 'look [Ramziz], we do it this way.' And I managed to make him [to] tell them to do it this particular way. And we started...I said, 'look, what about getting on with the next one?' "Well we do this... ." I said, 'look, you're employing five people here, you've got eighteen people altogether, why can't we [start]?' So we managed finally to get him to...he was so impractical! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** He said, "they're complaining 'cause it hurts their feet!" And the standard money you paid a labourer up there was two fifty [pestras?], which I reckoned wasn't on 'cause it was less than I'd pay for a...about what I paid for a gin and tonic. So I said, 'tell them they can have four.' So he was rather displeased but I knew I was going to give them five, but I didn't tell him that then. 'Cause I had control of the money and Mac said, "don't let [Ramziz] know how much money you've got!" [Laughs.] Which he didn't! Anyhow we got the palm trees all up and they all got their five [piastras?] and they were all very happy. The car driver whom we had contracted for six pounds a day to drive the car suddenly said that he wanted more money 'cause he'd been driving. I said, 'well I hired him to drive, not to sit under a palm tree and that's what he gets!' And when I got back and told Mac he roared with laughter and he said, "you've had the cheapest transport and the most expensive labour in [???!]" [Laughs.] And I paid these poor devils four [piastras] instead of two and-a-half!

**John Legard:** What did the third unit consist of in fact, apart from [yourself]?

**Peggy Gick:** It was a very nice chap who wanted to do these odd shots up there, [and] an American director, he was extremely nice. But the location manager of course was a disaster, because...oh yes, and then they wanted me to...they were coming back on the Saturday on the hydrofoil and again they hadn't realised it didn't run on a Saturday, it didn't run 'till Sunday.

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** So they came back on Sunday all very unhappy, and they had no transport or anything. So I was going off in the plane that night back to [??? See how the work...you know, that's OK]. [As soon as I said, 'I'll send the taxi back for you lot.'] and got him some more transport...but the location manager had done nothing at all...he'd been really hopeless.

**John Legard:** How much stuff did you need to get? I mean, was there a lot of um...what sort of scenes were you shooting in fact? [??? Starting...]

**Peggy Gick:** I've no idea what they were shooting...

**John Legard:** No...

**Peggy Gick:** I never even saw the script. All I knew is what I had to do was to get...

**John Legard:** All you had to do was to get...

**Peggy Gick:** ...get the thing up there...

**John Legard:** ...get the thing up and then that was it...yeah.

**Peggy Gick:** And then they [were to] shoot wherever they wanted to.

**John Legard:** Hmm...this is [???] presumably was it? I mean this is er...

**Peggy Gick:** [1960]...

**John Legard:** ...sixty...yeah...what was the film? 'Khartoum'?

**Peggy Gick:** 'Khartoum'.

**John Legard:** That was um...

**Peggy Gick:** That was 1965 was it?

**John Legard:** They showed that didn't they, quite recently?

**Peggy Gick:** I thought it was a very good film quite frankly...

**John Legard:** Yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** ...it was rather under-rated.

**John Legard:** Was it Charlton...

**Peggy Gick:** Charlton Heston...

**John Legard:** Charlton Heston, that's right...

**Peggy Gick:** ...although he was totally unsuited to Gordon, but I think [he/they] made a very good job of it actually.

**John Legard:** Yes I think that...

**Peggy Gick:** With Laurence Olivier playing [the Mali??]

**John Legard:** It was a very fine film.

**Peggy Gick:** I thought it was a very good film.

**John Legard:** I can't remember who directed it...

**Peggy Gick:** Um...now who the hell did direct it? Basil Dearden!

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes...he's another, yeah...the Ealing stalwarts!

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. Well no, not the father...

**John Legard:** No Basil Dearden was the...he is the original one isn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** No, there was the son...no it was Basil Dearden wasn't it? Oh yes, [Basil Dean] was the original one wasn't he?

**John Legard:** Oh right, yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** [??? Dean]...

**John Legard:** ...oh no of course, yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** Basil Dearden was his son wasn't he?

**John Legard:** I didn't know that.

**Peggy Gick:** I think so, yes.

**John Legard:** Was he?

**Peggy Gick:** I think he was his son.

I didn't know that...hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** [I have an idea] there was a relationship, yes.

**John Legard:** Isn't that fascinating?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...yes he was a director.

**John Legard:** Yes of course he, Basil Dearden did some very, very good films didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes some excellent films.

**John Legard:** You worked with him quite a bit perhaps over the years?

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm, hmm...

**John Legard:** ...at Ealing and so on.

**Peggy Gick:** And then next year Mac went out to Hong Kong with the famous [Harry Towers] [???].

**John Legard:** [Harry Alan Towers].

**Peggy Gick:** [Harry Alan Towers]! [Chuckles.] Well actually, curiously enough, [Harry Alan Towers] was such a rogue in a way that you never knew whether you were going to get your money or not. The union were always advising you not to go but of course the people who went were all people who were willing to take a risk and we all got on very well! [Laughs.] In fact I think I...I don't think that...he paid his technicians, [Hally/Harry]...what he didn't pay was the hotels and places like that! [???] [Laughing.]

**John Legard:** He had a very considerable output er [Harry Alan Towers] over the years...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, oh yes.

**John Legard:** ...and provided a lot of employment didn't he? And he made some good films...

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...

**John Legard:** And all of them below budget, [???] his budget.

**Peggy Gick:** Mac went out and he kept saying, "I've got to have an assistant, I've got to have an assistant...I might as well have my wife." And when he finally got me out there I was of no use to him because I'd been to see [Harry Alan] just about two or three days before I was going and he said, "well I don't know whether you can help because I've got a slight problem. We're in period, it's 1923 and although we've got a Chinese wardrobe and everything, of course they don't understand [???]...could you [take out a few]?" So I went around to the tailor and cutter and I went to various places and got descriptions of all these clothes. When I got out there, there was nobody in charge of wardrobe at all, except some young girl called Jenny something, who did absolutely nothing! And so I found myself taking the actors round, making sketches for the clothes and doing the costumes! I had no time to help Mac at all. But then when the English...yeah, they were doing the English scenes over at [Bray] in Ireland, and so I was sent back to do that little lot. And that was a...by that time the money was running out and life was getting difficult, we couldn't get props. [Laughs]. A couple of things happened on that! Yes, they lost the actresses costumes on the way so we couldn't, we were two days [without her]...they caught up with us. The leading [man] coming back got...they got in an air pocket when he was having a whiskey and soda and he knocked one of his front teeth out! So he was supposed to be shooting that afternoon but he had to go to his dentist in the morning to get a new tooth put in! [Laughter] So [we were having] to change schedule and shoot different things. Meanwhile the production manager had got flu and when he came back he said, "How the hell did you keep shooting with all these things happening?" [Laughing.] And in the end we had...we had [to direct a scene?]. We had the court scene and he said, "I do want...the [judge] has got to have something very big and impressive behind [him.] By which time the suppliers...I can't get anything out of

any of the suppliers, they won't give us anything because they hadn't been paid for anything! [Laughs.] So we went around and found a big sort of plaster scrollwork and got that and put it on a [ball], got the drapes and put some red velvet and stuff in that, and it really looked quite impressive, you know. And a desk in front with a soapbox underneath...the poor actor had to sit on the soapbox more-or-less but he had this great [scene] behind him!

**John Legard:** That sounds lovely! When was this film? What was the film called?

**Peggy Gick:** I think it was called 'The Vengeance of Fu Manchu'...

**John Legard:** Yes he did a whole series of those didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes and er...

**John Legard:** [Don Sharpe] directed some of them didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** And also we had to do a control room in Paris for Interpol in 1923. Well I'd got an [odd] photograph I'd managed to get from the London Library. Anyway [Jack Stevens] was over there 'cause they'd been doing other films and he was still there...

**John Legard:** [Jack Stevens]...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes...and he was helping me. And I said, "How the hell are we going to do this Jack?" He said, "Oh don't worry" and he found all sorts of bits of old radio sets and pipes and this, that and the other and he rigged up something that looked amazing! [Chuckles.] But when you get old hands it makes such a difference!

**John Legard:** So how long were you in Hong Kong for then?

**Peggy Gick:** We were in Hong Kong for a month and then I had a day off and then I was in Ireland for three weeks I think...it was a real hard chore.

**John Legard:** It sounds as though it um...it was rather remarkable that you were able to get it in [the] schedule.

**Peggy Gick:** Well we did get things done! [Chuckles.] I remember saying to [Scotty] once, "I may not be the most brilliant art director but I can get things done." He said, "Don't I know it!" [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** Busking your way through, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Well he gave me a dreadful job once...

**John Legard:** Hmm?

**Peggy Gick:** Working with um...at [???]...Andrew Stone...

**John Legard:** Andrew Stone...oh right, yes, yeah, hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...who loathed art directors, he had a pathological absolute loathing of art directors...

**John Legard:** Why was that?

**Peggy Gick:** He always wrote scripts that needed a lot of art directional work in it...I don't know why he disliked us so. Anyhow, [Harry White] had been doing this film and apparently he'd left, and [Scotty] rang me up to go out and see about it. And as I walked around the studios people said, "What have you come up to do?" And I said you know...I think it was 'The Secret of My Success'. They said, "Good God! Who hates you up here?" [Laughs.] That's what I was met with. And he really was an absolute stinker!

**John Legard:** What was the film you were working on with him, can you remember?

**Peggy Gick:** It was called 'The Secret of My Success'...

**John Legard:** Ah hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** But he was a very competent director, I will say that...I admired his...the way that he organised himself, 'cause he shot this, mostly down in [Lacot?]. And of course he was very clever because he got [the villagers] with him, 'cause instead of taking [down a catering van] he got The Women's Institute to do all the catering in the [??? Of Laycock Abbey]. And so he was really clever in that way, but he was absolutely hopeless as far as the art department were concerned...everything he did was wrong.

**John Legard:** He did quite a few films over here didn't he...Andrew Stone?

**Peggy Gick:** I think so...[always ??? money??]

He had his wife with him as well didn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, yes...

**John Legard:** Yes, yeah...Andrew and Virginia.

**Peggy Gick:** Gosh yes! And poor [Honor Blackman], she was ill and they sent for the doctor...we were all [???] working or something. The doctor said, "look" [cause the staff don't clear up??]...he said, "Look, you people have nearly killed one actress, are you trying to kill another?" [Laughs.] Making poor Elizabeth Taylor go back to work when she wasn't fit when she'd got pneumonia. And then [???] extraordinary film, we had to have [huge ???] spiders...supposed to be about four foot and we had [each scale model] made of the...[it was doing part ???]. 'Cause these spiders were supposed to be chasing [her coming] down the hall. And they'd got, from South America, some spiders about that big which they'd kept about an inch scaled down...

**John Legard:** Three or four inches long, yeah...

**Peggy Gick:** ...they'd kept at the zoo. And when they got them down and poor Honor Blackman was supposed to handle one of these and she was rather sort of dubious about it. And Andrew said, "oh they won't do you any harm" and he went to touch it and his wife said, "don't you touch it!" [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** [Laughs] I love it!

**Peggy Gick:** It was really hilarious! But um anyhow the first lot of spiders, that's right, when they went to order up these spiders that they'd used before, and the zoo said, "they're dead, you overworked them!" [Laughs.] They had to get another lot over...oh God!

**John Legard:** Did you work with [them] on any other films apart from 'The Secret of My Success'?

**Peggy Gick:** No I didn't. But the sort of thing he did was...[Frank Whiteland] had made the inch-scale model to match the staircase at [Dome Park] which was supposed to be shot back in the studio. He said, "That damn model's no good...go up and have a look at it and see what's wrong with it!" Well I went up and looked at the model and there was absolutely nothing wrong with it whatsoever [??? Dust off]. [But/And] I made a plan carefully where they needed to take the shot from and gave it to the cameraman who, thank God was...

**John Legard:** Who was the cameraman?

**Peggy Gick:** I can't remember but he was a sensible man who would co-operate...

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** And he said, "Oh thanks very much" and they put their camera there and that was fine. And when they went out to do the bit in the studio with the model, old Andrew said, "what was wrong with that model? What did you have to do?" I said, 'nothing!' My God he was furious with [me]! [Laughs.] Nothing wrong with the model at all. At the same time I...while he was saying [???] [I suppose we were doing something else, instead of being on the stage...there was nothing we had to do on the stage]. What I was actually doing was up in the prop room, saying to the prop men, 'get this [van/thing un]loaded for his location shot the next morning.' They said, "oh God, we [???]" I said, 'look, I hate him far more than you, I've got [more] cause to, but he's got to have his [van] loaded, get on and do it!' And that was the way one was having to get things done for the rotten old pig! [Chuckles.] In fact when they were coming into the studio to do a [mac] shot from where they'd been, I rang up the studio manager... 'what stage are you going to give them for this?' "Oh we can't cope with [him]!" I said, 'look, you've contracted to [let him have] a stage, he's got to have a stage today, because then he's to do that shot tomorrow and then he's got to go off down for another location.' So I was fighting to get his blessed film made and he was saying, "what's the blessed woman doing? I suppose she's working for somebody else!" [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** Ridiculous.

**Peggy Gick:** I was the only one on the film and I couldn't be on location and in the studio at the same time. I was having to rush down and do a bit for them, leave that in the air and then come back and get the work done for them in the studio! [Chuckles.] He was a terrible man.

**John Legard:** Did you have anybody assisting you, helping you um when you were um...

**Peggy Gick:** On that?

**John Legard:** Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** No!

**John Legard:** Nobody at all?

**Peggy Gick:** No! [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** What year are we talking about? That was...Andrew Stone...was it the sixties?

**Peggy Gick:** [???] sixty four or five...

**John Legard:** Hmm.

**Peggy Gick:** ...because Mac was out in Beirut, that's right and he said, "I hear you've been having a ghastly time with that Andrew Stone." I said, 'well I didn't give a damn, I just knew...I just gritted my teeth and got on with it.' It didn't worry me; nobody was going to reduce me to tears!

**John Legard:** But I should think that as a result of all this um...you know, making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, you must have been in great demand around that time? You must have had plenty of work?

**Peggy Gick:** Yeah I did actually, yes. In fact after I'd done the children's series I was so worn out I said, 'I'm not doing any more films 'till after Christmas!' [Chuckles.]

**John Legard:** But perhaps later on you did do a few more, you picked...you could pick and choose...

**Peggy Gick:** Yeah a few children's films, yes. It was only the commercials that really one was...you know could have done twice as many as you could do, because they were doing so many at that time...

**John Legard:** Right, yeah...hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** And if you were known to a company, they liked to use you all the time. But as far as features go I was never all that much in demand that I was turning down a lot.

We're coming to the end of this tape, do you want to carry on?

**Peggy Gick:** I think there's nothing more really, I've probably told you everything there is!  
[Chuckles.]

Well if you'd like to sort of finish up perhaps?

**John Legard:** Yes, well looking back on it, your career...you obviously got a lot of satisfaction out of it?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh I thoroughly enjoyed it!

**John Legard:** Many happy times?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, ah hmm.

**John Legard:** Which were the happiest days, I mean most interesting? Perhaps not happiest but the most creative times would you say?

**Peggy Gick:** Well um... 'The Day They Robbed the Bank of England' I enjoyed very much because of the actual sets we had to design. Um...I don't know...I've enjoyed a lot of the films I've worked on actually.

**John Legard:** Of course I only sort of worked with you at the Crown...well not worked with you but at the Crown Film Unit, you know...

**Peggy Gick:** [Partly over previous question.] Oh I enjoyed being at Crown, yes...[???

**John Legard:** But that must have been a happy time I suppose for all of us wasn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, oh yes...

**John Legard:** Because it was a very good atmosphere...

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, excellent yes I enjoyed that very much.

**John Legard:** ...in those days, you know, well it was wartime of course and the circumstances were quite different. But um...

**Peggy Gick:** No I've worked on a lot of films I've enjoyed very much.

**John Legard:** But of course the studio days have finished now...I mean so much stuff is shot on location now isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Yes.

**John Legard:** I mean the sets...

**Peggy Gick:** I remember how [Teddy Carrick] got fed-up with films, he said, "I don't want to work in them any more, I don't want to work on location. I'm an art director, I want to build things!"

**John Legard:** Hmm. And I suppose...what changed it? Because I suppose...with colour I suppose you needed to be more realistic didn't you? In the old days of black and white films you could have sort of phoney backgrounds and you'd get away with it...

**Peggy Gick:** Hmm...

**John Legard:** ...it's much more critical now isn't it?

**Peggy Gick:** Also...I've forgotten, I did a film with Guy...Guy Hamilton...

**John Legard:** Oh yes!

**Peggy Gick:** ...called 'The Party's Over' and that was done all on location. And they were doing a location shot in a long sort of passageway in [the Peasantry?] down in Chelsea actually, and Guy said to me, "Of course this is marvellous, you could never get this effect in a set."

**John Legard:** No...

**Peggy Gick:** And I thought, well I could easily have built that as a set, but you wouldn't have got that effect because you wouldn't have shot it like that - you'd be sort of, "Can you strike that wall?" and shoot it that way, because it would be easier to shoot.

**John Legard:** Hmm...

**Peggy Gick:** But it wasn't that the art directors couldn't do the sets; if it was a set, they didn't shoot them that way because it was easier not to.[Break in recording]

**John Legard:** Peggy Gick, Side 3.

**Peggy Gick:** Jick...

**John Legard:** Oh I'm sorry.

**Peggy Gick:** G soft as in Genie [laughs].

**Peggy Gick:** I went over to Shipton[?] to see him about something.

**John Legard:** This is Peter Proud, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes. And there was this set. What they had asked for was the interior of an airline's office in Paris. And there was this office with great glass front to it, glass windows, looking out over a little square, little houses and a cafe opposite. And when the people came to..., "Good god, we only asked for an airline office!" And they hadn't paid for any more[?]. Because they'd just found this stuff and put it up you know. But they were amazed. Another chap I worked for said, "Why don't you [???]." Oh god, with Peter Proud, when you asked for a set you got a whole street or something, you didn't know what to do with it [laughs]. It was amazing that you could do this. Didn't cost them any more.

**John Legard:** Didn't cost them any more, no. Right. And so therefore you could...

**Peggy Gick:** The company who had this airline wrote another script to use it [laughs], this airline office. But it was a beautiful set.

**John Legard:** Did you work with Peter on one or two things?

**Peggy Gick:** No, never[?] worked with him, no.

**John Legard:** What happened to him?

**Peggy Gick:** Died some time ago.

**John Legard:** Did he? Hmmm.

**Peggy Gick:** I think he spent, he worked I think at Dunbar's School, I think he did a bit of lecturing there.

**John Legard:** Oh was he with Bob Dunbar?

**Peggy Gick:** I think so, yes.

**John Legard:** Down at the London International Film School, yes. No...that must have been an interesting period actually.

**Peggy Gick:** But he was, what I call an art director of the old school, always seemed to make films out of nothing, you know [laughs].

**John Legard:** Yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Run them up quickly [laughs].

**John Legard:** What about Teddy Carrick, he's still alive isn't he? Do you keep in touch with him?

**Peggy Gick:** I haven't. I must ring him up. I haven't rung him for some time. Last time I think was just after Christmas. He's over 90 now and he's finding it a bit difficult to get around. I used

to go out and see him quite a bit when I had a car but of course I haven't got the car now so I can't drive out. And it's difficult to get there because if I go to Thame[?], his daughter or someone has got to come and pick me up.

**John Legard:** Yes.

**Peggy Gick:** It's difficult, so I haven't been out to see him for some time. But I used to go out regularly.

**John Legard:** He was a remarkable art director wasn't he?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes [???]. He also grew up in the tradition of Oscar Berndorff[?] and all these. We were so lucky you see in the early '30s these German technicians came over, moving themselves out[?] [???] were Jewish. And Oscar Berndorff[?] taught a lot of English art directors their jobs I think. And another one...I've forgotten his name now of course...oh Gunther Krampf, the cameraman.

**John Legard:** Gunther Krampf yes, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Wonderful cameraman.

**John Legard:** He was a famous one yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes he was on the Air of a Gentleman[?], he worked on that.

Yes I did several films with him at Welwyn.

**John Legard:** Did you?

**Peggy Gick:** Did you never see that film, is it called Congress Dances?

**John Legard:** Yes, I know the title, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** [???] Harvey in. Now that was made in 1930, which was the second year of talkies wasn't it. I remember father[?] was mad about it. He loved films anyway. Probably he who first got me interested in films because we started going to films in my early youth I know.

**John Legard:** Your father was really film mad was he?

**Peggy Gick:** I started going to films at the age of 3.

**John Legard:** Good heavens! You've beaten me to it!

**Peggy Gick:** [Laughs.] Well during the First World War we were stuck up in this little, tiny village outside InverGordon[?]. My mother with the three of us and an aunt to help looking after us. And their only entertainment was to go into Dingwall[?] to the cinema.

**John Legard:** Yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Of course they couldn't leave us behind so we were taken. I remember, I can still remember this little cinema. It had...it was sort of blue and silver in colour and it had a little circle like that with little boxes all round and they used to serve tea.

**John Legard:** How nice.

**Peggy Gick:** And we use to see Charlie Chaplin and I think, I can't swear that I actually did or I whether I think I did, saw anything of the Exploits of a [???] you know. I don't know that I really remember seeing them or whether I just remember people talking about them.

**John Legard:** Yes you probably do, you probably saw that yes.

**Peggy Gick:** But then when we went to Aberdeen we always went to films. And I remember when we were living down at Westgate when we were school children and...

**John Legard:** So you can recall the silent cinema in other words.

**Peggy Gick:** Oh Lord, yes. But this, I was going to tell you I think about this, talking about this film Congress Dances and I went to see it again about 7 or 8 years ago down at the National Film Theatre with my sister. I said, "God it could have been made yesterday. But I don't think anybody could have made it yesterday." But it was such a beautiful film because Gunther Krampf's camerawork was absolutely wonderful. The art direction was so simple, the cast...we had Willy Fritsch, Conrad Veidt, Lilian Harvey [laughs]. God knows who else! And the amazing thing is there was a shot of Lilian Harvey in an open carriage driving along, and you saw [???] on the horizon, singing as she went. Now that was in the second years of talkies, when most of the talkies you were shot static from the waist up and nobody moved. But that shot, to have been done and dubbed at that time was absolutely amazing. But there she was singing.

**John Legard:** Yes, because they were petrified weren't they at the arrival of sound?

**Peggy Gick:** God I remember the westerns, when sound arrived and nobody moved from a horse at all, they sat and talked [laughs]. That was a disaster [laughs]!

**John Legard:** [???] yes, hmmm.

**Peggy Gick:** But seeing that film and remembering how...

**John Legard:** Did you work at all in studios overseas? I mean apart from location or somewhere - did you ever work in France or...?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes, I'd forgotten that. I did a film for Rediffusion...called Dare I Mourn[?]. Now who directed...it was Ted Kocheff[?], it was his first film.

**John Legard:** Ted Kocheff, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** We knew it would be a disaster within[?] his first film, he'd be difficult and throw his weight about, which he did. But we worked in Hamburg, we worked in a small studio there and I found it absolutely, wonderfully efficient. I'd got two prop boys with me and then you'd got the German ones. I had a German art director with me, delightful man. And when I was walking around and we were talking about [???] I said, "Who's your master carpenter?" And he said, "It'll be so and so." "And who are we going to have for painter?" And he went, "Oh him." He said, "Well he's got two hands hasn't he?" [Laughs.] And the first set we had to dress...

**John Legard:** Which studio was this?

**Peggy Gick:** Summer school studio, somewhere outside Hamburg.

**John Legard:** Oh right yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Or in Hamburg...outside Hamburg I think.

**John Legard:** And was this a television film or a feature?

**Peggy Gick:** It was made by television, yes, by Rediffusion.

**John Legard:** Oh right yes.

**Peggy Gick:** It had James...oh that was a disaster...it had James Mason in it. And they had arranged for three weeks preparation period and three weeks shooting, and they got their dates mixed, and James Mason was only available for the three weeks rehearsal period and not...so we had to do it with practically no rehearsal time at all. [Laughs] And that was a chaotic muddle.

**John Legard:** You do pick the programmes don't you! [Laughter.]

**Peggy Gick:** But these Germans [???] and in fact the first set we dressed - two German prop boys got the set dressed before my boys had got their tools ready. I said, "Now look, you've got to pull your socks up you know."

**John Legard:** Yes, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** And so we did. I must say they mucked in and they got the idea that they'd got to shift themselves a bit to keep up with these Germans. But then you see they were very highly paid. They didn't bother about whether they'd get a bit of [?] overtime. And if we were having lunch and we'd all finished our beer and it was only half an hour they didn't have to go back, they drifted back because that was it, that didn't worry them. But, "Oh you can't start five minutes before two." [Laughs.] And I found them really good to work with.

**John Legard:** And how did it come it, this particular production. Was the [???] particularly good?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh god, the difficulty we had with that director. Can't remember the name...Tony Cole[?] was the producer, and they said, "I think you ought to have this director, it's his first film, he'll be easy to deal with." And Tony said, "Not likely. If it's his first film and he's only done television, he's going to throw his weight around." And indeed he did [laughs]. The first day's shoot, and it was so amazing, we had to shoot a scene of a car accident. And the car had to be upturned or something or other. Ted Kotcheff, [???] got to do, the car had only got to be upside-down with, you know [???]. Ted insisted on having two cars, because he wanted to bash one up. We were doing this shot, which could have been done at the end of the film, when we had James Mason standing by doing nothing. So that was the first thing we lost time over. You know, he was so crazy, you know. The next day we were shooting and he was doing a shot, James Mason was talking to a chap behind a desk. And he insisted that he had to have six inches high or low. Couldn't do without a crab dolly...not a crab dolly but a something dolly, which we had to send for from god knows where. So we were shooting 'til after midnight to do this shot. It couldn't have been less important whether we had this damn thing or not. So we couldn't work the next day because the boys had worked overnight, so we lost another day. So Tony said, "I want to sack him." So he rang up and they wouldn't allow him, allow us to sack him, so we had to go on with him. Come...I think I got back to England to do the finishing shots, it was in the Rediffusion chap's[?] office, and they told Tony to sack him. He said, "Not now. Two and a half weeks ago yes. But with four days to go, no way am I going to sack him." And they said, "Well we'll sack you." And I said, "Well in that case..." And someone said, "Well I think you'll find a lot of [???] will go[?]." I said, "Well I would go to start with [laughs]." So we were stuck with him, but he was an absolute bastard. He did everything he could to try and make life difficult for us. And then we saved his blooming job [laughs].

**John Legard:** Can you remember the title of the finished ...?

**Peggy Gick:** It was called Dare We Mourn, I think. Dare We Mourn.

**John Legard:** Dare We Mourn.

**Peggy Gick:** I think. It was about some chap who had to go into East Germany to bring out his dead father. In fact it was an arrangement by which he was going to bring out some woman they wanted to get out. And he didn't really want his father back much. He was going to bring out his father alive, that's right, and pretend he was dead. And there were supposed to be holes in the coffin. And he thought, "Well I don't really want dad there much." So he didn't do it and what he told instead, this woman they were trying to get out, that he'd been made [???].

**John Legard:** So apart from all these difficulties and the personalities, what about your own work on that, was it satisfactory...you know the [???]. The building of the sets and so on. Not what you'd done but the German...?

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes. The work of the Germans was splendid, yes, it was more difficult[?] when I got back because I had very little time[?].

**John Legard:** Interesting working with a different culture as it were.

**Peggy Gick:** Oh yes. We were rather dubious about working in Germany [???]. And I said, "Well..." They said, "You've gone over to the enemy. I said, "Well I'm very sorry but we had to because they were remarkably efficient [laughs]."

**John Legard:** But did you say you worked in France as well, or...?

**Peggy Gick:** No, I've never worked in France.

**John Legard:** No. But that again would have been very different. I seem to remember working in France, everybody joins in and everybody knows the answer. Great chatterboxes.

**Peggy Gick:** But I must say that the way the construction worked out there was marvellous. There was no demarcation or anything like that at all.

**John Legard:** Right, hmmm.

**Peggy Gick:** It was much better. As I say they were well paid and so they didn't worry too much about every tiny scrap of overtime they could manage to get themselves.

**John Legard:** Well I wonder if they'll revive that one sometime. I must remember the title.

**Peggy Gick:** I saw it, it came up on the box once, sometime ago.

**John Legard:** Oh well anyway, that's a nice little appendix.

**Peggy Gick:** I couldn't remember these old films, I'd forgotten all about them.

**John Legard:** Because the thing is one keeps on thinking of stuff.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes I know, I forget. Oh god I'd forgotten I'd done that. I'd forgotten all about the [???].

**John Legard:** Oh well. It sounds as if you had a very interesting career.

**Peggy Gick:** Well I did, yes. It was highly interesting. I didn't want to take big, long films if I could get them because I didn't want to be away from home or something for six months. Because I had a growing family. But had things gone on, Matt[?] kept saying to me, "Why won't you atop doing these awful tough jobs you do and take a job as a set dresser or something." I mean, Ken Adams[?] was always one who used to come with him[?].

**John Legard:** Oh right, yes. On a sort of epic film. And do that sort of work, yes.

**Peggy Gick:** Yes, he was extremely difficult to work with.

**John Legard:** Was he? Ken Adams?

**Peggy Gick:** Oooh. I heard the way he used to go on to some of his art department. Well I wouldn't be talked to like that! [Laughs.]

**John Legard:** It would have been quite interesting to work on something like a James Bond[?] wouldn't it.

**Peggy Gick:** Actually I would have done probably but by the time I was available to do it because Cathy got ill and I had a grandchild to look after, so I couldn't do a film then. By the time I was available to do a film, quite frankly it was too late. Because Scotty[?] wanted me to do a film particularly once but it meant going to Canada and obviously it would have been very nice but I couldn't do it with a kid that small. And when I rang Scotty much later he said, "Well quite honestly you've been out of it ten years, it isn't really going to be feasible." And it wasn't.

**John Legard:** Oh well. So - unless there's anything else you can think you want to tell us about.

**Peggy Gick:** [???] up the road[???]. [Laughs].

**John Legard:** Oh this is really interesting actually. You've told us a lot. Very much about the...

**Peggy Gick:** So I don't suppose anybody will ever hear it so it doesn't much matter [laughs].

**John Legard:** Okay.