

DICKY LEEMAN

Interviewed by Rodney Giesler on 22.9.95

Born Shanghai 27.1.1911. Father in business. Returned to England aged 4. Gave concert to war wounded troops in Gravesend. Maternal grandfather a poet Edward Catto. Loved the theatre. Remembers prewar Gaumont State, Kilburn. Gofer for Micky Powell in 1936. Toured in "Young Woodley" acting and ASM in rep in Isle of Wight. ("Ghost Train" had five touring companies.) ASM on "The Miracle" with Diana Manners. In "Grand Hotel" at the Adelphi. Produced by Komasajevski who designed interiors of Gaumont cinemas. Worked with George Robey. With RAF film unit at Pinewood. Then to "London Town" as assistant director. Memories of Sid Field. Then on "Master of Bankdam" with Walter Ford. Started in films in 1930 as an extra at BIP. "Stand up and Sing" with Jack Buchanan. Shuftan process on film with Harry Roy at Joe Rock Studios. Studio working conditions then. Incident with police over the Jarrow March. Remembers George Elvin organising ACT. Assistant to Irving Harris casting extras. Then as 2nd assistant to Joe Haynes on "The Cotton Queen". Quota quickies. Graham Cutts, Lawrie Huntingdon, George Pearson. "Stardust" with Ben Lyon. Lunchbreak with Harry Langdon. "The Man Behind the Mask" and "The Edge of the World" with Micky Powell. Then called up to the RAF. Learned editing from Peter Bayliss. Worked on independent frame films at Pinewood. Worked on "Stop Press Girl". Then answered an advert for studio manager at Alexandra Palace. Got the job. (44'10")

End of Side 1.

Memories of Fay Compton's academy. Taught by Stella Patrick Campbell. Worked with Cavalcanti, ("They Made Me a Fugitive"), who taught him editing. Memories of Robert Newton and Trevor Howard. Back to job as floor manager in television. First directed show "Flight of Fancy" with Jimmy Young. Followed by "My Wife Jacqueline". Rehearsal procedures. All live transmissions in those days. Tribute to his PA Rita Gillespie. Production gaffes. The beginnings of ITV. Contrasts with BBC. Memories of producing "What's My Line". Carpeted every Monday morning for innovative ideas. Gilbert Harding. David Nixon. Prestige show with big ratings. Typical ITV production schedules in those days. Stimulation from live transmissions. Memories of Leslie Grade. (43'24").

End of Side 2.

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(2)

Memories of Alma Cogan. Eric and Ernie. Max Bygraves. Dicky Valentine. Nick Parsons. Bob Monkhouse. Live broadcasts very like the theatre. Taped output deadened performances. Colour and recording arrived together. Live Christmas Day broadcasts. Never should offend anyone. More memories: Eric Barker, Jewell and Warris. Definition of a trouper. Changing standards. Changing comedy. Back to film days. Remembers recruiting Terry Thomas, David Niven and Errol Flynn as crowd artists. Peter Sellers and Terry Thomas were personal friends. Modern students' attitudes. Contradictions of freshness of live broadcasts, which being unrecorded are now forgotten. Driven by Bonar Colleano! (43'26")

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Memories of working with Margaret Lockwood. Siobhan McKenna, and other leading ladies. Background to Gilbert Harding. Regrets at leaving acting. Changing nature of star appeal. Colour prejudice in those days. Black actor Sam Henry in "Belle of New York" (not "Flora, Dora") allocated separate dressing room. Memories of Lew Grade. Working with Bill Ward. Fees paid on "What's My Line". Influence of the programme. BBC bureaucracy. Crossover to ITV. (33'41").

End of Side 4.

6. Widworthy Mews,
Sylvan Way,
Bognor Regis,
West Sussex PO21 2RS.
01243 823770.
