

BEHP 0721T Norman J Warren Transcript

British Entertainment History Project – Interview No. 721

Thursday 5th April 2018

INTERVIEWEE – NORMAN J. WARREN, DIRECTOR

INTERVIEWER – MARTIN SHEFFIELD

Transcriber – Linda Hall-Shaw

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Over to you Norman. I'll ask you a few bits about family history and everything. Was any of your family in the industry at all when you started off?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Absolutely no. The only thing is my parents, both of them, particularly my mother, were absolutely just complete[ly] mad about films, you know, real cinema fans. My mother in particular. She would do anything to go and see the next film. She was always telling me stories about how when she was young, when she was a teenager she used to spend hours at the cinema, which I only recently discovered was on the Uxbridge Road near to where the Metropolitan Line station is and where now the extension to Shepherds Bush Market, it was there. It was bombed in the War and they decided never to rebuild it. But that was the cinema it seems where she spent so much of her teenage years. [TIME 00.01.05] So, I was taken to the cinema more or less from the word go because she wouldn't waste her time looking after a baby when she needed to go and see a film. [Laughter]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: About schooling. Whereabouts did you go to school?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, my schooling was a bit all over the place. I started off in a school of which I can never remember the name. It was in Fulham. It's still there but I don't know if it's still a school. Very near Putney Bridge. And it looked more like a sort of ministry building and don't forget it was War time or post War and many of the schools, like many buildings, had been bombed so there was a great shortage of schools so a lot of us were crammed into this place. My early memories of it really were ... This was my first school because I was very young. It was just incredibly cold and big. [TIME 00.01.57] Those are my memories actually, this big cold room. A roaring fire in the corner of the room which the teachers spent the whole time standing in front of warming their bums. [Laughter] And if you were at the back of this class in your short trousers then you froze to death. And also, every so often when you got a back draught down the chimney, I remember the smoke all coming into the class and you could hardly see the blackboard anymore. So those are my early memories of school really.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: So obviously your Mum was a guiding figure in going to the cinema. How did you get interested?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, I think it was ... I mean I should say I did have a quick interruption you see when it was about schooling because I was one of the unlucky kids in 1947 it was actually, when I was five, that I contracted Polio. So, I was taken out of things for quite a number of years. So, I really didn't start schooling properly until I was nine. So, I sort of came back with an annoying waiting to take things in and, of course, going to the cinema regularly I think that

was where the initial influence came from. I mean like all children I used to adore going to the cinema, the curtains going, it was just such a magical world.

[TIME 00.03.10] But I do remember that the one thing that used to fascinate me, as well as what was happening on the screen, was the dancing beam of light as I called it. Because, remember in those days, of course, everybody was smoking in the cinema, so you could see the beam very clearly. And, I used to keep looking back at this little window and thinking that's where the magic is coming from, what happens in there, you know, I definitely wanted to know. And fortunately for me, one of my aunts became an ice cream sales girl and usherette at the Savoy cinema in Acton. So, she had a word with the manager and at nine years old I got to make my first visit to a cinema projection room. And when I saw the projector, I have never forgotten it was a Kalee 12, I just fell in love with this piece of machinery and watching the film go through. [TIME 00.03.56] So, I would say that was the start because I then kept on to my parents and my father fortunately managed to get, it was a hand cranked Bingoscope projector, a very basic little machine which he bought off somebody at work with four little short films and they became my obsession watching these films. And it progressed from there actually, I would say.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: And so, what was that 9.5 [gauge]?

NORMAN J. WARREN: I should have said it was 9.5, yes. And I remember the films, it was a Donald Duck cartoon, a Mickey Mouse, and a Ham Hamilton cartoon, comedy I mean and another one, I can't remember the title, but it had a

very young Bing Crosby in it I remember that. I am talking about them little tiny reels. They lasted about three and a half minutes and that was it. And I did progress because I was running these little films and I found that there was a library in a chemist just up the road so with my pocket money I used to go and rent a film for the weekend. [TIME 00.04.57] It was one of the silent classics that used to be. I think my parents started to feel sorry for me winding this film projector through several reels of the film. And I had to wait a few years, for my twelfth birthday actually it was, when I got a Pathé Ace. It had a motor on it. So that was a complete joy because I could then watch ... I did actually watch an enormous amount of the silent classic films that were on 9.5 at that time.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: The strangest thing, talking to some of our archive friends, that a lot of the British musicals from the [nineteen] thirties still only survive on 9.5. Some, even the short ones.

NORMAN J. WARREN: That is true, yes.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Which is a bit of a sad state of affairs but they have got to be looked after and copied in some way.

NORMAN J. WARREN: I think I am right in saying that Kevin Brownlow has quite a good collection of those. I may be wrong on the musicals, but I know he has a good collection of 9.5. [TIME 00.05.53] So, there I had the projectors and the films but ... So the next obvious stage for me really was that I wanted to start making films. And so, for another birthday, thank God, Pathéscope produced a little camera called the Pathé Pat and it was six guineas, so that was

within the range of my father, if he got it on HP [Hire Purchase] he could actually afford it. So that was my first camera and with that I started the usual family films. You know, everybody waving at the camera. And then started to make little short films. I do remember my first one was called *Garden Cafe* and it was a story about a young boy who takes his girlfriend to a ... In those days, once again it was in the fifties, it was quite common for people if they had a decent garden they used to open it up to the public for afternoon tea. [TIME 00.06.53] I mean it wasn't a shop or anything, it was just people did it and you went along and had cream buns and things and a cup of tea. And the idea, it was very much a sort of Mack Sennett type thing and they go there and they don't like the tea or the cakes and it ends up as a complete fight with the waiter. Just an excuse to throw cakes around really. But sadly, the camera had two settings, light and dull, a little thing you push up and hold it. It was either bigger or smaller and I put it on the wrong one. So therefore, the whole thing is at night when you see it. The next stage was ... Because I was thirteen I wanted to learn more and I managed to join a cine club. They wouldn't let me join when I was twelve but I managed to join when I was thirteen. And that had regular meetings every week at which we would all talk films, show films, work on scripts and we would make a film and we would do the shooting every weekend. [TIME 00.07.51] The nice thing about it was with each film we all rotated jobs so if you did camera on one, you would do sound, well not sound so much in those days, but you would do say continuity or something like

that, which was good, so you did get a chance. But the real bonus for me was most people there were just enthusiasts but there were one or two there who were in the industry and one particular young fellow that was there was a chap called Brian Tufano, whose name you might know. So, we became great buddies. Even then, the fact that he had something about him for photography was very obvious because all his bits of shooting looked better than anybody else's. Anyway, I had been trying to make this little war film which I had given up with the Pathé Pat because it really wasn't looking right and Brian said "Well if you like, I'll do it with you. I'd like to do the photography with you." So, we started again and this time we had a Pathé H camera. [TIME 00.08.51] If anybody knows it, that was a great little camera, it really was, the quality. So we did that for a while until Brian got a job. He was at the BBC as a runner and projectionist and afterwards he got to be a trainee as a cameraman. And because he was now working and getting a bit more [money] he was able to buy a Bolex camera H16 Reflex. So, we switched from 9.5 to 16mm and restarted making the war film. Which I still have but sadly after three years of shooting, we never completed it because it had a cast of 27 and, as I said it was a war film, it needed German uniforms and all these things. I managed to get everybody together every weekend to go and film on Wimbledon Common and places but after three years it got harder and harder to get everybody together, you can understand, because they had got a life of their own. After a while, the novelty of doing a film at the weekend wears off. So, it sort of filtered out really, just petered out. [TIME 00.09.58]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: What was your first job then?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Obviously by the time it came to leaving school all I wanted to do was to work in films. I hadn't decided I wanted to direct films, I just knew I wanted to be involved in some way. Unfortunately, the employment officer was really not enthusiastic at all. He more or less laughed at me really and kept insisting there was a good job for me in this engineering factory sweeping up iron filings I think it was. That just made me more determined I would get in. So, anyway when I came to leave school I had applied to many film companies. I mean I really didn't know so I went to the top and went from MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, the big ones, and worked my way down. And, of course, I got rejections from everybody, in a polite way, they basically said there was nothing we could offer you. And they all had this little reminder at the bottom saying 'Also to work in the film industry you need to be a member of the Union.' [TIME 00.11.00] So, I found out where the Union was, ACT it was then in Soho Square, knocked on the door and said "Please I want to join the Union." And they told me I couldn't join the Union until I had a job. [Laughter] I discovered it was suddenly a Catch 22. It was very disappointing. My parents were getting upset because I hadn't got any work in just over a month and, of course, in those days you didn't get any support of any kind. I gave in and took a job. Because my father worked there, I was able to get a job at Rolls Royce. The Hythe Road branch which was the service division. In the Cost Office making up people's invoices and it was just a nightmare. It really was the worst job on earth. I was there for nine months in total and it was a living nightmare. I used to have nightmares about going there again on a Monday, getting on the same bus and thinking that I was doing that forever. Anyway, fortunately a friend of mine told me that there was a producer by the name of Dimitri de Grunwald who needed a messenger boy.

[TIME 00.12.05] And I immediately rang and got an appointment to go there for an interview and, thank God, I got the job. So that was it, I could leave Rolls Royce and then I was working with Dimitri, which was really what opened the door for me because suddenly now I was in a tiny tiny way but I was now actually in the industry. I'd got through that door. And, to be a messenger boy you didn't need to be a member of the Union which was good. So, that was my way into it. And working with Dimitri, he was one of the nicest people you could ever wish to meet. I mean over the few years I was with him he became like another father to me. Yes, he was just so helpful. And, in fact, the whole ... He had a very small set up but, you know, everybody was the same. Fortunately for me he was about to get into feature films because, as you probably know, his brother, Anatole de Grunwald was quite a well-established screenwriter and producer at that time and he made several ... He made an award-winning film called *The Way to the Stars* in 1940 something ... [TIME

00.13.08] I can't quite remember. And actually to show you how nice Dimitri was, shortly after I, you know within the first week of starting work with him, he actually hired the Fox Theatre, a preview theatre in Soho Square to screen *The Way to the Stars* for me, just to let me know we are part of the family. So that was very nice. And, of course, I fell in love with that theatre too. I got to know more theatres obviously later in Wardour Street but I also have fond memories of the Twentieth Century because the screen was so big. It was enormous.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: That was Bob Smith wasn't it used to run that. Bob Smith was the guy that ran that for many many years. The projectionist.

NORMAN J. WARREN: You know, I didn't know that at that time. I never got to know ...

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: He was there from the thirties right up until right up to the early eighties.

NORMAN J. WARREN: I would have seen him probably in later years although I didn't really get to know him. I didn't actually get to go to that theatre that often. I mean I was always pleased when somebody said we will be at the Fox, only because of that screen. I couldn't get over it, it was so big. It was wonderful.

[TIME 00.14.02]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: The picture you worked on was *The Millionairess* wasn't it?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, what I was going to say was, first of all I was a messenger boy to begin with. So, my first good year, I would say, with Dimitri was spent doing the mail, getting his sandwiches, but also I spent an enormous amount of time in Wardour Street collecting cans of film and doing other things because Dimitri also ran a company called Screenspace which makes cinema commercials. And they made all the big ones at the time, you know, the Camay Soap and the Shell that was, the Guinness, all the top ones. So that was why I was in Wardour Street a lot in connection with the commercials side. And, secondly all the shooting of those were done in Paris. They had a studio in France but their cutting and all the post production was done in London. So when I was working with him which was in Clarges Street in Mayfair, they had the cutting rooms in the basement. [TIME 00.14.59] So, it wasn't long before I could go in there to work as a trainee assistant editor actually, because just after I started with Dimitri there had been a young fellow, who you may

know of, a man called Antony Balch who had left and so I more or less took his place. So, that was another opportunity. Obviously, I knew editing on an amateur's point but to start learning it on a professional level and working with 35mm, of course, was a great bonus.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: What was they using? Moviolas there or ...

NORMAN J. WARREN: They had an Acmiola. I mean, later I fell in love with Moviolas but it was an Acmiola which was with the round [lens?]. Thinking back it wasn't the best of pictures but it did the job. I do remember the coming of the first tape joins which were individual ones, you had to peel it off and put in on. It took ages to do. But, of course, initially I was doing everything on splice cement.

[TIME 00.15.59] And, I do remember, you always learn by your mistakes they all say and the first time ... They knew that I did amateur films and the rest of it so I wasn't a complete novice with film and one day they were in hurry and they said "Can you make up a showreel?" because Dimitri was showing the reel to somebody that afternoon. So, I went with all the commercials they wanted, in what sequence and a couple of seconds gap in between, but I had never actually joined 35mm together, I had only ever done 16mm which I had done a lot of, of course. On 16mm you don't have to worry about the frame line but on 35mm you do, because I was putting blank film between the commercials. So, I ran round to the theatre which was actually The Warwick, which was The Warwick pre-view theatre in Audley Street I think it was, with a man called Cassidy, Gerry Cassidy that's it. They put the reel on and I stayed in the projection booth [TIME 00.16.57] while they ran the reel and, of course, every time another commercial [unclear] the projector I had to quickly rack up again,

because it was always out of rack. I learnt that lesson from then on. I was just doing it on the re-wind you see, I should have used the synchroniser, so that's not so hard then. So coming back to all that I was actually given the opportunity to learn quite a lot of things because of the commercials side. And then people like Antony Balch who became very helpful [? unclear]. A few years later when I actually went freelance he started getting me small editing jobs for distributors around Wardour Street. Actually, you probably know, he became a distributor of his own. Quite an adventurous sort of guy. He had a wonderful technique of changing the titles of films to make them very commercial. You mentioned about the film. [TIME 00.17.55]

Yes, fortunately for me, after quite a short time Dimitri was going into film production because he had only been doing commercials mainly because his brother Anatole was doing [? Unclear] Dimitri said he was now going to produce and *The Millionairess* was the first production. So that was the first film that I got involved in. I became a runner on it but not because of the Union problem again. I wasn't actually on the shoot itself, although I did go to the shoot, I was what they called a Production Runner which meant that I was more involved with the Production Office, with the Production Manager, who was Roy Parkinson, and the Production Designer and all the people on that side of it, which, of course, in the long run was actually beneficial to me because I did get to learn about budgets and schedules and things from that side. And, of course, I could go on the set. It was shot at Boreham Wood, [TIME 00.18.52] so I obviously did go to the set to see it, but I wasn't actually directly involved with the actual shooting, but it was still obviously a magic world for me. And, of course, a dream come true because I couldn't believe it because when I was still at school, I'll

be honest, I used to at times run out of school in the afternoon and bunk off to see a film, and one of the films I'd gone to see, because it had Alan Ladd in it, it was called *Boy on a Dolphin* and it had a very young and amazing Sophia Loren in it and, like all young people, she was one of those I instantly fell in love with, and of course *The Millionairess* had Sophia Loren. I have still never forgotten the day she came into the office with Carlo Ponti, and that was quite a magic moment. And the other thing, I had always been a fan of The Goon Shows and all those, and Peter Sellers was way up there on my fan list and of course he came to play the doctor. So, the film had quite a lot of magic for me. And I got the opportunity to see some amazing technicians at work. Jack Hilliard the cameraman. Brilliant. [TIME 00.19.59]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD. So, what was the next stage after that?

NORMAN J WARREN. I mean I was still working for Dimitri because he was going on to make other productions, although I didn't get involved with this one. The next one, he did a film called *Mr. Topaz* which Peter Sellers directed. An unusual little film, actually the BFI restored or saved it recently. I remember signing a thing saying this film is one to save, only because I would have liked to see it again because I didn't really remember it that well. By then I was getting more involved on the commercials side for a while, so my involvement with *Mr. Topaz* was very limited. It wasn't until *The Dock Brief*, which he did a year after that, with Peter Sellers once again and Richard Attenborough, and I was an assistant on that. [TIME 00.21.02]

That was done at Shepperton and that was a good experience, with Ted Scaife as Director of Photography, James Hill directing. I didn't mention on *The Millionairess*, of course, it was Anthony Asquith, who signed my first application to the ACT.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, well he was a leading light. He was one of the founder members of the ACT Union.

NORMAN J WARREN: Yes, he was. So that was my in. Whilst all this was going on I was still doing my own little production things and with Brian Farnham we formed a little company to do well anything actually, anything that anybody wanted filming, weddings, christenings and those sort of things. We did get to do a nice little dance thing. There was an American Dance Team, when I say dance team, it was two, who were at the Palladium called The Szonys and they asked us if we would do ... One of their dances they were learning, rehearsing, [TIME 00.22.06] they wanted it filmed so they could sort of analyse it and make alterations. So, on the weekend, on the Sunday when they weren't at the Palladium ... Jenny Taylor [? Unclear] ... we went to the Sadler's Wells Ballet School and used their room and shot this little film, on 16mm, of them doing this thing. But we learnt one of the early lessons then of business in connection with films, and that is, we finished the film, I edited it for them, synchronised the music to it and all the rest of it, and presented it to them. We gave them the invoice and we never saw them again. [Laughter]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, we've all been down that one.

NORMAN J. WARREN: All this was going on and I was still making little films and writing scripts for possible feature films because I did have a dream that I wanted to be a director. And it came to the stage where I knew I needed to make more of a move on this. [TIME 00.23.07] So, I actually left Dimitri on a regular basis and went freelance. Dimitri, I have to say, [unclear] was such a kind man, said to me on the day I talked to him about it, said "Well, look let's just think of it in terms of you're

going on a long holiday.” So, he said “If it doesn’t work out you can always come back.” Which I thought was just so nice of him. But I didn’t go back. I started another little company actually to try and make commercials and those things. And we had reasonable success. I was managing to keep alive. And I was also then taking scripts around to distributors and people to try and raise finance to make a feature film but not actually getting anywhere. Looking back of course honestly, I was very young and I really didn’t have the experience. If I had been the other side of the desk, I would probably said no to me anyway. But I should mention one film because it would have been quite amazing had it been made. [TIME 00.24.09] It was a film called Carol, a simple story about a girl. At the time abortion for young girls was still a taboo subject and this was about young girls getting pregnant and what to do about it. And there was ... I can’t remember what his name was ... There was an art director who worked at the BBC and one day he said to me “There’s a young actress who has been in. She is going to do a programme called *A for Andromeda*. A young girl called Julie Christie. I am sure she would be right for your main girl Carol. So, he gave me the address and said you should go and ask her. So I went to see Julie Christie who said yes. I had Julie Christie for my main part. Somebody else then suggested a girl, there’s a girl called Edina Ronay. I went to see an actress called Edina Ronay and so I had her as one of the sisters, and she said to me “Have you got any parts for my boyfriend?” [TIME 00.25.09] I said “Oh yes, I need the brothers and their friends. And her boyfriend at the time was Michael Caine. And he said to me after a pint “Is there a part for my flatmate?” And I said “Yeah.” It’s Terence Stamp. So, I had Terence Stamp. I then had a good friend at that time called Michael

Craze who was in *Doctor Who* and all these things. And we had become good friends and he was part of my little film company actually. And, of course, he had friends like Richard O'Sullivan and David Hemmings. I met them all at parties. So they all came in. They were all playing different parts. The cast list was amazing. And remember at that time, none of them were known. They weren't at all. I mean, Michael Caine was playing the third thug on the left in the sort of Merton Park productions. And Terence Stamp until he did *Billy Budd* I don't think anybody knew him at all. Anyway, so I had all these names. I would take it to the distributors or producers and they often used to say, of course, "We couldn't go with all these unknowns." [Laughter] [TIME 00.26.13] Of course, at the time nobody knew but had that film been made it would have had the most amazing cast list. Michael Crawford, all these people, Nyree Dawn Porter. It went on for ever and they were all on there. But none of that actually got made. So, out of frustration in the end, I decided the only way I would be able to maybe get the chance to do something was to shoot another little film, a short, but trying to do it a bit more professionally. In other words, I decided that I had to shoot it on 35mm because although 16mm was commonly known, the industry really wasn't geared up for 16mm and you couldn't take a 16mm to somebody in Wardour Street and say "Have a look at this." Because 16mm they just couldn't be bothered. So, I made a little short. I could only afford to do a little one without sound. So it had to be music and sound effects. And I had enough money to do it for a week with a couple of actors. [TIME 00.27.19] Anyway, it was called *Fragment* and I finished it and took it round the distributors once again and they all said "It's very nice but it's short. What can we do with a short film. But they all turned me down apart from Charlie Cooper who ran Contemporary Films and

he said “I’ll take it for you Norman because I could certainly get it on in the universities and those sort of outlets.” You can make a 16mm copy and that sort of thing. “But if you really wanted it on the cinema ...” Which is what I wanted to do. ... “The only thing I can suggest is that you actually go and talk to the cinema owners and managers yourself.” Because he said “There is no way certainly that I can get that done.” So, I did. Fortunately, there was an awful a lot of independent cinemas at that time. And one, a lovely man called Richard Schulman who owned the Paris Pullman in South Kensington and he said “Yes by all means, I’ll put in on.”

[TIME 00.28.19] Because I didn’t want any money, I just wanted it to go on the screen. So he very kindly included it in a programme. So that was really nice because I could register it with the Board of Trade as a professional little film. And I think I actually once got a pound for Eady money at some time, something like that. But where the sort of lucky break comes in, it just so happened that at that time a distributor by the name of Bachoo Sen who ran a company called Sebricon who imported things like *Last Year at Marienbad*, *Cleo from 5 to 7*. Quite sort of classy productions, you know, French. He was talking to Richard Schulman about them going into production for themselves. And they decided obviously they wanted to do low budget and so they discussed it. And also, I mean I didn’t know this at the time, but they decided that the sex market was one that was coming up big. [TIME 00.29.15] So Bachoo thought that was the market we should try and cash in on. Anyway, they needed to get a director and they needed somebody who wouldn’t give them a lot of trouble, probably wouldn’t ask for a lot of money and it just happened that my little short was on the screen as they were talking about it and Richard Schulman said “Why don’t we give him a call because he was very enthusiastic.” So I

got a phone call from them saying would you come and talk to us about doing a feature film. [TIME 29:46] I couldn't believe it. I think I was there before he put the phone down and said "Yes, yes, yes", not knowing what it was. It turned out to be a film called *Her Private Hell*, which I said was a sex film but if you see it now, I mean it could be shown quite easily on children's television. I am talking about 1967 and it was so innocent of that time, unbelievably innocent. And there was so much restriction. What you couldn't show. You don't actually see anything. So that was my lucky break actually. [TIME 00.30.21] And the film was not the greatest of films but the one thing it did do, it made an enormous amount of money. It sold literally everywhere and it was on at one cinema, The Cameo Royale in Charing Cross Road for over a year, running every day of the week, making money. It was on the front of the Daily Cinema, as it was then, it is now Screen International, because it was breaking records. So therefore the industry loves people that make money. So, I suddenly became the golden boy on those films. And I went on to do *Loving Feeling* which was also another sexploitation film, as they called them, which did well. But then actually I turned away from doing those. Not because it upset me doing the sex thing, it's just that the truth is I found them incredibly boring because I ran out of ideas where to put the camera when you have two people in bed. Every other scene had to be people having sex. [TIME 00.31.25] As well as having sex, it was innocent, so you couldn't show anything. It was very difficult. I was asked to do a film called *The Wife Swappers*. I think it was Stanley Long actually - Michael Myers, Miracle [Films] But I didn't want to. I couldn't face doing another one. So, I put myself out of work as a director actually and went back to editing. I should explain that I had become an editor, not on feature films, on doing little documentary things

and commercials. And I started off by doing through Antony Balch actually doing censor cuts for distributors in Wardour Street, you know the small distributors that didn't want to pay to have negatives changed so they just got me to edit their prints, which was a good learning curve because I had to work out how to make these cuts and not affect the sound because it not being in sync any more and I got to know John Trevelyan very well

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: He was a character, wasn't he?

NORNAM J WARREN: Yes I liked John. I would say to this day he is the best censor we ever had, [TIME 00.32.26] because he had his funny ways but he genuinely loved film and he was really interested. Nobody else that took over that job you couldn't do it but with John if you had a script you could take him the script and he would go through it with you. He'd be more that happy to meet you in the bar, in fact he enjoyed doing that. [Laughter]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: I used to see him in several restaurants around there.

NORMAN J WARREN: And he was always covered in ash, he was such a chain smoker as well. He was a lovely man, and he could give you advice, he would come to the cutting room when you were editing and suggest things and actually say "Look be careful on that because we would have to cut that." And so, as I said, he was the best.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Because he was the censor in a real big swing period of time, wasn't he? Right from the late 50's to the early 70's, when so much in the industry was changing, all the violence was coming in the movies etc.

NORMAN J WARREN: Exactly, yes, well coming back to the sex thing, it was getting you could show much more. [TIME 00.33.26] I mean, going back to *Her*

Private Hell you couldn't show nipples, no such things, no sir, and when you did do a couple in bed, if the girl was naked they weren't allowed to move, it was quite weird [LAUGHTER] There was a scene in *Her Private Hell* where the girl strips off and the moment she lies on the bed she no longer moves, so she's just static and the actor – you weren't allowed to take the trousers off in those days so he had to keep his trousers on, so you had to make sure the sheet covered the trousers, and all basically he could do was stroke his arm up and down, hand up and down her back and her arms. It was like the Windmill Theatre, the moment they were naked they had to stand still and they applied it to the films as well.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Just looking at the list of your credits here, you worked on *Rod the Mod*.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes I did, well we're jumping about a bit here. Yes, of course, that was before *Her Private Hell*. [TIME 00.34.28] I worked on a Shell documentary called *Shellorama* a 70mm. It was like a giant commercial for Shell and actually it was a wonderful job to work on, I did learn a lot on that. Stanley Sayer [Norman remembered the correct name post-interview] the Director of Photography with the Technicolor man, you know, who worked with the three strip before then.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Not Jack Cardiff was it?

NORMAN J. WARREN: No, No, that was Shaye [?] [see above] I can't remember his Christian name though. Yes, I was working, I was in the cutting room, assistant editor on it and the assistant sound editor as well, and I was working with an editor called Fred Burnley and after the Shell thing, Fred was doing *Rod the Mod* for a director called Francis Megahy I think it was, something like that. And it was about Rod Stewart. I wasn't on it full time though because Fred had been doing it on and

off. [TIME 00.35.27] I am not sure what the arrangement was on that film. I assisted for a while until I had other things to go on to. Well yes, that's how I got onto that with my having worked on the *Shellorama*. Which was also a good experience on that because it was Cinerama with the six-track stereo sound. Because Norman Savage who was also a top editor, he did the sound editing on it, so I worked with him as well and that was also a learning curve on how to do sound effects. Norman sadly, well they both did, and Fred Burnley, they both died young which was a shame. Norman Savage had just done *Lady Caroline Lamb*, you know, the David Lean movie.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, I worked on the publicity on that.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Norman had gone to lunch and was walking back to the cutting room and he just dropped down dead. He had Leukemia it was. He didn't know that he had it, nobody did. Fred Burnley, it was cancer of course, the usual thing. Yes, so that was before, that's how *Rod the Mod* came along, which I believe has just been shown at the BFI too. [TIME 00.36.31]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: It's been shown. It's been shown again has it? Yeah, because the full-length version, not the short one we saw before.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Oh, I see I didn't know there were different versions. In fact I'd forgotten all about the film because it was in the BFI Programme.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, they did show the entire thing, it might have been BBC Four or Channel 4 or something. I think I recorded it.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Was it at the time of its transmission?

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Ah yeah, a long time ago.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Then we saw an abridged version on *Missing Believed Wiped* and then I think they intend showing the full version shortly, in the next couple of weeks, down there.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, I might try to get to that one because it was shown back in January I think it was, or February, or was going to be. And, I only learnt it because that same evening it clashed ... I was at the BFI because the BFI was showing another one of my old films called *Bloody New Year* which I didn't know anything about and that was on there, so I went to see that. And I then discovered in the programme that *Rod the Mod* was on, meant to be on, Screen 1 at that time but I believe, as you said, it didn't happen. [TIME 00.37.32]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: He is supposed to be turning up for the screening, Rod, but err ...

NORMAN J. WARREN: Whether he will or not.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: After that, what was your next ... Oh, there's a film called Onk? Was that?

NORMAN J. WARREN: *Oink!* No, that's just a little comedy thing I did for David McGillivray. He just wanted to do this silly little film about people laughing, basically. It's a film where nobody gets to say anything because they can't stop laughing. We just did it in a day at Crystal Film Studios and David basically just got everybody drunk and did it that way. [Laughter] It didn't actually have any future, it was just made for that. Because at that time I was always doing lots of little things and I was doing commercials.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Was you working for any particular commercials company or was you freelancing between various different people ...?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well I was doing things that I had for my own little company called Magic Films. [TIME 00.38.29] When I started directing commercials, I should say I was doing editing, but when I started directing then I was working for various people. Either for companies like Fisher Price Toys. I did a lot for them over several years. They were nice jobs actually because they tended to be [unclear] Fisher Price made toys, children's toys. I would do their commercials for Christmas and they were nice little easy things to do. I really shouldn't admit this but to be honest, those sort of commercials are so simple because it is all storyboarded even though I had to go, as is part of your contract, to the casting session. The agency people they had already chosen which children they wanted so you just went through the process saying "Oh yes, I agree." You know, "That boy with the freckles and the glasses. That would be perfect." Then there was Gillie Potter production rushes. On a whole variety of different commercials. [TIME 00.39.34]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: I did some work for him. He used to be wonderful. Special Effects wasn't he. He was well known for that. All that sort of stuff.

NORMAN J. WARREN: I can't remember exactly which ones they were. So, I was doing commercials during that period. And little documentary things. A few people managed to find them on YouTube. The very first one I did was called *Hope Anti Jackknife* and it was about a device that had been made for articulated lorries to stop them jack-knifing. And strange enough I don't know whatever happened to that device because it worked. But you still hear about lorries jack-knifing so it obviously didn't become a standard fitting.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: I saw that problem on the M25. It went right across the central reservation.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, because it is quite horrendous when you see the lorry do it. So, where are we up to.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: [TIME 00.40.32] *Satan's Slave*, that was '76 wasn't it?

That was a little later on.

NORMAN J. WARREN: It was actually shot in '75 but I know that '76 was the date they put because that was the release date, yes. Well, do you want to jump to that because ...

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: OK. Well, we'll talk about anything after, before we get to that.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, before that ... I am trying to remember things in sequence. As I said, I was still doing commercials and documentary work. You know, anything, as you do. I worked as an assistant too for a company called Valley Films who did commercials and I worked on the sort of things like the Zoom Ice Lollies which used the Tracy Island, you know from Thunderbirds. And that was a good experience. There was a man called Roger Woodburn who made the little rockets. He made all the special effects, like fake chocolate and all those things. He was really a master at it. I do remember the little rockets, which were actually the iced lolly itself, [TIME 00.41.32] [? unclear] and every time you did a shot you had to stop and open all the doors because the studio was just getting full of smoke because it was a commercial studio and it wasn't very big. And I also worked on ... I am talking about as an assistant director now ... on things like title sequences, because very often title sequences were quite elaborate at times and they used to spend a lot of money on. There was a very talented man called Robert Brownjohn and I did a few things that he designed. Things like *Night of the Generals*. I worked on *The Sailor from Gibraltar*

was fascinating because the idea was they wanted the actor ... I can't remember his name now ... he sort of turns away and throws a raincoat over his shoulder and walks away and they wanted that projected on the cigarette standing up and as he walks away the cigarette burns down. Of course, it was in the days when we all smoked, unfortunately. We spent quite a lot of time, Roger Woodburn was asked to do this, [TIME 00.42.32] all lighting cigarettes and things, lighting up and trying to work out how long it took to burn down. And Roger was working that out in terms of frames. And what he did in the end was to sync up with our Arriflex Camera. [How he did] know a way of turning over one frame at the same time with the ... anyway it worked. Oh, no, he had to sync it up with the projector, that's right. We had a portable 35mm projector projecting the image on the cigarette and he needed a link to. So he got a wolf [cub?] extension thing for drills and connected it to the camera and the projector and it worked. The projector actually drove the camera.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Because Richard [sic] Brownjohn died quite young.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Robert Brownjohn, yeah.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Because he did the credits for *Goldfinger*.

NORMAN J. WARREN: That's right, yes. Robert Brownjohn ... It was a commercials company he was with too. His design skills were amazing. [TIME 00.43.33] But, sadly, like a lot of people, he was so heavy on the drink. He would drink a bottle of scotch in the morning and again in the afternoon and we never saw him eat a thing. He was never drunk but he was just drinking whisky all the time from the moment ... like eight o'clock in the morning he would be on it. And he'd finish that bottle by lunchtime and would be on another one afterwards, and neat, no nothing, no water or anything. So, I am not surprised that he didn't last. It's a shame,

because he was such a talent and a nice guy. Going back to those people, there was another talented man, a photographer actually, a man called Robert Freeman, who you may know the name.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes. He did a lot of Beatles.

NORMAN J. WARREN: He came to fame because he had done early photographs of The Beatles and because of that he got to be one of Vogue's top photographers. So, I actually worked on quite a number of shoots with him just with models, because for just over a year I became the manager of Holland Park Film Studios [TIME 00.44.34] which belonged to Peter Biziou, another name. Peter Biziou ... I became friends with Peter way back in the early sixties and he once again came in on my little company and shot the commercials I was doing. So, I had one of the best - who went on to be one of the best director photographers. Because, if you don't know Peter, his credits ... His very first film was *Bugsy Malone*, I can't remember his very last one, He got the Oscar for *Mississippi Burning*. I mean, he once again like Brian Tufano was just so talented. He was a natural. He actually shot the interior stuff for my little short I mentioned, the one that got me the break, to direct. *Fragment*. So, Peter, I can't remember his father's name, Leon Biziou, I think it was, who was a cameraman, when he died he left the studio to Peter. And Peter was busy doing other things, so he just asked me if I would take over managing the studio. [TIME 00.45.34]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Whereabouts was that studio, in Holland Park?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Strangely, Holland Park Studio was actually in Holland Park. I can't remember the name of the road. It was actually a converted school. [It was at 247 Walmer Road in the old St John's School. DS] He had bought the entire school and turned what would be the assembly hall into the main studio part. It was

very good. You couldn't do the enormous things in there, but it was big enough to do commercials and the dolly, a Vinten Velocitator, I think you call it. One of the things with a wind-up handle, you know for the calibration, but it was a monster. So we had plenty of room in there for doing tracking shots with that. Robert Freeman used to like using the studio for his photographic work shooting models. That was interesting because this was the Vogue shoots. Because the secret for photography for those, you just take a thousand photographs and then your assistant has the nightmare job of doing a contact sheet in the darkroom. [Laughter] [TIME 00.46:36] He had a young guy called Denzil [?] I don't think he saw the daylight in weeks, he was always in the darkroom. All this was going on but I still was desperate to make a film. You know, I really did want to make a feature film. That's when I got *Her Private Hell* and after that I wanted to do more. So, I started taking scripts to various distributors and producers and, once again, not getting anywhere. But I was possibly then going to do a film for AIP, American International Pictures, which would have been my first horror film, it was called *The Naked Eye*. And it was going to star Vincent Price which was wonderful because he was one of my idols. I really adored Vincent Price. And, it started happening. It got to the stage where lots of re-writing was done and John Cohen and Stanley Mann were brought in to work on the script, who also had amazing credits. It was getting more and more ready to shoot. We got locations started again, the casting. [TIME 00.47.39] We had people like Michael Gough was included, Lesley Anne Down was going to play the young girl, which would have been, not quite, her first film break. And then at the last moment ... I should have said from the moment the film started the AIP people ... I can't remember the man who was in England at that time who represented AIP.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: It was Louis Heywood and the other two were Samuel Arkoff and I can't remember his other partner. It will come to me.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, he was in America. I think it must have been Heywood who was in London., one of them was based in London, and what happened was they kept making alterations and bringing in more cast members. I even met with James Mason, but he didn't come in on it in the end. Joss Ackland did, the actor, and so they got more and more but, of course, the budget was going up and in the end they turned round and said "We're not going to make it now because it's too expensive" and they had made it too expensive [TIME 00.48.40] and they decided to pay off Vincent Price. I should explain the reason they wanted to do this film was because they had a contract with Vincent Price to do ten pictures. And they had done nine, because he had done all those with Roger Corman, you know, *The Pit and the Pendulum* and all those things, and they had one more to fulfil the contract but, sadly they decided that they would pay him off rather than ... And in Vincent Price's autobiography he mentions the film at the end but he just said it was because the script was never correct, they were never happy with the script, as to why it never happened. It is a shame because that would have given a whole different start to my career. At the same time, I was also asked by Amicus, Milton Subotsky ... There was a chance of me doing a film called *The Book of Seven Seals*. I had a great many meetings with Milton down at Shepperton. [TIME 00.49.35] It always makes me laugh that he always referred to the Amicus Studios and, of course, his office was a Portakabin in the car park. [Laughter] A Portakabin divided in two. In the front bit was his secretary, then there was Milton in the other bit. Both of them surrounded by comics. He had the biggest comic collection I have ever seen in my life. But he was a strange

man. Interesting man actually because he really didn't like directors and he couldn't see why he needed them. He was really interested in the screenwriter and the editor, because I think he was a frustrated editor. So I used to have meetings with him there with the writer and most of the time he ignored me completely, talking to the writer. Anyway, it went on for several months but it just petered out again. So obviously by this time I was getting upset and very frustrated and a good friend of mine, Les Young, who I'd known from being a camera operator, he was on *Her Private Hell* which was his first feature film ... we'd become friends over the years and he'd been working for AIP [unclear]. [TIME 00.50.44] He just said to me, because I was getting frustrated, well why don't we try and do it ourselves, lets try and make a film ourselves rather than ... if you're not getting anywhere this way. So, we did. First of all we tried to raise money but after a year we gave up because we would get fifty percent of it but by the time we had raised the other fifty percent the person who was going to give us the first fifty percent would then say I can't do it now, for whatever reason, or people would say I need to do it before the tax year ... So, in the end we said let's just go for broke and do it ourselves. So, we did and I will always be grateful to Les because he had a company called Crystal Films which rented out film equipment, like 16mm Arriflexes and so on, the whole lot, lights, sound equipment, the whole thing, and he mortgaged that company and sold his car and mortgaged his house and we all put in whatever we could and made *Satan's Slave*. I should actually backtrack a bit here because we weren't the only people doing that, of course, it was also, another contemporary of mine, actually, Pete Walker was doing it. [TIME 00.51.52] And another fellow we knew well was Lindsay Shonteff. Because Les and many of the people I worked with, like technicians, worked with Lindsay who was

another character. And one other thing, in 1969, I think a lot of people forget this, in 1969 the American companies, and that would have been AIP and [? unclear] all left England. They all pulled their money out because they were getting tired of the rates and things going up every year and they said suddenly England's too expensive. So they all pulled out. Well, of course, I don't think many people realise, but America actually had been financing all the film production in England. So-called British films were being financed by America. So as a result suddenly, I have never forgotten that, the industry collapsed overnight. Everybody was out of work. I knew directors of photography and people who became minicab drivers, and production designers, it was ... And I started ... I am backtracking here again now, another thing I forgot. Because I needed to survive and there was no more work, [TIME 00.52.52] I had actually started a little mail order company for 16mm and 8mm films. The market was just really becoming quite big then. And I ran that for three years. And, at first, it was actually quite a good income on that until video started coming along and then I decided to get out because I could see it was going to die, but initially it was good. The only thing is it started taking me away from what I really wanted to do because I was becoming a businessman and spending most of my time getting in new stock and all this sort of thing and importing stuff from America. So, another reason for closing that down was because I wanted to get back to working on films anyway. That was a long way around of saying because the industry collapsed and everybody needed work, it was now possible to get crews together and people like that at a slightly lower rate. [TIME 00.53.47] I don't mean you were trying to cheat anybody but you could get people, as we did with *Satan's Slave*, to come and work on the film for a reduced rate. In other words, doing a deferment. Say you were meant to get £100 a week, we

would pay you £50, and everybody in fact got £50 so that's an example, enough to cover your rent and your whatever, and you would get the rest when we hopefully sold the film. And people were prepared to come in on that because, as I said, we all needed to earn something. So, that's how *Satan's Slave* was made. We shot it over three weeks at a wonderful location that our production manager, Hayden Pearce, who was also another close friend. In fact, I worked with Hayden on everything because he was just amazing, one of the best you could ever wish. Hayden had a skill of being able to get things for you or build sets and things no matter what the budget was. You could say to Hayden "We need a replica of the Taj Mahal but we have only got £10." [TIME 00.54.51] And he'd give you £7 change or something. It was quite incredible. And so, we found this wonderful house down in Pirbright, which I think other people used afterwards, it was just incredible, it belonged to a baron and baroness who were crazy enough to allow film units in, which is the last thing you want to do. And fortunately, I could manage to get Michael Gough to play the main lead, who was a real bonus, to have that name. A very good cast actually. So, we made the film and then took it to the distributors and fortunately we had several who wanted it and we went with Brent Walker, which was very good for us because we actually got the film out there but, we won't go into the realms of all this, but they weren't the straightest of companies, so we were terribly cheated with Brent Walker.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, I do know because we were dealing a lot with them at Kays at the time, we did *The Stud* and *The Bitch* and various others all done there.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, Brent Walker, yes another. [Laughter] We were very lucky, coming back to *Satan's Slave* for a moment [TIME 00.56.01] because Techniscope was being used by the Italians for spaghetti westerns and so on and

Lindsay Shonteff had done a couple on that and so we were quite impressed because I love the 'scope format, I really do like that ratio. And, of course, you didn't need to get Anamorphic lenses for which, at that time you had to pay a licence to Fox because they owned the rights to the name. So we used Techniscope which meant that you had to go to Technicolor and, of course, Technicolor was known as being the most expensive laboratory around at the time, even though their work was brilliant and Les and I went to a meeting [yes, I remember?] That was quite an experience because it was very American, Technicolor, and we were shown into this boardroom, you know an enormous table, we were sat at the end and suddenly all these men came in, in suits, looking incredibly smart but there were loads of them, they were all sat around us completely. And the head man, I can't remember who he was, at Technicolor said ... remember we were a couple of young guys sitting at the other end ... [TIME 00.57.05] "What can we do for you?" So we very sheepishly, well Les was the producer, so he said We're making this little film, we want [to use ?] Techniscope and so and so, could they do the processing? And in the end they did us the most amazing deal, they really did. We thought it would be beyond our reach but they gave us so much, you know, threw things in, said well you can have that and so on. There was a man called Tony Lewis who was our contact man and he was brilliant. And they were good because they also had a bit of a problem with our stock, because Fujicolor approached us because it was before Fuji was established, they were known on stills and things but they wanted to get in on the feature market, and they said to us if you're prepared to use Fuji stock we'll give it to you. So we got our film stock free of charge from Fuji. The only thing was it had a colour problem, Technicolor, it took them a while to get the flesh tones right. [TIME 00.58.00]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: It had a very magenta bias.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, that's it, but they managed to correct it, and on the shooting side they had a problem with the emulsion, you got emulsion build-up really badly. After every take you had to clean the gate out, because there would always be some emulsion in there. As time went on Fuji ... We reported back all these problems to Fuji so I think they used that to correct it for future use. So we were lucky on that, we got our film stock free and the processing was good and there we were. As I said, *Satan's Slave* that's what got me active and into the horror thing because it was successful. Directly after that I was asked to do a film called *Prey* which was a little science fiction horror thing, for a producer called Terry Marcel who was in fact a very established First Assistant Director at the time and he wanted to make this film *Prey* [TIME 00.59.02] ... I'll never forget, when he phoned me, there was no way I could have said no as he rang me up and said "Norman, I want to make this film, he said it's about an alien that comes to Earth in search of a new food source for his planet, and he encounters a young lesbian couple and discovers that humans are high in protein and easy prey, would you like to direct it? With an outline like that I couldn't say no, I thought, wow, that's really fascinating so I said "Yes" and then I met with Terry and I wasn't surprised when he said we don't really have any money, I mean I was used to that, he said we need to start shooting, oh we're going to shoot at Shepperton Studios, and I thought that's wonderful, I like Shepperton, very fond of Shepperton, he said but we've got to do it at a set time because they will let us do it at that period and we've got to shoot it in ten days, well OK ten days, I'm sure that we can do it if we plan it well, and then but the final blow was we need to start in three weeks [TIME 01.00.01] and we don't have a script yet, he just had this outline so I still said "Yes"

I wanted to do it. It became quite an experience, the fastest thing I have ever worked on actually. A young writer by the name of Max Cuff did what was, we basically shot a first draft, did a wonderful job really in the time he had, he got to the stage where we actually started filming while he was still writing, so it got to the stage where we were getting the script in the morning, like working on a newspaper or something, getting the hot news coming in and quickly have a meeting how we were going to work that day, and we worked at a hell of a pace. But going back now to, it was different times, Terry had been working as he did on the Pink Panther films, I forget which one it was, and that had just finished so Terry said to the crew on that “Look guys I am making this little film, if you are not going on to anything now directly, do you fancy coming on to it?” And they more or less said to Terry “Well if you buy the sandwiches and the coffee, we’ll come and do it.” So, I had the top ... You couldn’t have got a better crew. It was quite amazing. I had the cream of British technicians, which meant we shot in ten days and we were working at a hell of a rate but I never had to wait for technical reasons because there were never any problems. I never saw the focus puller ever use a tape measure, he did it all by eye, and there was never another take for focus. It was just incredible. So, I had a job to keep up with them. They had the camera set up for the next take in a couple of seconds. It was a great experience. There was a great editor, Alan Jones on it, who also did *Pink Panther*, and even now when we talk he doesn’t quite remember how did we actually achieve it. Five weeks after we had finished shooting, the film was ready. It had an answer print within five weeks, which was quite incredible. Yes, that was a good experience. It was actually quite an unusual little film. It’s a slowish film but it looked good and the cast were excellent and it was a good little script.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Who ended up distributing that?

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, it went through a whole assortment actually. There was an assortment....[Asprey?] I think they were called at the time, Euro London, Premiere Releasing, I can't remember all of them actually, that was his problem at the beginning it actually went through a whole assortment of people and therefore its release initially was quite obscure, you know, messed up, it eventually opened at the Odeon Swiss Cottage with a film which was strange programming called *Charlie One Eye* which was a western so it was incredibly strange programming where they put it together and as a result I don't think it did very well, so *Prey* disappeared for a while and it came back later to mixed feelings and over the years does very well on DVD releases and things like that and its one of those films that people either love it or hate it if you see what I mean. [TIME 01:03:18] And then of course by the time that was over *Satan's Slave* was out and we had made enough money, we had recovered our money, we had paid everybody off their full rate and we were able to give everybody ten per cent on top of what they would have got as a thank you, and then we had enough money now to consider making another film. By then, I'm now talking mid 70's towards late '70s there was a lot of horror films coming out, an enormous amount, not just from England, there were lots in England but they were coming in from America and Italy to the state where you could actually see two or three new horror films every month in this country, sometimes as many as four but the problem was because they were all coming out so fast they were all looking a bit similar to each other, so, our problem was what sort of thing could we do. Well I went to see a film, which I was fascinated by the title called *Suspirio* [TIME 01:04:18] which was directed by a young Italian called Dario Argento and not knowing what this film was

all about and it was just mind blowing for me because it was ... he'd thrown all the rules out the window, I mean the story didn't actually make any sense really, but things like the lighting, there were colours greens and reds and things, but never explained why, but normally I was brought up with a film that where the colours come in from somewhere, you tend to explain where it's coming from, a lamp or a streetlight or whatever, but this film they just used colour for effect and the sound, it has sound effects strange type of things that had no relation to what was on the screen but it added to the atmosphere and the music, it was just a whole revolutionary way of looking at it. I wasn't the only one it happens that Les Young had gone to see it with his wife Moira independently and so we more or less rang each other straight away and said I've just seen this film we've gotta ... this is [?] the stars so we then put together what became *Terror* and how we actually came up with the idea for that, we sat down and just wrote down all the things we liked seeing in horror films, you know classic things like a young girl getting strangled when her car breaks down out in the country and it's raining, the thunderstorm and she finds a cottage, which of course the door's always open and there's no one in there, and when you need it the phone does work. All those little scenes like that and can be jumbled, none of it made any sense and didn't have any connection and we gave them all to David McGillivray who had written *Satan's Slave*, I should have explained and said "David can you do anything with these ideas?" [TIME 01:06:00] And David put together a sort of a story of which I said "You can't analyse it, it doesn't make sense. And that was *Terror* which we shot.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Who was the main lead? He was in *Bouquet of Barbed Wire*. I can't think of his name.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Well, he wasn't the main lead ... we had a lot of characters in it ... but you're thinking of James Aubrey.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, that's right.

NORMAN J. WARREN: What we did on *Terror*, we couldn't afford to have any names. We didn't have that much money. There were 27 characters in total in the film. So, what we decided to do was we would go for young actors and actresses who had done theatre and television but maybe not had a film so maybe they would be keen to do it. And we spent almost two months. Moira, Les's wife, and myself we had open casting. We just saw loads of people every day until we had got three people for every part and then we did a lot of screen tests one afternoon and once you see people on the screen you get the answer as to which one is the one to choose out of the three. It was a very good way of working because by having people just coming in we discovered a few people that we put in the film that we would never have done so. We put them in because they were such wonderful characters. We had a lovely actress called Elaine Ives-Cameron who had an incredible face and just such a personality. We said yes even though we had no part for her, but that night we wrote a little part to put her into the film. And there was an agent I knew well called Ralph Kruger [?] who kept ringing me saying "Norman you have got to see this actress I have got, a new girl, you're going to want to use her in the film." I said "We haven't got any parts." ... "But definitely you've got to see her." So in the end I gave in and said "Alright, well send her round." Anyway she came in and the moment she walked through the door we both knew that we had to put her in the film. And her name was ... oh it's gone I just had it on the tip of my tongue then ... Glynis Barber. She was just such a stunning looking girl and we knew we had to have her in the film. So we

did. We came up with a little part for her. Sadly, it was a small part. I say that because when the film was finished we had endless letters from fans, young men in particular, saying why didn't we have her longer in the film. That was her very first job. She went on to do a series called *Dempsey and Makepeace*.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: That's right, yes. She ended up marrying the guy ...

NORMAN J. WARREN: That's right, yes, the American guy. And another TV series, *Blake's 7* I think it was. And it was all people like that. As you say, James Aubrey, John Nolan, Carolyn Courage. It was a good cast actually, they were all right for the parts. But the story about that film ... The nice thing about *Terror* was that without realising it we had hit on the right formula because the film became incredibly successful. But it was, it just took off. [TIME 01:08:56] Young audiences just took to it. We were playing to full houses and in America we were breaking, in places like Chicago we broke box office records. They kept it on for weeks in Chicago and Oklahoma. And in England, I actually was very proud of this, it became the number one film, only for one week. It out-grossed any other film in England and the West End but only for one week. So that was very successful financially but also it's always good for your reputation when things do well. So, *Terror* was amazingly successful which was very nice for us. And, not on the back of that necessarily, but I got a phone call from a producer who said would I like to consider doing a film with them. I went to see them, and at the time it was called *SECK* which stood for Sexual Encounters of a Closer Kind, so you can understand what they were trying to cash in on. And, to be honest, when I read the script it was another sexploitation film and I thought I don't really want to do this because it is going back to the days of *Her Private Hell* and *Loving Feeling* which I had enough of it then. So I did say to them,

well I'm not really that keen on doing it. I don't really want to. But the producer, a man called Peter Schlesinger, who is a really nice man, he said "Oh I really want you to do it for me." And he was a big fan of *Prey*, he had seen *Prey*. And he said "Look you can make all the changes you want to with the script. If you don't like the script, just change it and things." So, as he said that I met with the writer and he was quite happy to make changes and we decided to really go for the comedy rather than make it a sex film as such. We would just take the situation which was very basic. It was about an alien spaceship which was completely manned by women who have to land because they have a malfunction because the spaceship is falling apart actually. So they land on Earth and they accidentally, not intending to, take on three guys and one girl and then take off again. And, of course, you have got the environment where they have got the three men and they have never seen the male species at all, it doesn't exist on their planet. This is where the comedy comes in when they start analysing them and there is some sex in it but very limited. [TIME 01:11:22] So, I agreed to do it. Strangely enough the cameraman, John Metcalf and Hayden Pearce once again, the production manager I mentioned, when I talked initially to them about that, they weren't so keen but in the end we decided to go with it and, I will be honest, at that time we all had the rent to pay. It was also that angle. Anyway we did it. We shot it at Twickenham Studios which was an experience because being a spaceship, of course, the moment you go in for a science fiction thing you have to shoot in a studio. Otherwise you can do location but you can't find spaceships on location, so we had to build it. Well, at the time, that was 1979, all the studios were booked. There was no studio space around, except Twickenham Studios said "Well we have a small ..."

Well basically it was a commercials studio. So we went to see it and it really was

quite tiny but Hayden and his wonderful skills again worked out how we could build a set, that would fill the stage actually there was only about a couple of feet left to get in and out of it. But as long as I did the shooting quick enough he could re-vamp it and move things overnight to create another section of the spaceship because we needed fourteen different spaces on the spaceship. So, we did that and that was quite an experience. We shot it in, I think it was, two weeks or three weeks. Once again, it was a nice quick shoot. Fortunately, because of my background I had learnt how to work fast. I do work fast, so it didn't frighten me too much, the short time. But it was quite scary because at the end of each day I had to be sure I had got everything for that scene because overnight the set would change or sometimes, depending on the schedule, it would change at lunchtime. And on one particular day ... we used to go and see the rushes at Twickenham at lunchtime ... we were sitting there and the rushes were running through and I suddenly remembered that on what we had just been shooting I had missed out one close-up. I charged back to the stage and, of course, it was already halfway dismantled, you know, they were pulling it down. So I quickly said to Hayden "Look I have got to get this close-up." Fortunately, there was one piece of flat that still had the right paint on it and everything. So we quickly stuck that up, put something on it and brought the actor in and did the close-up very quickly that way, so I managed to get it. [TIME 01:13:52] You can't really tell when you see the film but if you knew, it looks a bit odd. Suddenly he is standing against this flat not really involved with the person he was talking to. But, otherwise we achieved it. And in some ways it was a fun little film to do. It was enjoyable. A good experience. And the film didn't do terribly well. Oh, I should say that the title was changed from *SECK*. It became *Out of Touch*, initially, that was the UK title but it got changed in

America to *Spaced Out*. I think that was a wise move because *Out of Touch* when you think about it is a negative title. You know, because it sort of suggests that it is out of touch. *Spaced Out*, it might be because you have the connection with drugs which was what the American angle was working on. So in England it didn't do terribly well but it was sold to the, the producer Peter Schlesinger sold it to Miramax, the American company, with a Mr.[Weinstein] that famous man of the moment with all that's going on, in the early days of Miramax And they took it, changed the title and they re-voiced one of the characters, when I say one of the characters, in the characters apart from your human type people there's also a talking juke box and a computer and the juke box is an analyst, you know, put the money in and it will solve your problems for you. The Americans changed the computer and made it camp Jewish New York humour. Actually it was very funny. And the film, they changed it to *Spaced Out*, and it did amazing business in America which upset Peter terribly because we actually let them have it for quite a low price. But, anyway those things happen. So that was *Spaced Out* and that is still shown around. It's actually been on television a few times. Because, having said it is a sex thing, once again, there is really nothing in it. And by the time it was towards the end of that ... *Inseminoid* was going to be next but before then we were editing the final stages of *Spaced Out* and I had a call from a company, I have forgotten their name actually, who asked me ... They wanted to do a horror film and it was called *Gargoyles* [TIME 01:16:09] So I went to meet with them, now they had already met Richard Gordon of Gordon Films who was based in New York, and I met Richard Gordon I didn't know him terribly well but I thought I had met him at odd times early in my career for instance just before *Satan's Slave*, he produced a film with Antony Balch, a horror film called

Horror Hospital so I had met Richard at that time and Richard had seen the things I 'd done obviously and he said to these people look if you can get Norman to direct it, I'll come in on 50% of the movie so that's why they approached me. So I went to see them, we went over to New York to meet with Richard which was very exciting for me actually because he made films in the 50s that I was a big fan of like *Fiend without a Face*, you know wonderful B movies he made, *First man into Space* and he also did wonderful *Corridors of Blood* with Boris Karloff.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: We got the rights for them at EMI when I was there, I worked for a short while, but they've all come out subsequently on DVD .

NORMAN J WARREN: If you think films like *Corridors of Blood* and ...

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: The two of them were shot down at MGM studios

NORMAN J WARREN: They are wonderful productions, they are proper movies even though they were low budget, and of course Boris Karloff is a great actor, Richard used him in three films and became good friends, so anyway I found that very exciting to be sitting in his office in his New York office and he was asking me to direct a film for him which was quite nice. So it was all agreed, I came back to England with the two guys and we once again found locations, we were doing some alterations on the script and suddenly these two guys of this company, and it was based just off Wardour Street, they just vanished overnight, they weren't there anymore [LAUGHTER] I know this tends to happen in the oil industry as well, they were suddenly gone, so Richard Gordon said to me "Look Norman we are not obviously going to make *Gargoyles* now" but he said "If you can find a script I'd still like to do a film so if there's anything you want" I did not actually have anything to hand, well to backtrack – on *Satan's Slave* we had an actress called Gloria Walker and

a make-up guy called Nick Maley who did special effects and things, now they had actually fallen in love on *Satan's Slave* and actually got married some few years later and they invited me to their first wedding anniversary party, so I went along to that and in idle chat I just mentioned the fact what happened to the production and I was now looking for a script and two or three weeks later much more after that meeting, they, Gloria and Nick, Nick sent me a script which was called *Doomseed* at the time and what became *Inseminoid* and I liked it, it had a lot of potential, I liked this idea, so I sent it to Richard Gordon who immediately said "Yeah, we'll do this. We can do it." And that's what happened. So we needed to do some changes on the script, but it all started. [TIME 01:19:32] In fact, I have never been on a film that was put together, financially [? Unclear], so fast. Because Richard Gordon came over to London straightaway to sign up the script, to get that sorted. And also we obviously needed some more money as well. I'd actually gone to Peter Schlesinger, the gentleman I mentioned who did *Spaced Out*. A really nice South African guy, and said "Would you be interested in this Peter." He really loved the script and said "Fine, yeah I'll come in on it. So we now have the two both Richard and Peter Schlesinger. And, as I said, a science fiction story and it was quite elaborate in some ways but not enormous, but the budget ended up being bigger than Peter or Richard really wanted to go to, you know, it was out of their safety zone or, in fact, committing too much money. But Richard, because of his long experience in the industry, had so many contacts he knew Sir Run Run Shaw, Shaw Brothers, very well. [TIME 01:20:34] And he literally phoned Sir Run Run from the office and told him about the production and so on and Sir Run Run said to him Richard, or Dick as he was called by most people then "If you say it is a good production and you want to go for it, count us in for fifty percent

whatever the budget is.” So, we suddenly had the finance it was quite amazing, quite incredible. And, they meant that, they just came along with the money. They were entitled to get quite involved because of their high investment but all that happened was he sent one of his sons, or nephews over to say hello guys and wish us well and then they never bothered us. We used to send them the material every week to look at and I must admit, the only comment that ever came back was “more blood”, because at that time they were very bloodthirsty. So that was how the film was put together financially. And the casting ... Richard, once again, was a good friend of Rose Tobias Shaw who was the top casting agent at the time, she really was the cream of the industry, you couldn't get anybody better. I mean, she could just open doors. Agents would just fall down and worship the ground she'd walked on, type of thing. So, she came on the film and got the most amazing cast together for us. [TIME 01:21:17] In particular, Judy Geeson who was just an amazing young actress to work with. She really was just incredible. A lovely person but just such hard work because she had to do some pretty unpleasant things on the film. Because we ended up filming at Chislehurst Caves in Kent. I should explain there, because once again being science fiction and a lot of it is on an alien planet. And, of course, building caves and things, the most expensive type of set to build, because caves had to have the strength of all that plaster. Its quite a big structure to build caves so it is incredibly expensive. So we thought we can't really do that. And the production manager, Roy ... it'll come to me in a minute [Ray Corbett DS]... he said “Look, why don't we use Chislehurst Caves, you know they're wonderful.” I don't know if you have ever been to Chislehurst Caves but it's 22 miles of manmade caves, they're chalk and they're just incredible. You can go there for tours at any time. Having the 20-minute tour is one

thing but when you actually do work there ... I mean it was wonderful. There's no way we could have afforded ... the production value it gave the film was incredible but as an environment to work in it was not good. For instance, you are under ground which is not nice and it is pitch black. I mean, you have to have lighting because you can't see your hand ... I mean you just can't see a thing because there's no light. The other thing is its damp and cold all the time so you're never actually warm. Hayden once again brought some amazing sets actually in the Caves. It was a couple of miles down and he managed to level out ground enough to build all these things but had an enormous problem with warping because all the wood on the set would keep warping overnight. [TIME 01:23:48] We had a, air lock door, every day it would jam and every day the guys would have to sand it down again before we could open it on our first day we were doing a shot and somebody pulled the handle to open the door and the handle came off, the door was locked solid. Going round to say about Judy now, because it was not so bad for the technicians but the cast, most of the time they were just wearing a flimsy T shirt and some things and had not much clothing on and as I said It was really cold down there, and also difficult for our actresses because there were no toilet facilities down in the caves, obviously, it was not so bad for men but for women so they had to restrict the amount of tea they consumed when they were up in the canteen area. We took over the car park and that's where all our caravans were for dressing rooms and production office, and the generator of course which we had to have on full time, which would go down every so often as generators do and we were all plunged into darkness. We had one American actor who really couldn't take it. He quite freaked out when it was dark. Which I must admit wasn't a nice experience. You just hoped it would come back on again soon. So, *Inseminoid*, I don't have much

to say about it really. It was a very good experience, good cast, good crew and the film, once again I am pleased to say, did well. It got released like all of them actually, everywhere in the world, theatrically, done on television and on video and as years have gone by on DVD and now on Blue Ray, so they just keep on ... which is wonderful. [TIME 01:25:29] After that... to think about what went next, I should say that between all these films, there wasn't much gap but I was also doing things for other people, I did pop promos and things like that, I worked with people like [The] FIX and a man called Rupert Hine who wasn't very well known in England but he was very big in Australia and another film with Gary Newman, who you will have heard of. And Gary, of course, is a very lovely guy, really nice person to work with, he and his family. His great love was aircraft. He used to finance an air show every year at West Malling Airport called Warbirds, which you know are old military planes and Gary suddenly said to me when another air show was coming up "Would you make a film about it?" "You could introduce the pilots." and all that sort of thing." I said "Gary I'd love to but I know nothing about aircraft, I wouldn't know what to ask a pilot, and he said "Don't worry, just tell them when you are doing the shot and they will tell you what to ask." Because I wouldn't know what to ... what's particular about this plane. The show was on for two days, so there was obviously the preparation day, the things arriving or the planes arriving. We basically shot it over three days there. And I was able to have three crews. I had two guys on the ground and one in an aircraft to do shots and I could work with them all through walkie-talkies. And it was great to do because once the show starts, of course, it's all happening and you just have to be there and catch it. [TIME 01:27:27.] Fortunately I had one guy who was wonderful on following stuff with the telescopic lens and

managing to keep to keep them ... when they do their shows, the stunt things... I really enjoyed it, I got to know the pilots very well and I admired them. I mean like stunt men, I like working with stunt people because I think they are all crazy, the business they do and the pilots that do the stunt flying exactly the same attitude, they get such a buzz out of doing it, they sort of shut out the risk they're taking, because some of the pilots we interviewed on the documentary did kill themselves in the coming years, there was one who did this amazing dive where he just let the plane drop and then turn up at the last moment and he said to me he said "One day I'm going to get it wrong" because the G force on him was five or six or something, your face is being pulled back and he said "One day I would get the judgement wrong, and he did, he went straight in to the ground one day and that was it. They're amazing people, like stunt people they're quite insane. I was doing those things in-between and also doing, it was actually into the 80s I started doing a lot of work for the BBC. The BBC asked me to do a little Drama thing which was called *Person to Person* about a bicycle company which they actually wanted to use for teaching English [TIME 01:28:40] I mean I just shot it, we shot it as a straight drama but they in fact used it as a ... It was not shown on British television ... Very big in Japan then productions like that for teaching people English. And because they liked that and it worked they got me to do an enormous amount of documentaries and other things for the BBC. I think I did about two hundred productions over several years which was quite nice and that was in between the films. After *Inseminoid* it went quiet for a little while and partly that was why I did it ... I had actually been working sort of non-stop and I never had holidays ... I just decided to take a little break to get my breath back again and I was asked to do a film which was called *Gunpowder*. And when I got the

script and went to meet them, it all sounded quite good because it was a sort of James Bond spoof type thing. It was all speedboats and helicopters and all that sort of thing. And, at that time, it was going to be done in the summer. I thought it would be quite a nice film to work on, especially in the summer. I have to be honest, I wanted to get involved with the helicopters which I had not experienced. So I agreed to do it even though the budget was a bit under the money they needed. And, as often happens with films, it got delayed and we ended up getting ready to shoot it in November and December but I'd agreed to do it so I really couldn't back out of it. The other thing was, the producer she said to me "We are going to shoot it in Macclesfield." She said she had certain arrangements there. We never found out why. And, I have got nothing against Macclesfield but it was a strange place to go to make this film. For one thing, Macclesfield is known for its rain and [unclear] to find locations ... which she said she had but in fact there weren't any. For the first three weeks we were travelling around it just rained, day and night. I mean, we were constantly soaked. I ran out of clothes actually in the hotel room because I couldn't dry them quickly enough. [Laughter] The heavy rain did actually reduce to a light drizzle when we came to shooting but it was still freezing cold. Anyway we did this film which really the budget was way too small and she kept wanting things that were way beyond our budget. And, secondly because she was very inexperienced as a producer, she was doing silly things like sending back props before checking with us that we had actually finished with it, to save money. So we had endless problems, we had props that disappeared and we had to try and work round it or, for instance, we had a car which had Milk Marketing Board on the side, a white Fiat, I forget what model it was, and she sent that back but we hadn't finished with it. So, once again, dear Hayden, he

went around the streets looking for a similar car. He found one, knocked on the person's door and talked them into letting us borrow the car for the next day and he produced transfers and stuck Milk Marketing Board and things on the side of it, re-dressed it again. So we got round it that way. [TIME 01:32:04] The film involves Gun Powders two characters, Gun and Powder. They are sort of James Bond type agents. And they are both completely different. One is a little gay and he is always dressed immaculately in a white jacket and sort of Bond joke things. No matter what happens to them his hair is never out of place and his jacket never seems to get dirty and the other one is an American guy who has the flying jacket, you know, after all the women all the time, the complete opposite. So, that's the two characters. Well they both had their own distinctive guns and when we were near the final scenes in it, once again, she sent back one of the guns. So there is a scene in the film ... because I had sort of given up by this stage and so had everybody else ... There is a scene in the film where you see them going into this place, they break through the door and they have both got their guns and when, of course, we did the next shot inside, that was when we didn't have the gun for one of them and so they just adlibbed it. So the other character turned round and said "Where's your gun?" [Laughter] and the other one said "I don't know." He just said "I don't know." because in the next shot he's got it again you see. But no one has ever mentioned that, it's quite weird. It was that sort of film. Because we couldn't afford the things we should have done I, we all did, were saying to her "Can't we use this more as the comedy side" and Hayden said what we could do, which was an idea that's been done before but it would have worked, he said the things that we couldn't afford, like the atomic submarine, he could draw it all out as a cartoon like in a comic, so you could see the comic shots of the bits you couldn't

afford and when you got to bits you could, that part of the picture could mix into the live action of the film which would be one way of getting round that problem.

Because the script did want an atomic submarine. Well there was no way you could have that. I said "How are we going to get one of those? And she said well what you do is you know that bendy ... [Laughter] I am not joking that is actually what she said to me ... the bendy bit on a drainpipe, when it comes down it bends, she said that if you hold that up under the water, that could be the ... I said I don't think submarines have that, atomic submarines. I think you are thinking of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Captain Nemo has that sort of periscope. I don't think they have them on those.[TIME 01:34:30] You can't do that with a drain pipe. It was just one of those films that was a complete disaster from beginning to end to be honest, because she hired the worst stunt driver ever. He was such a Jack the Lad when he came along with his leather trousers and things but when we actually did a shot he kept putting his foot on the brake, it got so bad I had to get them to take the stop lights out because you kept seeing them come on, oh God he was terrible. I could have done some of the stunts... I wouldn't have been scared because he had all these things built inside the car. He had a skid on a field which we put loads of water on but I mean there was no way he could hurt himself, even if the car had rolled, he had so many iron bars and things that he had built in it, that it wouldn't collapse. And he had to go through a wall, I mean a gate, which was all built of balsa wood but he slows down when he got to it. [Laughter] And we got a terrible man with the guns and explosive people that nearly killed us, there's a scene where the soldiers are meant to blow the lock off this warehouse, it's like an aircraft hanger and the fella laid all the charges to do the explosion and [unclear] blew the door off. When you saw the film it was quite

frightening. How the actors didn't get burned I don't know because there was an enormous ball of fire for a moment. And fortunately also the blast blew things inwards rather than out because just inside there was a van parked and it actually had buried metal from the metal doors actually in it. The blast had actually blown the metal, which if it had come the other way it would have killed an actor or a member of the crew. [TIME 01:36:07] Absolute madman. And the guy with the guns was exactly the same ... blanks actually discharge a little bit of copper, and he one day on the set when we were doing these two machine gun things, he left them lying there and they still had bullets in them, and one of the actors was just looking at it and it went off and he just missed one of the other actors, it could have been ... anyway, forget that bit, it shows that things can go wrong, and badly if you're not careful. So that was *Gunpowder*. And also she wanted to shoot it on 16mm which was another bad mistake, couldn't talk her out of that because when it went to the market place distributors weren't keen because the cost of blowing it up, and also when you do the quality just goes.

MARTING SHEFFIELD: It's alright if you're shooting it on Super 16 but if you're shooting it on normal 16 ...

NORMAN J WARREN: Even with Super 16, I mean it's alright for close-ups and medium close-ups but if you get to long shot the poor little negative does not have enough information on, and you see it on a big screen on 35, all the detail on people's faces disappears on wide shots. I love 16mm but it does have its limitations for that. So the film suffered. Since it's been ...it got television screenings, late night I think. I did actually agree because she agreed she would change her ways so when she said she wanted to do another film I did say "OK I will as long as you promise to change

your ways” [TIME 01:37:42] And that was a film which ended up being called *Bloody New Year*, a horror story, I though the script was actually very good, it was a good idea, it could have been a good little film but sadly she hadn’t really changed her ways, because we had excellent locations. We shot it at Barry in Wales, and everything we needed for the script was all found there. For one thing we needed a fairground, and there’s a tiny little fairground at Barry, and to my amazement we went to see the owners, it was part of the Cotrill [Collins. DS] Family I think it was who owned it and we had a meeting with the and the production manager did the talking and the production designer Hayden but I was there to sort out things and in the end he said “Yeah, you can use it, the fairground”, and he said, I couldn’t believe my ears, he said “Three hundred pounds”. Well I thought he meant a day, but that was for the week, three hundred pound for the week, and they gave us ... he said “I can’t give you anybody to work with you” so he said “You’ll have to do it all yourself , I’ll give you the keys” I knew which rides so he had someone come round to show us how to turn the ride on and make it do whatever it had to do and how to turn it off , and that was how it was our own fairground and with the keys to it all [unclear] it was for me I’d always liked fairgrounds as a kid, so it was like a big train set it really was, but we didn’t actually have any extras, so what we did, we put out flyers to kids saying if they wanted free rides to come to the fairground, which they did and members of the crew if they weren’t needed on the shot they would get on the ride, but there were a couple of occasions, one in particular we were doing a shot and in the background we had – it’s the ride where you sit in chairs – I mean it’s quite an old fashioned ride, they’re on chains and it spins you round and you’re sort of going out the faster it goes, anyway we had all our extras on that because that was in the background and for various

reasons as often does the shooting we were doing was going on longer so were we taking a while, and when we finished and switched the ride off so they could get off nobody could stand up everybody that got off were all collapsing on the floor and looking very weird [Laughter] fortunately they recovered. When we spoke to the guy from the fairground about it he said “All the rides work on a G force principle and there is a set time for these rides, it not all to do we want to make extra money because the ride is short because there is a limit to how much you can put the people’s body through with the G force, what you’ve done on that by leaving them on there for about 20 minutes you’ve put all the blood in the wrong places so that is why, you’ve completely messed up their body for a while. This is why they wouldn’t be able to stand because their legs would be like jelly.” That was a lesson learnt but it was still good fun. Sadly the film, its OK its around and being released and so on but its always been a slight disappointment to me because I know how good it could have been. Everybody on it was very good and put a lot of effort but sadly it also taught me that you should not work with an inexperienced producer because it just doesn’t work. That actually became my last feature film for quite a while because after that I continued to going back to editing, to directing for the BBC and various other companies, on anything from documentaries and educational films and promotional films for companies, like the BBC one when it says “This is the BBC” where it is just promoting ... They did a lot of those sort of things which they used for overseas through BBC Enterprises it was. I did a lot with them. I don’t think that exists anymore

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: It’s BBC Worldwide.

NORMAN J. WARREN: BBC Worldwide, yes that's it. And, of course, BBC English, going back to the English language, they have closed that down. And I worked for a little company that were out at Bushey, Bushey Studios, which I believe has also sadly gone now, a nice little studio, and that was the English Film Services. Yeah making little drama things. I don't know whether you have ever been to that studio, it's a nice little studio actually. It was Rank who created it, Lord Rank. Also, the nice thing is they couldn't lose money because he had built it and was making films ... because he used to make religious films there because it seems he was a very religious man and he was rather guilty that he had made so many commercial productions so he decided to have that studio to make religious films which I don't know if anybody actually saw them but it just made him feel better.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: They probably go around various churches and that.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Do you think they would have done? I've never ever seen one. That's why the studio was created and continued.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: There was a little studio in Palmers Green called, I can't think, it's gone it begins with a D ... Productions, they were there for years. Oh no, what's it, Gate Productions. [TIME 01:43:13]

NORMAN J. WARREN: I thought you were going to say the Danzigers, but it wasn't them.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: No, no. That's another story that is. [unclear] They were tied up with Armond and Michaela Dennis and I haven't spoken to them since.

NORMAN J. WARREN. Armond and Michaela Dennis, goodness that's a name from the past. Yes, indeed.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Gateway Films that's what they were called.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Ah, Gateway Films, yes. Of course, there were a lot of little studios about, which you tend to forget about. There was a studio in Ealing ... I mean not Ealing Studios which I am pleased to say that is doing very well actually because that was at one time going to disappear, Ealing Studios which would have been a shame. I can't remember the name of the young gentleman who bought it but he obviously had money from somewhere and he restored it and it is back to a successful little business now.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Yes, I looked around it about five years ago when they decided to do it, the studio manager was an ex Shepperton studio guy who took over the running of it and showed us round where they were going to do the old boardroom, which was Michael Balcon's place, up, still pretty good condition, they I went down this corridor and it was very eerie, they kept exactly the same pre BBC days and it had all black & white stills, front of house stills of all the productions there and I thought it was like going through a time warp there, it does have this sort of funny feeling about this corridor, obviously lots of famous people walked down there...

NORMAN J WARREN: I suppose you could say that about any of the studios actually, yes when you think about the history and the people who walked down those corridors and things. Because when you see the studios at the BBC, of course ... Going back to my relationship with Brian Tufano and friends when he runs companies he was based at Ealing because Ealing was their film side at the BBC

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: We know a whole group of people that worked there, don't we from all at the same time in the 60s, they were projectionists or assistant

NORMAN J WARREN: Its nothing to do with my story, but jumping back to Brian again, I told you we were making these films and how he got switched, I should explain this bit, from projection into cameras, was, he was a projectionist at the BBC at Lime Grove and he used to run material for the various producers and so on well, making our little war film we used to, this is a bit naughty really, but everybody did it, we would process our film through the BBC, you would put it in through the despatch[?] and it would get lost in the BBC thing so we got our processing done at a good price, well Brian was eager to see the material because he photographed it, so in the lunch break when they had a break in the projection he would project the footage for us to look at. Well this particular day he had been showing some material for a producer and somebody else, possibly the director, and it was all over, it was lunch time so he assumed there was nobody in the theatre so he put on our rushes and said suddenly the intercom went and a voice said "Who's material is that?" and he thought oh God, I'm getting the sack now and he sheepishly said "Mine. I'm doing it for a friend." They said "Who photographed it?" and he explained that he did. And they said "That's amazing. It's excellent." They said "Why are you doing projection, don't you want to be on cameras?" And Brian said "Yes". So, they actually got him transferred to be a trainee on the camera side. So that was a lucky break. Yes, what interesting times.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: I certainly did a lot of his stuff when I was at Kays. You know, did various dramas he'd shot and stuff like that.

NORMAN J. WARREN: The BBC is a funny company to work for because he started winning awards and they didn't like their technicians to become names so they started moving him down to less interesting ... they took him off drama and put him

on to really boring stuff. And that's when Brian, so he left the BBC and went freelance, which I know he found tough for a little while but eventually he started getting work outside the BBC. Because he had been at the BBC for a long period and sort of thought he was a BBC man, he wouldn't be able to work as a freelance but he did, of course and did some very good films. But coming back after *Bloody New Year* I went back to doing other things but it wasn't long before I had a hankering to do another feature film. So I started on new scripts and I had a script which was called *Delusion*, a horror script, and I had two producers on board and we were doing the usual things to trying to find finance but [unclear]. It is getting even worse today, I mean things were, I am talking six years ago roughly, it was very hard to find finance it was really very difficult indeed. And, anyway, it just happened by accident as often things do, I was invited, along with other producers to a screening of a Chinese film at the BFI, Southbank, *Confucius* it was and it was being presented by a set-up called *Filming East* [festival] which is run by a young lady called Yixi Sun and we were invited, well I went to the screening and met Yixi we chatted afterwards in the bar and because she was really big into film things and also could we meet up for coffee and I met her another day and she was really enthusiastic and wanted to get more in to production and all the rest of it and I really took to her because she was doing all the right things if you want to get in to films like making little films and that sort of thing, anyway we told her about our film, the problems, so [she said] maybe I can help with China, so we said well if you could. Well, within two weeks she got us invited to the Beijing International Film Festival to go to the festival and do our pitch for financing. So that was really exciting so we went of to Beijing and we did our pitch to a room of possible financiers all from that part of the world, Chinese, Japanese and anyway the

end result was we basically in various forms we raised fifty per cent through a company in Hong Kong and also had a very good Chinese actress who spoke perfect English who would have been ideal for our lead part because she was also very good on physical things, she did all the King Fu things not that we need that but it meant that she was incredibly agile, our character needed to do a lot of running and jumping and that sort of thing, but sadly when we came back to England once again the producers could never get the rest of the money and in the end our lady contacted, not the one I was talking about but another one in Hong Kong said she really couldn't hold on to the money much longer and I remember she rang me one day and said about this actress that had an offer from Hollywood so do you... I said let her go because I don't think we're going to happen and I don't want to hold her back from that and so I knew she'd do well in Hollywood so that sort of petered out as they often do. Well I said to Yixi because I knew she was disappointed because she had done so much to help us I said do you fancy to try to do a film ourselves, a low budget one so we started on putting scripts together and so on, I won't go through all the details because it's the usual old story, she went back to China on that one and got 80% of the budget. [TIME 01:51:06] And then came back but sadly I got this sudden bug, I got an infection. The hospital never actually worked out what it was but it was quite horrendous. I went to the hospital with severe pains which woke me up in the middle of the night and within a matter of hours of being there I was reduced to being like a baby, I couldn't walk anymore, I could hardly talk, breathe. And they admitted to me they didn't know what it was and they said whatever it is it has completely thrown everything in your body out of order, you know, your levels of sugar and salt. They said you have got all the wrong combination that's why you can hardly speak, hardly

breathe and all the rest of it. They said all we can do is try and get it all back and help your body fight it off, which they did but it took ... I was in there for five weeks and ended up coming out in a wheelchair and had months of recovery. It was really quite a disaster. Anyway, so sadly we couldn't do our filming because technically, although they didn't say that, we were in breach of contract because we weren't starting ... just when this happened we were meant to be starting pre-production. So, she had to go back to China to negotiate a new deal. Well, this time she succeeded in getting a hundred percent of the budget but some few weeks later just when they were about to ship the money over to our bank account because by then we'd formed a company account for it to come into, the Chinese Government suddenly changed the rules, as they do constantly there, and they stopped any money leaving, not just ours, fifty co-productions were closed down at the same time. So, overnight we lost it all again. So, what happened now was the Chinese producer said "Look I can't give you money but I can help out in kinds of ways." Like we needed a couple of Chinese actresses and we wanted them genuinely from China because of doing the accent correctly and so on. So, he said "I'll pay for them, their fee, their airfares and their accommodation in England for starting So, at least we had that and we started making it. We actually go the film together. [TIME 01:53:26] on a low budget, it's called *Susu*, which is the Chinese character who's in the film, the character is actually dead it's not alive at the time of the film but her character influences everybody else in the story so it seemed to be the obvious title and it's a nice little catchy one but the only thing was by the time we came to shoot it we shot it a couple of years ago in November at a wonderful we got up in Birmingham just outside Birmingham, a wonderful house, we ended up saying we would actually direct it together but my health was still not good, I had

enough energy to be there, directing is a really demanding job so in the end I decided that it would be much better if she directed it, I would be there the whole time to support her if she wanted any help, and that's how we did it, and also we did it like on the editing she did the editing and I was able to constantly work with her on that, and she does all the Avid bit which I'm not good on that, we couldn't afford ... digital is wonderful in many ways but it's quite expensive to work with on post production, the equipment is also expensive therefore it costs money to use it and we really couldn't afford an editor on top of all the other costs for digital post production. Anyway, so we made the film and it's been show at various festivals, it was invited to the Montreal one at the end of last year. It's now out in the market place, it's been playing in America and Berlin recently, it's actually Beijing again next week, I'm not going because once again because the Government there is having another mad house it really is very sad, I feel very sorry for the Chinese people with their government situation, and it's also at the East End Film Festival in just a couple of week's time on the 26th it gets the, it'll be the European premiere. Then that's it really, that brings me up to date. Future plans I haven't, I can't give up completely so I'm sure I'll do something [TIME 01:55:56]

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: I just want to ask a couple of things. *Christopher Lee, A Life in Films*, post production supervisor, did you actually meet Christopher Lee on the

NORMAN J WARREN. Not much on that one. I kind of met Christopher Lee before. No on that one I ... basically it's a long, very long interview with him covering his life in all detail so I was brought in to put it all together. Which I did, I quite enjoyed doing it I managed to, through other various contacts, I managed to dig

up some really good material, even going back to his school days, I even managed to get some photographs of him at school which the school loaned us enough to actually get some rostrum footage on, but sadly the producers, they got all their timing wrong because they delayed things so by the time because everybody... its horrible to say this, but he wasn't such a well man, and at first nobody was particularly interested in putting the programme on because there was a lot of things about Christopher Lee so everybody was saying, well it's better to hang on until he's dead, to be quite honest ... because the value would go up but they seem to have got everything wrong because they missed out on releasing it before then, they took so long because the things he was talking about in it that he was about to do had already been done by the time it was finished it was old news and other people had covered it in other programmes. I had actually met Christopher Lee who was quite an interesting character in many ways, he ... I didn't actually go to meet him, I went to a film shoot – I can't even remember the name of the film – it was one that he was in, he was the star, I had a friend, a make-up man Tom Smith, who I knew very well, and I heard he was on it and so I went to go and say hello to Tom and I went into the make-up room to speak to Tom and suddenly Christopher Lee came in and walked up as we were talking and introduced himself to me, which I didn't know what to say and he said "I'm Christopher Lee and I'm starring in this film", and he'd talk about 15 minutes about how people didn't appreciate me in that sense and thinking of me as a horror star and eventually walked away again. I was sort of left open mouthed with Tom, but I learnt from everybody on the film that it seems he's like that all the time. Don't ask him anything about anything because he will never stop talking, But an interesting character, I still say, having said all that I still think he's the best Dracula there ever

was. He was perfect for that... Going way back, jumping back before I shut up it's going back to Peter Sellers. You know I was actually with him on the two films and got to know him quite well because I was the young guy on the film it didn't matter if he distracted me from what I was doing because he was into gadgets and toys, he was like an overgrown kid actually. A very talented man but a very strange man, very strange really, so I was the one who had to share the excitement of the new toy whatever it was came in, for instance one day he came in with a new walkie-talkie thing so I had to run round the studios saying "Can you still hear me" type thing. He'd chat to me and he was always bringing in new cameras, big on photography and movies and so on.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: The BFI has got all his collection which Jo [Botting] got in, some of his stuff is quite ... they've shown it on several programmes about it, there's a great sequence, I might as well say it, one day it will come to light, Brian Forbe's collection came in, he shot a lot of it on 16mm and Peter Sellers dressed up as a woman "I'd just been away and had a small operation over the weekend "and it's hilarious, I don't think anyone would be offended by it now you know, Brian Forbes just cracking up trying to interview him, just can't keep control [laughter]

NORMAN J WARREN: Peter Sellers could easily make you laugh. I must admit on the first day of the shooting he, well he was alright on the first day but by day two everybody got a bit tired of it. On the first day he kept going in to all the Goon characters which was very funny for a while, but after a while you could see the rest of the crew saying look we're working here, just do the character you're meant to be doing in this film, he never spoke in his own voice very much, he was always in

another voice. [TIME 02:00:31] You know he was the most amazing mimic, he could hear an accent and do it in seconds, it would be perfect, quite incredible. All these toys, I remember, I was saying that he would bring these thing in every day, and of course one day he brought in Brit Ekland

MATRIN SHEFFIELD: That was his latest toy [laughter]

NORMAN J WARREN: And it was the way he treated it, its like look what I've got today guys. She looked completely bemused about the whole thing. And I felt sorry for his children, he wasn't too good to his children.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: And Joe McGrath who was another good friend of his, director, who did *A Square World*, we interviewed him and I spoke to him after an event on the history of the BBC Television Centre and he got let in, he did two big productions, he did *A Square World* and he directed *Not Only But Also* and he was saying the trouble with Peter every time he had a new girlfriend he wanted to change his will all the time, he said Oh give it a rest, he said what about the kids, these are all five minute wonders

NORMAN J WARREN: Call it falling in love. Because on *The Millionairess* with Sophia Loren that was quite something and she genuinely did one day slap him round the face and told him not to be a silly little boy. But an interesting man. Very quickly before we stop, you mentioned Brian Forbes, he was another, he was such a nice guy, going back to when I was trying to get various films together I actually had a script called *Goodbye For Ever* and he had just been made Head of EMI, do you remember that? Which he thought was genuine because he had eight films he was allowed to select to be made to go into production, anyway I took my script down to him and he actually liked it and wanted to do it, he said definitely it was all looking very good it

was on his slate of ones to do and then he found out that they were just using him as a figure head because he was so well respected in the industry, but they had other their plans and they said to him we're not doing any of the ones you've chosen these are the ones we're doing and he sent me a really nice letter apologising saying completely out of my hands, we're not going to do it, just a lovely man.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: We discussed that in quite a bit of depth a few months before he passed away because Simon Callow interviewed him. It was quite funny his daughters were there, Nanette [Newman] couldn't make that particular thing, he said "Cor blimey we missed out on a good that day." The amount of drink, but every other shot the glass was either half full or empty. [Laughter] But it was probably good he went to town about the day and he remembered me. We reissued when I went back there nearly twenty years ago *The Railway Children* and all the crew turned up and he did and everything else and "I remember you, you were in Publicity weren't you at the time." That's a blooming good memory we are talking about nearly forty years on.

NORMAN J. WARREN: He did have a good memory, yes.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: Blah, blah, blah, and we got talking and that ... and he said "They were right bastards EMI weren't they? I am glad I got out of that. Well not the company but the people I was involved with".

NORMAN J. WARREN: Oh no, they really did, they cheated many.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: But he pulled them out of the quagmire with about three films that's what makes you laugh. *The Railway Children* was obviously one, *The Tales of Beatrice Potter* made a lot of money in America for them and there were a couple of others, oh *The Man Who Haunted Himself* which later became a big cult film.

NORMAN J. WARREN: Yes, he was a very nice man. But, of course, you just mentioned ... Talking about memories the other man that I had the pleasure of working with was Richard Attenborough who had the most amazing memory. He was quite incredible. Once again, working with the studio I was impressed with the fact that when we were on our first day, you know they used to have the doorman, when on the days the red light went on he would make sure at the door that no one came on the stage. Richard came in and he remembered the guy but he remembered all his children, his wife's name, all the kids, I mean he probably hadn't seen him for years. That is what I remember. And about two years after having worked on ... this was *The Dock Brief*, the film was *The Dock Brief*, I was walking down Wardour Street as we all were there constantly, Richard Attenborough was coming the other way towards me and I didn't know whether I should say something or not and he straight away said "Hello Norman, how are you?" and I couldn't believe that he remembered me, you know, because I was a junior assistant on the film. Not only did he remember everybody but he actually remembered your name. I admired him for that because I am terrible on names.

MARTIN SHEFFIELD: OK. Thank you

INTERVIEW ENDS

[minor edits: David Sharp]

