

Bernard Vorhaus (film director) 25/12/1904 – 23/11/2000

by [admin](#) — last modified Jul 27, 2008 02:46 PM

BIOGRAPHY: Bernard Vorhaus was born in New York city on Christmas Day 1904. He got interested in film through his sister who used to sell stories to the early studios in New Jersey. After graduating from college, he got work writing scripts for Harry Cohn at Columbia. He worked as a writer for various production companies during the 1920s, and began to direct films of his own. With the arrival of sound he moved to England, working initially for Phonofilm/British Talking Pictures. When they folded he bought their library and made a living selling stock shots, until he had raised enough to make his first feature film, *Money for Speed* (1933), starring Ida Lupino. During the early 1930s Vorhaus worked consistently in Britain, directing low budget films for ‘quota quickie’ producers such as Julius Hagen, the best remembered of which are *The Ghost Camera* (1933), *Dusty Ermine* (1936) and *The Last Journey* (1936). When the British film finance boom ended in 1937-8, Vorhaus returned to America, to work for Republic Pictures, again on low budget features. During the war, Vorhaus volunteered for the Air Force Motion Picture Unit, and made training documentaries on technical matters, as well as public information films on subjects such as Venereal Disease. During this period he worked with Ronald Reagan, who he remembers sympathetically. One of Vorhaus’ documentaries – about the Yalta Conference – was suppressed before release in the face of the onset of the cold war. In the late 40s he continued to make ‘B’ features, for Republic and independently, some, such as *The Amazing Mr X* (1948) and *So Young So Bad* (1950) are still memorable today. Active in left-wing politics, Vorhaus found himself working under increasingly difficult circumstances during the McCarthy era, and eventually he was blacklisted, having been named by Edward Dmytryk before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Although he attempted to continue making films in Europe, he was hounded by the American authorities, and eventually he gave up film-making, and settled in London as a property developer. **SUMMARY:** In this interview, conducted in 1991, Vorhaus talks extensively to Sid Cole and Alan Lawson about his film career. He gives a vivid and engaging account of the British Quota industry in the 1930s (and of Julius Hagen), maintaining that despite the pressure on time and budgets, the sector gave directors more creative freedom than more ‘respectable’ production contexts. His recollections of the cold war era and the experience of being blacklisted are detailed and fascinating. Among the colleagues he remembers, are Ida Lupino, Julius Hagen, Harry Cohn, Harry Rapft, Ronald Reagan, Louis Weitzenkorn, Ring Lardner, Ian Hunter, Sol Lesser. Lawrence Napper (BCHRP)

BECTU History Project - Interview No. 219

[Copyright [BECTU](#)]

Transcription Date: 2003-03-31

Interview Date: 1991-10-23

Interviewer: Sid Cole

Interviewee: Bernard Vorhaus

Tape 1, Side 1

Sidney Cole: Bernard, Halliwell says you were born in Germany, but I gather that's quite wrong.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes that's quite wrong! I was born in America, in New York City, on December 25th 1904, in the typical little brownstone, of which there were many rows at that time. I went to school in New York and then to university at Harvard, which is near Boston. And my father, who had come to America from Austria as a seven-year-old and worked his way through college and law school, had developed quite an impressive law firm in New York and was very anxious for me to get into the firm. And I was anxious to get into motion pictures! My eldest sister had written quite a few original stories for films. At that time the principal film industry was not in Hollywood, but in New Jersey, across the River, the Hudson River, from Manhattan, from New York. And she used to take me on the ferry when I was - oh I suppose about eight or nine years old, and she would leave me on the floor of the studio while she had a huddle with the script editor, and usually came back having sold an original story. And I - they gave me scraps of waste film and I had a little toy projector at home, so I used to put these scraps of film together and early on [chuckles] became very interested in filmmaking. So I made a deal with my father that I would get my degree in three years instead of four - in American universities the normal course is four years - and have a year in which to try to get into the film industry. If I didn't, I would go onto law school. Well during that year I managed to get - to meet Harry Cohn who was the head of Columbia Pictures, which at that time was quite a small outfit. And he was quite a formidable character, I think of all these tough producers Harry was probably the toughest. And he said to me, "So you wanna write?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well what makes you think you can write for Chrissake?" I said, "Well I've written a few short stories." And he said, "All right, all right! Boy, girl, heavy - got it?" I didn't even know what a 'heavy' was, but I said, "Sure!" [SC chuckles] He said, "Boy is a fireman - fire breaks out, boy climbs up ladder, goes through window, finds his girl with heavy. Now finish the story!" So I ad-libbed something or other, [chuckles] I don't remember what the hell! But anyway he said, "All right, take you on as a junior writer, fifty dollars a week." And that's how I started in Hollywood.

Sidney Cole: Great. What was the company your sister worked for in New Jersey? Was that Harry Cohn?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, no - no, no. That was before Harry Cohn! [Chuckles] I don't remember the names - I think Vitagraph was one of them. Some of the very earliest of them...

Sidney Cole: Yeah, sure. It was when Griffith was around?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, yes.

Sidney Cole: Right. What sort of year was it when you started with - can you remember the date when you started with Harry Cohn?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, um - it must have been 1925. And um - one of the stories that I wrote for him, the film called Steppin' Out turned out to be much more successful than their usual low budget pictures and I got a job with Paramount as a writer, and um - then with Metro. And that was a hell of a job because I was assigned as a junior writer to Carey Wilson who was a very big shot as a writer, producer. And Carey had a charming manner, and he used to go into Louis B. Mayer or Irving Thalberg and tell them a story. And his telling a story was not a story at all. He would start with a fascinating opening and jump to some kind of an end, and they would always buy it. And then he would assign a junior to write, just to write it for him. And you were faced with absolutely impossible conditions! But anyway, there was one script I wrote on which I had screen credit called Money Talks which was - I had co-screen credit with a writer, Jessie Burns. And the only thing I can remember about it, Archie Mayo directed it. Now remember on an exterior scene - because I was always anxious to get out on the set because I always wanted to be a director, not a writer - he had a big, high tower and it swayed in the wind. And Archie was a tremendously fat man and got dizzy very easily. So he went a little way up the tower and then quickly came down again. He said, "All right boys, you go up there and shoot it, tell me if it's funny." So they shot one take, he said, "Is it funny?" They said, "I don't think so." He said, "All right, shoot it again!" And the cameraman was having nightmares, because the thing was rocking like this! So they made a second take and he said, "Is it funny?" They said, "Oh yes, yes, it's funny, let's get the hell down from here!" [Chuckling]

Sidney Cole: What sort of year would that be?

Bernard Vorhaus: Um -

Sidney Cole: Were talkies in then?

Bernard Vorhaus: This was a silent film - um -

Sidney Cole: So we're talking in the late twenties?

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right, that's right. Then um - I also have credit on a film for Fox and I cannot remember the title at the moment. Anyway I was anxious, as I said to you, to direct rather than write, and so with Jessie Burns with whom I'd written a number of scripts. We co-produced and directed a two-reel silent film with Zasu Pitts, called Sunlight[?]. Do you remember Zasu Pitts?

Sidney Cole: Ah hmm -

Bernard Vorhaus: She was a character actress, she appeared in a number of von Stroheim films, including Greed -

Sidney Cole: Greed particularly, yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right.

Sidney Cole: Marvellous.

Bernard Vorhaus: Well yeah, I think it was quite a film and we got some interesting critics on it. But this was just the time when talkies came out. So nobody was interested in releasing a two-reel silent and nobody was interested in a director of a two-reel silent. So I was very depressed [interference on tape?], and this was - I'd put into it all the money that I'd saved to date. And I decided to treat myself to a trip to England, a vacation, and assumed I'd have to go back to the struggle of being a writer and getting assignments as a writer and so forth. I expected only to stay about two weeks in England. I -

Sidney Cole: Did you have any relatives in England?

Bernard Vorhaus: I had a very distant cousin, yes. Um - and I went across, third class on a boat - I mean at that time you didn't fly. And I got off at Plymouth and was absolutely - am I - is this too long? Do you mind?

Sidney Cole: No, no -

Bernard Vorhaus: It doesn't matter? You'll edit out presumably?

Sidney Cole: No, no - you just...

Bernard Vorhaus: I was absolutely enchanted by the green of England, I'd never seen - this was spring, you know, in Devonshire.

Sidney Cole: Hmm. What year would it be, roughly - '28?

Bernard Vorhaus: About 1928 yes. And I remember I hired a motorcycle, because I didn't have the money to hire a car, which would have to be returned to Plymouth. And I'd never been on a motorcycle before! [SC chuckles] And I remember seeing I needed some petrol, and I remember going into a village and saying, "Where is the gas station here, please?" He said, "Gas station? There's no gas station here." I said, "In the whole village there's no gas?" He said, "No." I pushed that bloody bike to the next village! [SC laughs] And the same thing started! And then a woman came up, she said, "Oh you mean a petrol station, fancy that!" And that was my introduction to England! Anyway - I still think it's the most beautiful countryside in the world. I um...

Sidney Cole: You made for London then, did you?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. And I was offered a job as a production assistant for a company - British Talking Pictures - it was - it was an offshoot, they had Wembley Studios.

Sidney Cole: That's right, I remember, yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: And -

Sidney Cole: Phonofilm?

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right, they were owned by Tobis-Klangfilm. And shortly after - I hadn't been there very long when Tobis-Klangfilm went broke and they therefore sold off their English company to pay off their German debts. So I was out of a job again. And they had an amazing library of old films. They had the very oldest of British talking films, interviews with famous people like George Bernard Shaw, coverage of events like a big fire or God knows what. And they owed me money which they couldn't pay, and agreed to sell me all this old material for a song. And I couldn't even - this was all negative - I couldn't even afford to make copies. So I ran the negative on a movieola - you know those - they were at the time German movieolas which instead of like a Bell and Howell, jerking thing, the light was intermittent instead of it...

Sidney Cole: Yeah...

Bernard Vorhaus: So you could run a negative on it without killing it. And I edited this stuff and shot some things silently - took out an old Bell and Howell camera - I made a Debrise camera myself. Do you remember those cigar box Debrise?

Alan Lawson: Yes, yeah.

Sidney Cole: Alan was a cameraman [meaning AL].

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah. And um - oh I sold a series of shots to Metro Goldwyn and - I don't know. Anyway, I collected enough money to get some friends with me to put in a little more, and I produced and directed my first feature film, which was called Money for Speed.

Sidney Cole: That was 1933, according to Halliwell.

Bernard Vorhaus: Right; that's probably right.

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: And I had Ida Lupino, who was then only fifteen years old and this was her first film.

Sidney Cole: I remember that because it was very - I think you must have got good notices on that, did you?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes I did, I did.

Sidney Cole: Cause it was rather refreshing, I remember some quick cutting you did, of Ida Lupino in the witness box was it?

Bernard Vorhaus: Ah you're thinking of the next film -

Sidney Cole: Oh, ah...

Bernard Vorhaus: The Ghost Camera.

Sidney Cole: Ah.

Bernard Vorhaus: Actually I mean I was very successful but you still made no money on it to speak of, as a second feature for United Artists.

Sidney Cole: Did you sell outright on that?

Bernard Vorhaus: We - at a certain point you were supposed to get fifty-fifty, but they contrived - I mean it got a tremendous number of bookings. But they could allocate what percentage went to that and watched their main film you see.

Sidney Cole: So nobody ever got any profit again?

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right.

Sidney Cole: I understand.

Bernard Vorhaus: Actually we got a little money on sales abroad. But meanwhile I was offered a number of directorial jobs and didn't think it was worth scrabbling to get money to produce...

Sidney Cole: Sure.

Bernard Vorhaus: ...on those conditions. So the first film I then made was The Ghost Camera for Twickenham...

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: Which again had Ida Lupino in it. And that's what you said - I think it was, at the time, quite some revolutionary cutting.

Sidney Cole: Yeah it was. I remember a series of...

Bernard Vorhaus: Going closer and closer, that's right.

Sidney Cole: Yeah. Hard, strong cuts from - you impressed me cause I was an editor, and the tremendous dramatic power it had.

Bernard Vorhaus: Thank you.

Sidney Cole: A very unconventional way of doing it.

Alan Lawson: Yes. That was made for Julius Hagan then wasn't it?

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right.

Alan Lawson: Ah hmm.

Sidney Cole: Say something about Ida Lupino, who obviously from her earliest years was a terrific, strong-minded young woman.

Bernard Vorhaus: She was indeed. Let me just go back for one moment because I just was thinking suddenly back to the silent days as a writer. Of course, working for Harry Rapf. All the stories you've heard about Goldwynisms were true of Harry Rapf, and I remember his describing this man who was thrown from the 'pea-narkle' of fame! [laughter] And that was quite a typical Rapfism. But anyway, sorry, you asked about Ida. Ida Lupino was tremendously talented.

Sidney Cole: How did you find her?

Bernard Vorhaus: [Slight pause] That's an interesting question - how did I? I was looking for leads - how did I find Ida Lupino?

Sidney Cole: Acting school? Did she...

Bernard Vorhaus: I think um - I think the agent, Christopher Mann suggested her - I don't really remember how I met her. But the family was fascinating, you know Lupino Lane, the...

Sidney Cole: Yeah all the acrobats.

Bernard Vorhaus: And Ida's mother was also an actress. And they had in their house a little stage where they used to do amateur theatricals. And um - this was the second film I made and the second film that Ida made. She was obviously extremely intelligent and imaginative, and it's very sad that her career in Hollywood wasn't an outstanding success. Because she directed you know, a couple of films very intelligently. She unfortunately became quite an alcoholic.

Sidney Cole: Oh did she? Shame.

Bernard Vorhaus: She had a very sad marriage and um, I saw her from time to time but - not enough to know the details of ...

Sidney Cole: So did you find her easy to direct in those early films?

Bernard Vorhaus: Oh yes!

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: Oh yes!

Sidney Cole: And she made contributions did she, even at that early age of fifteen, sixteen?

Bernard Vorhaus: Well, I was always pretty definite myself about what I wanted from [chuckles] actors and actresses...

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: But she certainly did it with ease and perfection. Working for Hagen was an interesting thing because [SC laughs] you had to make the films incredibly quickly.

Sidney Cole: What were the schedules?

Bernard Vorhaus: Well two weeks was a long schedule. And Hagen - if you were behind schedule, he would just edit out some of the script, and his way of editing - I don't think he ever read a script in his life! His scenario editor, Harry Mear used to tell him the synopsis of the thing and Hagen's method of editing was he - you were supposed to do, what, about six pages a day I suppose, so from the middle of the script he would tear out six pages for each day that a director was behind schedule! [Laughter] And I remember on *The Last Journey* which was a film about - a background of railroad, it was a cross-section story, which I'd always been anxious to do, with the different characters taking this train. And the engine driver who was going to be retired after this last journey, and went really berserk and was going to wreck the train, kill himself and everyone else. And the story had been kicking around the studio for a long time because everybody didn't see how you could shoot it in two weeks. And I thought, "Well what the hell I'll take a chance!" And actually we did pretty well with the outside stuff. I had four cameras, but when you say four cameras - the principle camera was a Debrie, which was fine for studio work but, can you remember how heavy they were in the tripods?

Alan Lawson: Oh yes!

Bernard Vorhaus: And you couldn't use it outside of the tripod - outside of the um...

Sidney Cole: The blimp.

Bernard Vorhaus: ...of the blimp.

Alan Lawson: The super-parvo.

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right. So it was a terribly heavy thing to move around on location if you wanted to shoot fast. And then aside from that we had one old cigar box Debrie, which was fine, you wound it by hand - a Bell and Howell Eyemo which was very useful, and then the fourth thing was called a Devris[?], did you ever encounter this?

Alan Lawson: Yes?

Sidney Cole: Devris, yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: It was a toy. It was a tin box and it invariably scratched. And also, after just I don't know how many feet it would start running down so that all the people would be rushing around wildly. [SC chuckles] Anyway we managed to get through the stuff. And then it was the first time in the studio that they'd had back projection, and everything went wrong that could. And so Hagen went absolutely crazy. And I went up to him, he was in his usual office which was the bar of the pub at Twickenham, you know across the road?

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Alan Lawson: Yes, the St Margarets! [Chuckles]

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right! And I said, "Look Mr Hagen, it's your studio - please come down and watch." So he came and sat and he watched. And his face got whiter and whiter! [Laughter] Because first of all the projector ran out of synch with the camera. Then it scratched and we didn't have another print. Well just everything you could think of. Finally he retired back to his office and didn't say a word, and he started drinking. And thank God, he drunk himself silly, so that by next day we were all right! We'd managed the technicalities and we finished in the time.

Sidney Cole: So what happened with that film? Did you complete it more-or-less the way you wanted to?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes I did and er, I think it stand up pretty well. In fact...

Sidney Cole: What was it called?

Bernard Vorhaus: The Last Journey. In fact if either of you would like to come, I've invited some friends, they're running it at the Holborn Library - Holborn Cinema Club - next Tuesday the 29th. And I'll be serving a little light supper at five-thirty, which is a crazy hour, but the film starts at six-thirty and it's followed by a film of Hitchcock's, The Lady Vanishes.

Alan Lawson: Oh yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: So if either of you or both of you feel like coming, you're most welcome.

Sidney Cole: Oh thank you. What date was this railway film? Because it's not mentioned in Halliwell's incidents.

Bernard Vorhaus: No I know it, and I'm trying to place it. Well immediately after it I made Dusty Ermine and that was 1938, so um -

Sidney Cole: '38 - oh yes -

Bernard Vorhaus: So The Last Journey must have been '37 or '38.

Sidney Cole: Because what er - Halliwell has Money for Speed, then he has in 1935 Broken Melody and then in '37 Cotton Queen.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, but - well let me just fill you in on - I gave you Ghost Camera...

Sidney Cole: That's right, yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: And then the next film I made was Crime on the Hill for British International, which was an interesting film I think. It was run at the National Film Theatre among some others.

Sidney Cole: With the recent retrospective they did?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, yes. And um - you see at the time, on the quota films, they mostly shot 'em in a studio exclusively with as much dialogue and as little movement as possible!

Sidney Cole: Yeah, sure.

Bernard Vorhaus: And I moved them to get out on location and - I was much more interested in cinema than theatre. And I think that achieved a fair amount of movement and atmosphere. And what was marvellous for me was that you could get such wonderful acting talent here, even in very cheap pictures. Because top West End actors really commanded very small salaries at that time, so it was just a joy to be able to get this wonderful talent available. Um - let's see, was - I think Dusty Ermine was the last picture I made in England. The - it was at the time of the boom in the industry and Hagan had acquired two more studios besides Twickenham. And we shot this one in his Elstree studio. And they had bought a book, Dusty Ermine, a play, which was a very mediocre thing and pretty dull I thought, although it had a nice basic idea of this ultra respectable family who have the one black sheep, the Uncle who had become a counterfeiter. And I was fascinated by skiing at the time and thought, "My God if there's some way we could shoot in the Alps, I'd get a little skiing in!" [SC chuckles] And it was logical that the counterfeiters would want to have a centre in the Alps where they could get across all these International borders you see, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy. So I went to Hagan and said, "Look, we can make a wonderful picture out of this with big appeal. Let me shoot some of it in the Alps." He said, "Are you crazy?" "I'm not sending anybody out of the studio, let alone abroad!" I said, "Mr Hagan, there's a cameraman I can use in the Alps who will cost very little, and only a skeleton crew - we'll only be a week there." He said, "Nothing doing!" So I was resigned and out. Then he called me back two days later and said, "I've been thinking about this. You've made some good films for me on low budgets; I'm going to let you go to the Alps." So I said, "Oh Mr Hagan, thank you so much." And I said, "I'll re-write the script within two weeks and we'll be ready to go." He said, "No, you'll have to go this weekend." I said, "Well we don't have a script." He said, "Write it on the train." [Laughter] So we went and it was quite an effective film. And I only found out later why this sudden generosity. It was the time of the boom, as I told you, and a tremendous amount of films were being made. And an American company which were shooting here were stuck because they were supposed to go into a studio at Elstree and the company ahead of them was late, so they couldn't go in. So they came to Hagan and said, "Look, we'd like to have your studio for so many weeks." To finish their film they needed two weeks I think. And Hagan at first said, "No," because he was expecting me to go in, then he thought about it and called them back. And he said, "You can have the studio at such and such a price." He said, "My God, Mr Hagan, that's impossible. You're holding us by the balls." He said, "Yes and I'm squeezing!" [AL laughs] And so he let them in at a fantastic price for those two weeks while we were at the Alps you see. [Chuckling]

Sidney Cole: Which more than paid for you in the Alps! [Chuckling]

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Alan Lawson: Who was the cameraman you had there?

Bernard Vorhaus: I can't remember the name of the German man, but Curt Courant did the studio work - that's another story gone. Um - sorry I just can't think of it.

Sidney Cole: So how did the - that worked out all right did it, Dusty Ermine?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes it really um - it stands up very well today. And we had at the end a tremendous chase on skis, with um - which was copied I think it would be fair to say, in one of the um - oh damn it...

Alan Lawson: [Indecipherable], do you mean?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, no - a British film - never mind, I'll...

Sidney Cole: It'll come to you.

Bernard Vorhaus: I don't want keep you - can you hold, can you cut off a minute?

Alan Lawson: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, sure. [Break in recording]

Bernard Vorhaus: ...the one with Dusty Ermine

Sidney Cole: Are you running again?

Alan Lawson: We're going, yes.

Sidney Cole: But you were saying that the ski chase in Dusty Ermine you think was copied by a later, rather famous film -

Bernard Vorhaus: One of the 'Bond' films.

Sidney Cole: One of the 'Bond' films, oh yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: Well if you look at the two I think you would agree! [Chuckles]

Sidney Cole: Oh great. But you said just a moment ago that Dusty Ermine was, you think, your last film in England?

Bernard Vorhaus: I think so, yes.

Sidney Cole: So what... This was nearly the outbreak of war then, was it?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, no, but after the big boom in the British industry came a bust which was even bigger than the boom.

Sidney Cole: That's right, that was about 1936, '37.

Bernard Vorhaus: That's right, that's right - 1937 or '38, I'm not sure which.

Sidney Cole: Yes, that late I suppose, yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: And all these studios which had been built, many of them were never used as studios, they became warehouses and so forth. Anyway Twickenham went bust and owed me a fair amount of money. Because I was supposed to get a...

Alan Lawson: ...a retainer?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah. And I was offered a - the head of um - oh Republic Pictures...

Sidney Cole: Oh yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: Herbert Yates, saw a couple of my films and was quite impressed and offered me a job, and so I took it. And actually this was a mistake I think, because although it had been terribly difficult and restricting, shooting films on the small schedules and tight budgets that I'd had, Hagen didn't interfere with what you shot, as long as you shot it fast enough and cheaply enough! [AL laughs] And Republic was very, very restrictive.

Sidney Cole: You mean Yates kept interfering, did he?

Bernard Vorhaus: He didn't, but the - because he was mostly in New York. But within the studio, the taste was pretty appalling.

Sidney Cole: What - did you have an imposed producer on you, did you?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, yes.

Alan Lawson: You were now in Hollywood then?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Tell me something before we go on to that. You had resident alien status here did you, with a labour permit and so on, while you were making the pictures here? I mean did you have any problems about working here as an American citizen?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, not at all, not at all. I don't think there were many restrictions at that time.

Sidney Cole: There can't have been, no - not for directors anyhow - no.

Bernard Vorhaus: No I...

Alan Lawson: There were on cameramen I think.

Sidney Cole: There were on cameramen at that time but not on directors. So off you went to Hollywood and you were saying you think it was perhaps a bit of a mistake, going to Republic.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah. Just to go back for one moment - I did give David Lean his first job as a cutter on the first film that I made.

Sidney Cole: Which was Money for...

Bernard Vorhaus: Money for Speed, that's right. I also used him on the following film, The Ghost Camera. I had seen some unusual cutting on a newsreel, was it either British Movietone or um...

Sidney Cole: Yes - no, he was Gaumont British.

Bernard Vorhaus: Gaumont British that's right. And er - I wanted to find out who was doing this. And it didn't worry me about giving a job to somebody who hadn't cut a feature film before because I always pretty much did my own cutting anyway.

Sidney Cole: You did anyway, yeah. Oh so that was interesting because the interesting thing on Ghost Camera which I remembered, I mentioned to you a bit earlier in the interview, was some interesting cutting.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. But with respect, this I had worked out before.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, yeah. But if I can interject, Kevin Brownlow is doing a biography of David Lean. I'd like to put him in touch with you about that early - do you know Kevin Brownlow?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes I do.

Sidney Cole: But he hasn't been onto Desmond - I don't think he's aware of that connection of yours with David.

Bernard Vorhaus: Um - he phoned me and talked to me a few months ago. I would be surprised if he didn't, but um...

Sidney Cole: But did you mention that to him?

Bernard Vorhaus: I can't remember now, I really don't remember. So you might er...

Sidney Cole: I'll check with Kevin, yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: But I would think he did.

Sidney Cole: Sorry to interrupt your flow.

Bernard Vorhaus: No, thank you for mentioning it.

Sidney Cole: Are you back to Republic now?

Bernard Vorhaus: We're back to Republic alas! [Chuckles]

Sidney Cole: Is there anything particular to say?

Bernard Vorhaus: The first film that I made there, called King of the Newsboys, unfortunately was a very difficult story to do and I had on it a writer, Louis Weitzenkorn, who wrote a number of interesting plays - er, Five Star Final...

Sidney Cole: Oh yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: One of the two famous - one was by Ben Hecht, one was by Louis Weitzenkorn, and I'm not sure which was which.

Alan Lawson: Front Page.

Bernard Vorhaus: One was Front Page...

Sidney Cole: Front Page, that was Ben Hecht.

Bernard Vorhaus: ...and one was Five Star [Final]. Ben Hecht was Front Page?

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: Then Louis Weitzenkorn was Five Star Final. Anyway, Louis had a terrible alcoholic problem and part way through the script he just went to pieces. And I had to go on the floor within a very short time and um - it was not the kind of material that I would have tried to write myself and I just couldn't get the script right. It's still in some ways I think an interesting film, it's certainly seriously flawed. I'm just wondering whether there's anything particularly interesting. Affairs of Jimmy Valentine stands up pretty well. Then I directed a couple of films with John Wayne, Lady from Louisiana and Three Faces West. And then, with the war, I volunteered to go into the Air Force Motion Picture Unit, and for some years until they ended the war I was in the army. And I think they made quite some useful films. I think one can say that some of them probably saved lives. When each new airplane came out we had to make a film about the flight characteristics of that so that the pilot would be warned as to what might get him into a spin. Or if, God help me, I got into a spin, how I could try to get out of it.

Alan Lawson: These were the training films?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. And er - all kinds of training films, inspirational films. Some very elaborate like resisting enemy interrogation if you were a prisoner.

Sidney Cole: They used actors for those?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, in fact Ronnie Reagan was in the unit with me and I got to know him very well. Because we had petrol rationing at the time so we used to take turns driving together to the studio every morning and often had dinner together at respective houses. Incidentally Ronnie as President was considered an idiot - I found him in a superficial way a very shrewd bloke. And you know he knew more about American history than any other actor I've ever encountered. For instance, something was coming up and I said, "Well we can leave it to Roosevelt to handle that." I mean Roosevelt was the darling of all progressives, including myself. And Ronnie said, "Well you know, don't be so trustful. When he was under-secretary of war he sent in the Marines to quash a popular government in Nicaragua." I think it was Nicaragua, it was one of the central...

Sidney Cole: Hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: And I looked it up, my God he was right. I hadn't remembered this.

Sidney Cole: I think any Foreign Secretary of State would have done that in those days whichever party wouldn't they? I mean American imperialism was - the standard thing.

Bernard Vorhaus: I suppose so. But also you know, Roosevelt heeded the Catholic vote in America during the blockade of Spain and accepted the situation there, so he wasn't such a golden character.

Sidney Cole: Yeah - not perfect.

Bernard Vorhaus: Actually Eleanor was much more steadily progressive than he.

Alan Lawson: Was Darryl Zanuck in that unit? Or - he was here I mean?

Bernard Vorhaus: No. I didn't know that Darryl Zanuck ever got - did he get into...

Sidney Cole: Yes - he was out...

Alan Lawson: In South-east Asia, yes.

Sidney Cole: John Ford of course did some combat filming didn't he in Wake Island and films like that?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Where were you based - you refer to the studio making those wartime films.

Bernard Vorhaus: We took over the Hal Roach Studio.

Sidney Cole: Ah, hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: And er they were quite...

Sidney Cole: You were just talking about the sort of films you did and you did, for instance you were saying dramatised things like how to resist interrogation.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, yeah. And the film with Ronald Reagan in was Identification of a Japanese Zero.

Alan Lawson: Ah hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: You know the Japanese Zero planes. Incidentally, Ronnie was a very competent actor. Oh I remember [chuckles] - I think we did make a lot of useful films with them. Because the simple things, for instance at the time, all the American fighter planes had to be flown over to Europe and had to go over in stages. They landed in Newfoundland and then Greenland and...

Alan Lawson: That's right.

Bernard Vorhaus: And there were no sophisticated navigational aids, so they had to fly close enough to see where they were going. And - in Greenland when they were flying through a fjord, at a fork if they took the wrong turning they'd had it. Because they would come suddenly up against a steep ending and it was too steep for them to climb out and it was too narrow for them to turn around. So just shooting a film from the front of a plane, showing them what and emphasising, "Watch the rock there, the tree there..." and so forth, was a matter of saving lives. But as I say we made some quite sophisticated and elaborate films. I remember one [chuckles] I had to make. The medical corps and the chaplains were anxious to make a film about venereal disease. Because these young kids away from home for the first time - well venereal disease was just an epidemic in the Air Force. So I looked over the thing and said, "Look, if you want to make this film, there's no sense in exalting them to remain chaste and telling them the satisfaction of remaining pure. You've got to tell them the danger of getting infected, even with seemingly decent girls that were promiscuous and what precautions to take against it." Well the chaplains were horrified but they finally agreed. And of course the medical corps immediately said, "That's the thing to take." So I made the film and I was rather pleased with it. I mean it was the story of a kid who meets this apparently charming, beautiful, pure young girl and has a love affair and discovers that he's infected. And I was pretty pleased with the result. I ran it for the medical corps and chaplains and they were delighted, they said, "This is just what we needed." I said, "Well wait a minute, let's see how the kids react to it." So I got a bunch of young pilots in, students, and they ran it. And I said, "Now tell me frankly what you think." They said, "Oh we were very impressed, very impressed." And I got one of them aside, I said, "Look, tell me really - don't worry, you don't have to be polite." He said, "Oh yes Major, Sir I was very impressed." I said, "Forget the Major, Sir, just tell me what you thought." He said, "Really, I was very, very impressed. Why Jesus, if I could make it with a girl like you had in that film I wouldn't mind getting syphilis and the clap!"

Sidney Cole: Oh God! [Laughs]

Bernard Vorhaus: Anyway I do think some of the films we made were useful!

Sidney Cole: What happened to that one though? I mean as a result of that reaction did you [AL laughs] make any changes in it, or just sort of say, "Well..."

Bernard Vorhaus: No! [SC laughs]

Alan Lawson: I'm going to stop you a moment. [Break in recording]

Bernard Vorhaus: We were talking about O. Henry, and I must say that I have not been impressed by the vogue of some years back and fairly recently, of making films without stories.

Sidney Cole: Oh yes!

Bernard Vorhaus: Because I mean I think it had a good effect in breaking away from conventional stories, but I still think that the best films and plays should tell...

Sidney Cole: Tell a story.

Bernard Vorhaus: I'm all for the Lillian Hellman kind of play where you combine both a social situation and a damn good narrative story, dramatic story.

Sidney Cole: Yes. Well it gives it a lot of power doesn't it, double sort of strength. Yes I should explain then the reference to O. Henry was because I'd queried as to whether the [Affairs of] Jimmy Valentine you made for Republic was based on the O. Henry story of that name. You said it was very distantly.

Bernard Vorhaus: I think so. But it had the - as I remember the basic situation of the O. Henry story was that he's a safe-cracker and he is leading a new life, is safe from the police. And then a situation occurs where somebody is locked in a safe and to save his life he has to open the combination and therefore expose himself.

Sidney Cole: That's right, the fact that he is whom the police want, yes. Yes it was a very favourite sort of device of O. Henry's, yes. Well that's interesting. Anyhow, reverting to your wartime thing and your anti-venereal disease film, what did you do afterwards? Was that one of the last films you made? Did you go on making films throughout the war?

Bernard Vorhaus: Um - yeah. Actually the last film I made was on the Yalta Conference. And I saw the film which John Huston had made on the previous thing - the Terehan Conference, where he just recorded, photographed the prominent people who arrived and left and that was it. And I thought, "What an opportunity to make a really historic film, showing the causes of the war and the attempted solutions at Yalta." And er - oh it ran for five or six reels I think. And the studio I had was terrifically impressed and I was really very pleased because I felt it was the most important thing I'd ever done in films. And then the following day, do you remember the famous Churchill Fulton speech? When he says, "An iron curtain has descended on Europe."

Sidney Cole: Hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: And the whole attitude of America changed. I mean we had been allies of the Soviet Union and overnight the arms were given back to the German soldiers. And directions came - and incidentally Marshall had been very progressive within the American government. But suddenly - boom! History was completely reversed. So the orders came from Washington, "Destroy the negative, destroy all copies of this Yalta film."

Sidney Cole: Oh how awful!

Bernard Vorhaus: Actually I sneaked one copy to - when I left the army at the end of the war - to Hollywood. And then with the McCarthy period in Hollywood, I was going abroad. So I couldn't take this with me, all these tins of 35-mm positive, so I buried it behind our house. And years later when I went back I thought, "I'll go see whether it's still there." [chuckles] On the site was now built a block of flats! [AL laughs]

Sidney Cole: Oh dear! Quite a film sort of ending for that too!

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Tell me, reverting to Yalta, did you go to Yalta? Or did you...

Bernard Vorhaus: No.

Sidney Cole: ...just use material shot there by news people? Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: But it was marvellous because we were getting, every day, material from all the war fronts and all the political happenings.

Sidney Cole: It must have taken a little while to put the thing together after the conference, presumably?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, but we started immediately after the conference and um - I had wonderful material you see to - I mean I could draw on anything.

Sidney Cole: Hmm, yes you just had to ask for what you wanted.

Bernard Vorhaus: Reels and reels - yes all you had to do was ask for it and you got it.

Sidney Cole: Hmm. Yes they were very er...

Bernard Vorhaus: There was material taken by the Germans, material taken by the Russians, um...

Sidney Cole: It was a shame about that.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes I was very sad about that.

Sidney Cole: What did you do immediately after, when you'd left the army? You were then er...?

Bernard Vorhaus: Well I was anxious not to go back to Republic and er - I had a hell of a struggle. Because the boom was over in America, a lot of young directors had come to the fore during the years that I was in the army. And um - I didn't, as I say I didn't want to go back to the kind of pressures that I was under to make films that I didn't want. I struggled to write an original story with the background of the story of four young girls at a reform school, what would be called a - what do you call it in England? A um...

Alan Lawson: Remand home, a borstal.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, yes. And a psychiatrist who's working with them, played by Paul Henreid. And we got some very enthusiastic reactions for the script, but this was the time, just when the tide was turning as they say, and although the film was not political it was critical of a condition in American life. And at the time, what you were supposed to do was show how this was the best of all possible worlds in all possible ways. So they were a bit hesitant to make it. And the Danziger brothers, who were hotel owners, offered to finance it if we would make it in New York. So I had a United Artists contract for it and we shot it under rather difficult circumstances in New York. I used four young girls in it - interviewed hundreds of kids who had never been before a camera before. And actually most of them had quite a career after this - Anne Francis and Rita Moreno, who played in West Side Story and many other pictures - Anne Jackson who um - became a very good character actress.

Sidney Cole: Very good character actress, yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: And um it made a lot of money for United Artists, I mean way in contrast with its low budget.

Alan Lawson: What was it called?

Bernard Vorhaus: So Young, So Bad. And then came the McCarthy period and I was stuck. I went abroad and made a film in collaboration with Cinecitta in Italy. We had a United Artists release for it. And when we finished the picture, the projectionist's union in America, which was a very reactionary outfit said that they would block all United Artists films, refuse to run them, if this film was shown. So it was never released and I lost all my life's savings, which were in it and um...

Sidney Cole: Was it shot in English or two versions or what?

Bernard Vorhaus: Two versions - well Italian films at that time were all post-synched anyway, so it was no problem.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, including their own, they post-synched everything, didn't they?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah. Well I was offered a very attractive contract to produce and direct a whole series of films by a small Italian release outfit Zillidino[?] was his name. And I couldn't get a 'permit de sejours' renewed in Italy. They kept asking me when was I going to be finished with the film that was being edited, you see, and insisted that I leave. And I was told by the head of United Artists in Italy - I'm trying to think of his name - he was the brother of Mary Pickford - what the hell is his name?

Sidney Cole: Jack.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes that's right - that the FBI had assigned somebody to follow me all over. This was Marc Lawrence who was a small-time character actor, who had been in the party, in the Communist Party and he usually played villains - I don't know whether you - well you would recognise his face.

Sidney Cole: I don't recognise the name but I would recognise his face I expect.

Bernard Vorhaus: And um - so I couldn't get permission to stay. I went to France and started working on the first script, came back to Italy, quite legitimately, on a one-month visitor's permit. But I'd only been there two days when I was picked up by the police. I was in Positano at the time, starting to work on the script. I was taken to the nearest main police office which was - I forget the name of the town. It's where you take the ferry across to Sicily. Anyway there was a very hot bloke there, a policeman. I said, "Well what am I charged with?" He said, "I don't have to tell you that." I said, "But what have I done? I came here legally." Well I was really frightened about being sent back to America because obviously the American government was doing this. Because during the war you see when I was in the Air Force Motion Picture Unit I had access to all this top-secret material.

Sidney Cole: Hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: The newest swing-wing, the first RADAR blind landing controls, and all this stuff. And I'd also been very friendly with the Soviet console in Hollywood. And this was the time of the maximum fury of the McCarthy period, I mean the trial and execution of the Rosenberg's and Sobel or somebody else convicted on the basis of having put some message in a pumpkin you know...

Sidney Cole: Oh yes all that er...

Bernard Vorhaus: Extraordinary things. And I had had all this top-secret material go through my hands. Well I said, "Well what am I charged with? Why are you arresting me?" He said, "You can tell all that to the American console." Well the one thing I wanted to avoid was having to go to the American console! [SC chuckles] So I was locked in there overnight and the next day, two policemen took me to Naples, which was the nearest American consulate. And I managed to bribe one of them to get to a telephone and phone my wife and tell her to get a solicitor, which might have - I don't know whether it might have helped or not. Anyway when I got to Naples, this was a Saturday morning, and I was taken to the Head of Police in Naples. And he was absolutely furious because he had planned a lovely weekend with his girlfriend in Capri,

and here was an American, pulling him out and making him come. He said, "I don't know why..." - Oh, and thank God, with their usual inefficiency at the time, they had not taken the file on me along, so he didn't know what this was all about. And he assumed that this was an American who was to be sent out who was insisting on seeing the American console you see. He said, "I don't know why that bugger couldn't have sent you across the border to France himself! I don't know why he's put this on me." Well I knew bloody well why! It was because of the American console in Naples you see. I thought, "Well what the hell will I do?" And the only thing I could think of was to get this guy more angry than he was. And he said, "You Americans think you own us!" I said, "Well we do." And he absolutely went - he said, "Another word from you and you're not going to see the American console, so you wouldn't dare do that!" [SC laughs] He said, "Jose, Travani, take this American bugger and put him across the border into France! He's not going to see the American console." And that's how I got to France. But I still couldn't get a 'permit de sejours' in France, and decided to go to England, since my wife had been British and I had lived in England for seven years before the war and paid taxes there. So I went to England, lost my passport and um - saw a quite sympathetic solicitor - you knew Ziggy Seaford I'm sure?

Sidney Cole: Oh yes I knew Ziggy, yes indeed.

Bernard Vorhaus: And I said, "What the hell will I do? I don't have a passport, I don't..." So he said, "Well you'd better stay low for some time and just hope for the best." Well I was offered a couple of films but they were pretty lousy scripts, and I certainly didn't want to risk being prominent and noticed by the American government just to make a lousy film. And I was desperate for money. I had two young kids and I'd lost all my life savings as I told you. And we - with a tiny bit of money we wanted to try to get an option on a small house. But at that time bijou houses in London were at a premium, because everybody was moving out of big ones to save central heating and servants and so forth. And actually we bought the end of a lease for practically nothing on this house and converted it into three units and rented the two other units. And this seemed to me like a good potential business, so I at night studied a little architecture, just enough to know what I was doing, and started regularly converting houses and selling the flats. And um...

Sidney Cole: You never went back into films at all?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, this absorbed me more and more in time and was a way of supporting a family with two young kids.

Sidney Cole: Hmm - and was ongoing, yes. Would you revert a bit, Bernard, to those very bad years of McCarthy?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. Well what shall I tell you?

Sidney Cole: Assume, you know, you are talking to the future listeners.

Bernard Vorhaus: It was pretty grim in Hollywood. Within the director's union for instance, the Screen Director's Guild, I was on the board of directors. And George Stevens, who is a very

good liberal - not really interested in politics, but had a very good humanistic kind of stand, and - I'm sorry I'm going back a little before. Interesting contradictions, because we were working for various protections for directors, and Cecil DeMille was among the directors who was also a producer. And whatever we decided very secretly, he would the next day tell the Producer's Association you see. [Chuckles]

Sidney Cole: Hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: And when the McCarthy business started, he and a few others really became violent and within the Guild um... When I - at a certain point I saw there was no way of resisting this or doing any longer any useful work against it. I mean for instance we had developed a committee for the first amendment which went - William Wyler was very courageous and very good and I worked very closely with him on this. And they sent a plane with very distinguished actors and writers and so forth to Washington, to protest against the trials. But they were all assailed by the producers, who had been assailed by the banks, and they just backed down. And you probably know that Dore Schary, who had been one of the leaders was offered a very attractive job at Metro, in charge of all the writing, if he renounced his previous position. And that was pretty much the collapse. So I was offered and had a chance to direct a film abroad. In the last week I was in Hollywood, where they were sending summonses out, subpoenas to various people.

Sidney Cole: To appear in front of the un-American activity committee.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes that's right, yeah. Ben Bosmon[?] and I swapped houses. Ben Bosmon[?] was a writer, you probably know...

Sidney Cole: Hmm.

Bernard Vorhaus: And in American law you have to actually touch the man with a subpoena for it to count as having been served on him. So that if a man came to one of our houses you see, we wouldn't be there and could telephone the other bloke, "Look out, they're out for you now," so you'd go into hiding. It was a very grim period with a number of communists and other left-wingers under the pressure yielding and naming names. But I mean you had to - if you were brought before the committee, you had to either inform on your friends as well as reveal everything about your own personal political life, or you were guilty of contempt of congress and went to prison. And I mean some of my best friends were in prison, Ring Lardner...

Sidney Cole: Yes, I knew Ring, because of when I worked on the Robin Hood series.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. Well Ring and Ian Hunter had done...

Sidney Cole: Yes, Hunter...

Bernard Vorhaus: ...scripts for me.

Sidney Cole: So you didn't actually ever appear in front of the committee or any...?

Bernard Vorhaus: No, no.

Sidney Cole: It's just as well.

Bernard Vorhaus: Ironically I was first named by Edward Dmytryk.

Sidney Cole: Oh yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: Who claimed that he'd been at a communist meeting with me. And [chuckles] this was a complete lie! I had never met Dmytryk at the time and I was actually in New York at that time in the war, in fact I was making this film that I mentioned to you on um...

Alan Lawson: VD.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. And the first time I met Dmytryk was later when we were working to try to help the Hollywood Ten.

Sidney Cole: Hmm. I remember Dmytryk because with Adrian Scott who he worked with - when they were - because the curious thing about Dmytryk was that he took a good stand to begin with didn't he?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Sidney Cole: And I remember him coming over here with Adrian Scott and the union, ACT, we gave them a lunch because the union was fairly favourable of course to the people who were being victimised in America. So it was rather appalling from that point of view to us here when Dmytryk in fact suddenly reneged even after he'd been to jail didn't he?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Sidney Cole: He told tales on everybody.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Sidney Cole: An extraordinary, horrible period.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah. Of course there have been a few good films on it I think.

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: You've seen them I'm sure.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, yes well there's the Woody Allen one, which is interesting, yes [NB The Front]. Er - what else?

Bernard Vorhaus: It's er - it is pretty horrifying that people can become this fanatic under certain pressures.

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: And you know when the question is raised, could it happen here? I think British traditions tend to be more open-minded and less concerned about individual attitudes of people than Americans. This also has a negative effect, that they are less heated about good causes as well as bad.

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: But it seems to me that, unfortunately, this is changing at present. I mean there seems to be an increase in racism.

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Alan Lawson: Yes.

Bernard Vorhaus: And a division of social attitudes.

Sidney Cole: Well particularly because of the general social and economic climate at the moment which has existed over the last years and - the trouble is when there's a lot of unemployment and people are feeling poor of course they can to some extent become victims of the wrong kind of pressures.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes of course.

Sidney Cole: So that...

Bernard Vorhaus: And also...

Sidney Cole: ..."It can't happen here" has never been - I don't think most of us have ever accepted that it can't happen here whatever it is you know. The general thing preceding the war with the rise of fascism and all that you know...

Bernard Vorhaus: Well it's interesting, the contradictions. Because actually the Freedom of Information Act in America, although of course it's very limited in its results, is quite a significant thing.

Sidney Cole: Yeah.

Alan Lawson: The treatment over here, I mean we haven't got it.

Bernard Vorhaus: And the Official Secrets Act in England, on the contrary, is really a big danger to the freedom of speech.

Sidney Cole: Yes it is, yeah. And this resistance to - still the most extraordinary - you know what is it, fifty years or something, is still the general rule for access to information you know.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Sidney Cole: Alan and I, incidentally, were in Spain during the civil war...

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes I er...

Sidney Cole: So that er...But casting back though, looking over your career, what are your main pleasures in looking back and what are your main disappointments would you say over your career, if any?

Bernard Vorhaus: Well I loved making films, I mean to me it's the most exciting thing you can do. And even - I mean I never had a chance to make a film on a big budget. But even so, whatever freedom I had and whatever expression of ideas I could give within these physical limits was a great joy and I certainly did as much as I could with it. I mean for instance on *The Last Journey* because of this restrictive budget, as I told you, when we'd finished shooting the film I was completely exhausted. And Hettie my wife was looking forward so to a holiday, and I said on this first day home, I had wanted to get a few shots of the train going through peaceful country in contrast to this mad engineer who was driving it to destruction. So I said, "Look, we'll go out for a weekend in the Thames Valley." We were using the Great Western Railway. I said, "Well I'll take along one of the old soap box Debie's and just get a few shots." And she said, "Oh God not again!" I said, "Well look it won't take long and then we'll have a swim in the river." Well the camera was light and very easy, but I had a heavy Bell and Howell tripod to put it on, so the weight of that bloody thing! And going from one location to another - well, needless to say it took us all day just to get a few shots and no time to go in the river! But I remember we went into one field where there were some cows gently grazing and it was a lovely pastoral scene, and we waited for a train to go by. And just as the train was coming, one of the cows turned out to be a bull and...[SC laughs] Christ how we got over that fence! And I threw the camera over, it was all I could do! [laughter] And that was my peaceful day in the country! [laughter] But that isn't really answering your question very well. The thing I disliked most was having scripts messed up.

Sidney Cole: Your own scripts you mean?

Bernard Vorhaus: Excuse me?

Sidney Cole: Your own scripts?

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes, well or scripts that I had...

Sidney Cole: Or scripts that you would like to direct?

Alan Lawson: That you worked on.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yes. I think this was the worst thing always to me. This was worse than being very restricted on time and facilities and so forth. Funny, I remember one incident, a film we made called *The Courageous Dr Christian*, on which I had the luxury of having Ring Lardner and Ian Hunter as writers. And the principal player was Jean Hersholt who was a character actor, do you remember?

Sidney Cole: Yes, yeah.

Bernard Vorhaus: And he called us in to - wanted to go over the script just before we started shooting, and he put a bottle, a Magnum bottle and he said, "Now this is a very rare old whiskey, help yourselves, boys." And he was not the most generous of characters, and he started questioning every word on every page. And Ian and Ring started helping themselves to the whiskey! [SC laughs] And as Jean watched and turned over the pages, he saw the level on this bottle of very rare whiskey going down. And he started turning the pages faster and faster! [SC laughs] Finally he said, when the bottle was halfway through and we were only part-way through the script he said, "All right boys, I have every confidence in you. Go ahead, we'll call it a day." [laughter] But I think the most painful thing was having scripts messed up and having to shoot them. I mean Sol Lesser who is an independent producer was very anxious to be creative and to be an intellectual. And he used to read the final script and then re-dictate it and just switch sentences around, quite incredible. And there was no way of stopping him. And then he would ask me what I thought of it and I said, "Well Sol, honestly and truly I did like the original better." He said, "All right, let's see." And then he would call in his secretary and the telephonist at his little office and all his staff, and said, "Now I want you to tell me frankly. This is the original script" - and he would read a few pages - "and this is my change on it" - then he would read that. And he said, "Now tell me frankly, which do you like better?" And all this stuff - they'd say, "Oh Mr Lesser, of course yours is a great improvement!" [SC laughs] And I remember the second picture I did for him, I thought, I must try to persuade him to use as expensive a writer as possible, and I said, "Well Sol, this is Mr..." - I don't think I called him Sol in those days - "Let's get in so-and-so." I don't remember who it was now, but it was an expensive writer who happened also to be a good writer, because the two things don't necessarily go together.

Alan Lawson: Oh sure.

Bernard Vorhaus: And he said, "Oh Jesus, to pay that much!" I said, "But Sir you owe it to yourself, after all with your qualities as a producer, you should have a comparable quality of script." And finally he agreed and he wrote a script which was very competent, and I thought, "My God this time we're saved!" And then a few days before we were ready to shoot he said, "I don't know, I would like to revise the script." I said, "Sol look what you've paid for! You don't want to throw this away! Think of the money." He said, "Well I guess you're right." The day before, the same bloody thing - he starts re-writing all this stuff - couldn't avoid it.

Sidney Cole: Oh - terrible.

Bernard Vorhaus: Any more questions? [Chuckles]

Sidney Cole: Well yeah, I suppose you answered the question, what was the best thing you remember, by saying that you always loved making movies.

Bernard Vorhaus: Yeah.

Sidney Cole: That would be your - you could sum up by saying, the man who loved making movies.

Bernard Vorhaus: Quite true.

Sidney Cole: Okay, well thank you very much then.

Bernard Vorhaus: Thank you.

Sidney Cole: Alan would you like to ask anything?

Alan Lawson: No.

Bernard Vorhaus: Did I more-or-less cover what you wanted?

Sidney Cole: Yes indeed, very well thank you.

[End of interview.]