

The copyright of this recording is vested in the ACTT History Project. Alf Cooper, lab technician, interviewed by Len Runkels on October the twenty-third 1988. Side one.

How old were, how old are you Alfred?

I'll be, I was seventy-six in September this year. I was born in twelve.

1912?

September Twelve.

You were a, you were a 14-18 war baby then?

No. I was born before the 14-18.

No, but you were only six when it finished for goodness sake weren't you?

I, I, I know. I tell you I wasn't a war baby but the aftermath of the war is what I remember.

Yes.

Probably made me become a very left wing socialist because I still think the Poppy Day is the biggest disgrace to this nation, there should never have been a Poppy Day. When I saw men with, with legs less than down to their knees and stumps less than their elbows...

Yes.

With eighteen inch square boards with casters at each corner with a cardboard tray in their lap.

Begging for money?

And matches, matches and boot laces.

Yes.

And people are proud of Poppy Day. They should hide their head in shame.

I quite agree with you.

That's my opinion of that.

I quite agree with you.

And that was the aftermath of the war, the Great War when they were not going to allow private enterprise to make munitions of war any more.

Yes.

Thanks to Maggie Thatcher they've all got it back again.

Where were you, where were you born Alf?

[Pause] Well, I don't know much about it but I, I believe I was born in Mare Street, Hackney, I lived the bulk of my life at Finsbury Park. Till I got married I lived at Finsbury Park.

So, so when did you join Kay's then?

That is a difficult thing. I don't know. Let me see, 1912.

That must have been about Nineteen...?

No, no. Wait a minute 1912, and 1926 I left school. Mm, it was somewhere round about the Thirties, one's or two's I'm not sure. I spent about five years. I got my Federation diploma in butchering and then I joined Kay's and I was there, I don't know, and I was there for about five years I think and in 1936 I came unstuck and that's when I joined ACTT at BIP's. There'd be Twiggy Twyman and Bert, and Bert, and Bert, mm, Bert Crayke

What, mm, what did you actually start at as Kay's whenever?

Oh a toe rag. [Laughter]

What you were hypo bashing and so forth were you?

Oh yes. Hypo bashing and chemical, you know...

Mixing?

Potassium Cyanide fades, chemical fades. Mm, mixing up baths, clearing out drains that got blocked up with sanitary towels more than anything. [Laughter]

Yes, everything, yes.

You can't put that in. Are you recording?

And dog ends?, [Laughter]

And, mm, I did everything and finished up, finished up in the drying rooms breaking out newsreels working twenty-four hours often never knowing when you could go home. We went when we were told.

Yes. Did you know Emanuel Coombes when you were there?

Yes.

Because he, he, I worked with him, mm, later on.

Yes, and he come to Tech for a while.

That's right.

Well, he, he and I were. He, he was at Kay's when I was there and then he ultimately came, mm...

Because he was sight grading at, at Kay's I believe?

That's right. Sight, he used to do sight, the printers in those days graded as they printed.

That's right, yes.

And the printer graded his neg as it went through the...

Yes, they, they just washed it?

Of course, it was only black and white.

And he...

[OI] And what, what, and what printers were those then?

Well, they had, mm, they had, mm, well, Limsons [ph 036] I think, no.

[OI] Oh really?

Limsons [ph 036] and then ultimately...

Model J's?

Ultimately they had a, they made up a series of printers running one in a whole battery of half a dozen or so. Put an elevator up and put the negs on an elevator and the one negative went through the four or five, three or four sort of print machines.

Yes.

And they were called the Hindmarsh K because Percy Hindmarsh....

Yes.

He used to be the, the drive, well, what Technicolor called the drive maintenance but in the actual fact he was the printing engineer and all that kind of thing.

Yes.

Bill Norris was the, was the maintenance engineer for all the other stuff. In fact Bill Norris and I, that was another job, we built, and I had to assist him, he built it, I helped him, put up the whole plant two dev, two developing machines. Two or one, I can't remember now. One, I think, that's right for the, mm, Dufay colour processing.

Yes.

Which we put the, [0:05:00 044] the, the first newsreel in colour for the world. That's put out on Dufay of the Jubilee for, no what come first, the Royal Wedding or the Jubilee celebration? What did we do at Tech?

Well...

We did the Royal Wedding didn't we?

[OI] You'd do the wedding I should think first?

Yes, and it was the Jubilee celebrations that we did on Dufay colour.

Yes. What newsreel was that then you were doing at Kay's then?

Mm, Movietone I think. We used to do Movietone news there all the time.

Yes.

That's why we could never go home.

Yes.

Because the programmes broke on a Sunday.

That's right.

And you were just ready to go home and, and it was replace scenes start all over again.

Well, they were doing two or three newsreels a week then for the cinema weren't they?

They, yes, used to do two, two come out Wed, Wednesdays was it? Wednesdays and Sundays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Yes.

But, mm, it's getting a bit vague now. Mm, oh yes, I had a, I had a good time on Boat Race Day and things like that because I was a motorcycle maniac and, mm, you talked about Bert Stimson, he was getting, he was bringing negatives back from one of the, one of the major dos and was, a race or Derby or something when he run his combination into Maples front windows in Oxford Street belting it back. They used to fit us up with a sash across.

Yes.

Great, broke the speed limit on a motorbike and you couldn't, you couldn't get anything better. [Laughter]

[Laughter]

Never got paid. [Laughter] And there was another little fellow there, one of the drivers, he was a mad brain like me on a bike and he beat, oh God! We had a famous dirt track rider, he beat him back from some place or other with one of the newsreel's negatives. We thought that was wonderful. Who the hell was that bloke? I can't think of his name now but, or the guy he beat in time factor. I loved it.

Did you, mm, did you spend most of your time then on, on developing really did you?

I spent the bulk of my life on the wet side of the, wet side of the industry.

In Kay's? At Kay's particularly?

And in Tech if you remember?

Oh yes.

I mean I, I took over. I had a go in other departments but the bulk of my time has been on the wet side.

[OI] Let's stick to Kay's first and let's finish Kay's off. [Laughter]

Oh.

Who, who was, who was the Plant Manager then when you joined?

I told you a while ago, I can't tell you what I call him but his name was Bert Newton.

[Laughter]

Oh that was, that was Bert Newton, yes.

Oh yes, and his brother.

A particular friend of yours, yes.

His brother was a superstitious bloke, never came to work on Friday the thirteenth and he was so scared of Bert than everybody else. [Laughter]

[Laughter] Who was, who was the governor then?

Roy.

Was it, was it Roy?

Mm.

Now he wasn't a bad bloke as I remember him?

Ernie Roy was a, a real gentleman. I think he were quite a good businessman.

But he was a realist?

But above all he was a human being.

Yes.

And he had compassion and he thought a lot of his staff.

Yes.

And when we were working down like he would come in sometimes and give the boys a drink and that sort of business and he was a very, very nice bloke.

What, what, what were your wages when you started at Kay's?

Oh God I don't remember now. I was paying income tax.

Were you?

Oh yes.

Blimey.

God Blimey we, hold on a minute, we weren't doing forty hours a week you know.

[Laughter]

No, I realise that. Well, I mean it was a question, I know it was a question then that you, you put your hat on the peg and when the newsreel was out you might go home and that could be fourteen hours?

Anything could happen.

Yes.

I remember in my courting days before I got married Amy Johnson landing in America just as, and it came through as I was going home to dinner, [Laughter] going home for the Sunday and that was the end of that weekend. [Laughter]

Yes.

Oh yes.

I remember Frank Coombes telling me he'd burnt the Derby negative?

Oh yes, that's right. He caught that alight in a projector. [Laughter]

Yes, yes, yes.

I forgot about that one. [Laughter]

He told me about that.

Oh yes I was there when that happened.

Mind you, mm, mm, he said in the darkrooms in those days of course, they all used to smoke nitrate and all.

Oh we used to, and yes, it was a great place.

[Laughter]

We had the, we had the means of making a cup of char.

Yes.

That was about all but mm...

*So when, when you opened the darkroom door, you know, it used to billow out,
[Laughter] if they'd done about six hours of printing. [Laughter]*

I, I've actually, actually seen a bloke on his dog end on the side of a roll of stock..

[Laughter]

[Laughter]

On nitrate in those days. [Laughter]

Yes.

And the funny part about it is I'd never experienced a film fire until I got to Technicolor.

[Laughter]

Yes.

That's the strange part. But, mm, it was nothing for someone shout out 'a bin's alright'.

[Laughter]

[Laughter]

But no that's unfair to say that. That was on a thing ,you know but, but they did. And they used to open a trap door in the wall to let the air in that's come over Finsbury Park in the darkroom and it was alright we never fogged anything.

You used to tell me about great doings on nights there though?

I'm not going to tell you anything about that because it's libelous. [Laughter] It, or that might upset somebody's marriage. [0:10:00 090]

Yes. I, I believe the, the local working ladies used, used to come round at lunchtime couldn't they?

Oh no. A thing that struck me as a very, very, as a trade unionist talk about Women's Lib. I knew what would happen when Women's Lib started getting off because the women, well, the post girls and negative girls would hardly talk to one another.

Oh no, no.

And that was one of the things that I, that has struck me as rather naughty.

Well...

There was quite a lot of, quite a lot of feeling at times.

The filming assembly

Between neg and pos, yes. They were the real birds in the, in the pos side, yes.

Can you remember any, any of the old neg cutters there?

I couldn't...

Names?

Mm, I can't remember their names now. I remember one girl Bertha Orger, [ph 099] she was in the pos, in the negative side. We used to call her 'BO' because that was her initials.

[Laughter]

Mm, I can't think there was a, there was a very nice girl who was in charge of the pos joiners, she was a superb piece of human being. She was humane and she looked, tried to look after her girls. She had quite a lot of joiners.

Yes.

Because the newsreels were put together by the girls.

[OI] Well, that wasn't, mm, Ernie Simpson's wife was it?

No, no, no, and, mm...

What splices were they, were they using then?

Mm, Vintons [ph 106] I think. They had Vinton [ph 106] machines with the old diabalos in hanging strands and diabalos in wooden troughs.

Yes.

You know, as well in the drying rooms and all the wood, all the tanks were, all the tanks were wood in the developing rooms and we used to use those big, [Pause] fifty gallon Dalton [ph 108] vats to mix the solutions up, up in the, up above and just pull the plug out and let them down the drain.

Did you have any named, named developers? Any of the...?

Yes, Vintons [ph 109].

They were all Vintons [ph 109] were they?

Yes.

Mm, when you were running a Vinton [ph 110] [Pause] you'd join one reel to another did you?

Yes, and in those days you used to pull the end down in a bin to feed on.

Oh yes.

And pull so much of the last lot down in to a bin with a, with sort of any large pillow case inside it.

Yes, yes.

Bin cover to put, to join on and, mm...

What did, how did you join, staple?

I, I did very little work, I did very little work in the, in the, mm, [Pause] in the dark side at Tech, at, mm, Kay's, very little. Mm, I was stuck outside mainly afterwards, you

know, I got on the drying and that was your, that was your lot if you were good at breaking out before... You see for speed we used to break out the film before it, we used to put a roll of leader on a horse in, the drying cabinets were long.

Yes.

And there was two, two sides to the drying cabinet.

Yes.

Like a long greenhouse. And you'd take a horse with a roll of leader on it and you'd break, you'd break, and a bin in there, and you'd break a film out so that you save sometimes as much as half the length of the drying room. You'd pull the stuff down, out and let it feed on with a leader on to get it off the machines quicker, that was, the urgencies were so great it was. And sometimes you, once we'd got it fixed up pulling down and taking that we used to put girls in there. [Laughter] And with the static in there you can imagine if they'd just had a, recently had a hair do sometimes their hair would go. [Laughter]

Stand on end, yes?

Yes, but that was...

And of course...

But it was, it was a very cut throat way of living in those days.

What sort of a join did you make, that's what I want to try and get at?

That's what I can't remember now.

Well, when...

I think we used pins. That's right, we used ordinary pins.

Really?

Yes.

Not clips?

To, mm, to put them, to put the feeders on.

Yes.

And what we did in the darkroom I can't remember now. [Pause]

Well, you, obviously you didn't use a cement join?

No, you didn't use cement. The only cement going join

[OI] Did you use staples?

Don't remember. Can't recall at all.

It was, maybe it was before staples?

I'm wondering if we used sticky tape.

[OI] No, I don't think, would you, I doubt it very much because of...

Yes, I doubt whether...

I can't remember what...

Sticky tape was up to, up to the process in those days.

I can't remember, I can't remember what we made there.

[OI] Wasn't, there wasn't...

I know, I know that, that the first time I came in contact with clips was at, mm, Tech.

[OI] The phosphor bronze clip?

Yes.

What, the four prongs?

[OI] Yes.

Yes.

Films, like that was, that was the thing we used at, mm, Tech. Tech.

At Technicolor, yes.

[OI] Mm, and I've seen that done.

We used that and we also used, mm, eyelet staplers

Yes.

Alright.

Mm.

Yes, we used the Ari [ph 135] eyelet stapler.

[OI] Yes, yes.

You know but...

And then we went on to the, and then we went over to the old new single prong wire clip.

Yes.

[OI] So you can see...

Or double prong I should say single wire double prong.

So as far as you can remember we, you were using pins then?

That's right. We were using pins because we used to have to keep them stuck in there.

That's right we made pin joins. [0:15:00 138]

So that, how did you get them in line or didn't they worry about it?

No, I don't think they worried too much about that because they used to...

You'd put it in the sprocket and it found itself?

Yes, mm.

Yes, okay.

[OI] Yes.

As I say I did very little work in the dark side at Kay's.

Did you get, did you get, mm, get breaks?

Oh yes. Oh we had our breaks. [Pause]

What developer doesn't?

We had breaks, but looking back and they, and at one time...

And of course...

Kay's put three developing tanks, turned it from one to three. One to two.

Maybe...

I'm not sure now whether they put three in or two in but I know they doubled, they put extra tanks, a developing tank in so as to speed the things up at one period of my life, but I can't remember.

Well, what, what speed were they doing do you remember?

Oh I haven't got a clue, we didn't know anything about speeds in those days. Well, I haven't got a clue what speeds they were going.

Now I mean what method of developing were they using, time and temperature?

No, they were using sight developing. It was whilst I was there we started up, we started up while I was working there making dip tests for, for Radio Luxembourg was it with the, with the early morning and taped news, and the, and the, and the sound tracks were developed then in the early hours of the night.

Oh.

And, mm, we used to, and until we created the datum for all, all this... [Pause] Oh dear what the hell did we call it? Centrimetric control.

Yes.

[OI] Yes.

We, we used to, we used to make a dip test off the end of it, time that and temperature of the bath and dip test it by hand to give us yourselves a time factor. But I still don't know because I still can't remember the speeds of the machines but that was the beginning of the centrimetric control business.

Well, what did you do? Change, change, change the length, length of the, mm, elevator in the bath?

No, no. You changed the speed of the machines, the machine was on a resistance.

Yes.

[OI] Yes.

And, mm, the machines were running according to the way the sight developing was coming on until we went over to sound tracks and times and...

So you were using orthochromatic black and white then was it, it wasn't panchromatic?

Mm.

[OI] That you had?

No, no. We were using...

Was it pan? Well, what did you desensitise it then if you were sight grading? Did you...?

No. They used, they used red torches to watch the view, to watch the image come out of the baths.

That's why I was saying was it orthochromatic?

[OI] Well, I mean I've, I've seen them with green torches. I've seen Bill, Bill with green torches. This was in Thirty-two?

Oh yes, yes.

[OI] No, what am I talking about? In 1930?

Green torches.

[OI] Green torches.

Well, we never developed with green torches. If we had any torch at all in the darkrooms at Tech with the colour we had green.

Yes.

[OI] Yes.

But we never, never put it near, never actually put it near the film.

No.

And never sight, never did any sight colour.

So you can't really remember what, what, what, what the stocks were at Kay's?

No, no. They were, they were... [Pause]

Of course, ninety per cent of it was black and white.

Wait a minute, wait a minute. No they were using green torches in neg developing. What am I talking about, I'm thinking of the pos.

[OI] Had to have been, yes.

Mm.

Yes. Otherwise you'd got to desensitise?

Yes, sorry. I, I'm sorry. I was, I was still, still in the positive.

[OI] Yes, yes, yes.

Mm, because I...

Because I didn't like desensitising negative because it, it deteriorated the image didn't it?

[OI] Yes, that's right, yes.

Degraded the image.

Sorry, but yes, because I'm, I'm still upstairs in the bloody positive department, I thought we were. No, in, in the negative yes, they were using green torches. Sorry, pan, panchromatic, mm.

What, what was the capacity on these...?

Oh I forgot all about that side of life.

Yes.

[OI] On the elevators do you remember?

Pardon?

What was the capacity? I mean you were coming out, what 800 foot reels, 400 foot reels?

Four elevators I...

Thirty-five mil?

No, they were coming in in thousands, and then, and...

Well, that was, that was 880 or whatever it was wasn't it, 910?

Something like that.

Yes.

Well, they were so-called thousands but...

Yes.

Mm. Of course, they'd, they'd just gone over from frame developing. In fact I used to do the clearing on frames when I was in the neg department when they...

[OI] What do you mean by clearing?

Well, if, if, if some of the prints were too dark they would clear them you know.

[OI] Oh I see, yes.

In a very fine bath.

They'd put them, put them through another bath, you know, a reducer.

And we used to wrap those, and we still used the frames for that.

Ah, ha.

Wrap the frames and drop them in and out and stick some of them in.

Well, that was graft.

Oh yes, makes your fingers bad.

Well...

But by that time they'd gone over. When I got there they'd just, they'd gone over to automatics and then we got these Vintons [ph 182] in there.

Oh.

When I went to Kay's. And then...

And you'd got a feed elevator and a take off elevator had you, [Pause] to give you time to make the change?

Not, not, no, no. I told you they pulled it down in a tank.

So you just pulled it off until you'd got enough?

Pull it down into a bin and they then, they were the first ones to produce elevators for a negative.

Ah.

Yes.

To run, to run the, run the, run, run them through a series of printers.

Yes, I've got it.

Which Hindmarsh, Percy Hindmarsh who was the, one of the engineers there he actually designed the machine to do it and they built their own machines.

When, when they were printing particularly newsreels were they printing, mm, mm, a married, from a married neg, [Pause] or was it, was it a mute neg? [Pause] [0:20:00 189] See at one time the newsreel cameras going back a long way...

No, I don't know.

The pictorial newsreel camera had a sound head on it as well didn't it?

[OI] Yes.

And you printed the track in?

[OI] Yes.

And the commentary with the picture.

[OI] Yes.

No, they went through a different gate didn't they on that business, mm.

So that, yes.

[OI] Because they had to have a dubbing session anyway to put the commentary on?

Yes.

[OI] So you would have had a combined neg?

Yes, yes.

Do you know I can't remember. Is the Technicolor's too predominant on there isn't it?

[Laughter]

Yes. Well, we, we never, never used married, married negs at Tech did we?

No.

Never. Well, I say never, only if the customer...

Well, when we, when we first went to Tech if you remember we, we had a, we had a grey, which had got a...

Yes the grey image, yes.

Which had got a grey image and, and, and, and an optical image on it.

The fourth, fourth colour was black and white?

And then we did away with the grey image.

Yes.

And all we had was, was actually track printers.

That's right.

And they were known as track printers.

[OI] Mm, let's stop a second because, mm, we're coming back to Technicolor. We don't want to come to Technicolor. [Laughter]

Not yet, no.

[OI] Mm.

Well, I, I can't remember too much about Kay's now it's such a long way away. I know I used to, I used to, I can't remember. I used to do the silver reclaiming at Kay's, that was a stinking rotten job.

Oh yes.

We used to do that with, I can't, was it liver of salts? Someone used to buy a carton. Anyway they used to, we used to do this and that was a filthy job.

[OI] Yes, the slides, yes.

And, mm, the sludge.

[OI] The sludge, yes.

Yes.

But the as, I say we used to do these, we used to do these chemical fades in a couple of pails.

[OI] Yes.

One, one of Berry's [ph 207] cyanide and the other of hypo you know, out of an NG take, you know, sort of business and that would make your fades and, mm, that, I think they got half a crown for that.

What, mm, had you got any optical printers at Kay's?

Mm, [Pause] that I don't remember now. That I don't remember.

Had you got any Belhal [ph 212] printers at all at Kays, Model J's, Model B's?

No, I don't think they had, they had all these goddamn things of their own, Vintons [ph 214] and that sort of thing.

Just Vinton [ph 214] printers?

Well, no. They had, no, they had, mm, was it Williamsons?

[OI] They did have Williamsons.

Williamsons.

Oh yes, there was a Williamson.

That's right, Williamsons.

Yes.

And it goes, used to go through the gate and the, and the aperture was, was red. And they, and as the different... That's why every if, if you watch the better the printer the better was the team change because they were, they manipulated the apertures as the negs went through, so they had virtually graded on the printer in, in those days.

They had those damn great, mm, flapping loops top and bottom of the gate didn't they - the Williamson?

Didn't see that. I, as I say I didn't, didn't do anything in the printing rooms. I was on the wet side so I don't know too much about the printing side of it.

Oh.

And, mm, and in those days they were very short on teaching you anything.

You picked it up as you went along?

I remember I had one developer, I remember one developer which was, which was his name was 'The Silent Lover and he'd say 'mm', and that was good evening and when he went home in the morning he'd say 'mm', and that was ta-ta. [Laughter]

[Laughter]

I can't think of his name now, Sid something. And, mm, I hope the poor devils not alive, could be. But, and he used to actually put his hand round the controls so as you couldn't see what he was doing, and after he'd gone you'd only got to go with your own torch and have a look and see what, what speed he'd got it running at, you know the sort of thing I mean?

[Laughter]

That's how good they were on passing on information. Because one of the things that struck me as very strange when I got to Technicolor, there they was trying to force every bit of knowledge into you, you know, and pressed it in.[Laughter]

Yes, yes. Yes, I'm, I'm surprised at, mm, at Roy because it eventually of course...

Oh no, no. That wasn't Roy's fault.

They joined, they joined FITAC [ph 233] didn't they?

Oh they became part of the Federation, yes.

Yes.

Yes, they, they did.

So they must have had apprentices?

But they'd already apparently unknown to me, I don't know too much about this but they, they pulled a fast one on some of their other employers hadn't they.

Had they?

Mm, over a costing or something. They all agreed something and they went out, and I don't know how true it is but that was the story I heard it one day.

Well, I mean right, right up until, what, the mid Fifties, I mean when we were having trouble with the, the, mm, FLA it was then wasn't it before the ALFE, the FLA. I mean George used to, George Elvin, I went with him once, would go out to lunch with Roy and sign an agreement with him and then we'd go back to, back to the AFLE and say 'but, you know, we've signed up with Roy, Kay's they're not making a fuss about it'.

[OI] Do you remember that?

Well, if you remember they came, they came out of the Federation.

Yes, they weren't in the Federation, that's right.

At some time they became unpopular over some carve-up or something, which I don't know too much about, and, mm, what I do know I'm not going to be able to verify so I shalln't say. [0:25:00 245] Mm, but when they came out of the Federation of course, then one was able to do that sort of business then.

Yes.

But otherwise it was, it was leaving the Federation altogether which is a tragedy because I figure that the Federation was an advantage to the union, but the most important thing was as it was an advantage to the employers it was also an advantage to the industry for both sides.

Yes, of course, it was.

Because we could protect them from skite employers and skite manufacturers and all that sort of business.

Yes.

And I don't think that the other side appreciated really how, how useful to the industry the union was or is. But that's my own personal...

And they used to come to us occasionally for some protection didn't they and they had their problems but they never admitted to it.

Mm. I helped them...

Can you remember what the light change arrangements were on, on the Williamson printer?

Mm, aperture size I imagine.

You don't know how the controls worked?

It wasn't Denton it was aperture.

Yes.

Mm, mm.

Yes, yes, it would be aperture height that would...

Mm.

Yes, that, that, that was in the, well, 1980s and going out.

The increased the size of the light exposure and reduced it according, you know and, mm...

So the 1918 Belhal [ph 259] used, used aperture height to, mm, oh well, an inside shutter. Mm...

Because at one period before my time they were using gas lights in their incandescent weren't they inside them and not, not electric.

Yes, oh yes, yes, yes.

From what I was told. I also worked with [Pause] I can't think of his name now. We used to call him 'Brother'. He goes back a long time before me and his, his sister was actually hand, was em, employed on the hand painting of film.

[OI] Oh yes.

Thirty-five mill film. And, mm, I've yet to see them. I was promised it once at the, mm, [Pause] mm, who is it we keep the archives isn't it they've got them?

[OI] Yes.

And they got some out which were coloured in a different process than is used now but I never, I never, mm, saw any actual hand painted ones, they couldn't find them at the time I was down there.

[OI] Mm, I can remember at The Bush we had some hand colouring done on Alsbutton [ph 272]?

Yes.

[OI] And that went to, mm, Paris to be done. I think it was, I think it was done by Pathé I think did it in Paris I think someone... [Inaudible 273]

Actually Grubber became Roy, mm, Ernie Roy's second wife, his sister.

Now you and I went to see Ernie Roy didn't we once when he was, when he was managing, mm...No, not Ernie.

No.

No, sorry, sorry, I've got the wrong one, no.

I went up and saw, I went up years later after I'd got Technicolor well organised and everything was going and we'd got agreements signed and all that sort of business I went and saw Bert Newton. And, mm, I also started...

And start insult him?

No, it was pathetic. [Laughter] All he could talk about was the fact that he'd been sent to America and just come back. Asked me if I wanted a job.

Big deal.

I asked him if he thought, if he wasn't so. [Laughter] But, mm, [Pause] mm, and then I, I know, I know that I did go out of my way to start ACTT to get stuck in to organising Kay's after I, in Technicolor.

After you'd left it?

Oh yes, because the, the conditions there were from a working point of view. The money was alright. I mean I, I can remember in those days when, when employment was, you know, you take Thirty-two's and that.

Mm.

But I've actually seen blokes chuck their job in to try spend some money. They spent, they earned it.

They couldn't spend it?

And never got out anywhere. I mean I was, I was courting in those days. In fact I was the first person on Technicolor payroll to get married because I was just, I was going to get married and we were getting, we were all getting ready to get married as I lost my, my goddamn job at Kay's.

[OI] But you, you, you said you, you joined ACTT via, via BIP?

I, I got the sack from Kay's in Thirty-six.

Yes, yes.

For cigarettes.

[OI] Yes, yes.

[Laughter]

Yes, you laugh but the point is the guy, the guy that sacked me...

Was smoking?

Was, was actually gave me one of his own fags the night before.

Yes.

In the room that...

Yes.

And that, and, mm, British and, B&D got... [Pause] No.

[OI] BIP you mean?

BIP.

[OI] Yes.

No, I worked at BIP's. B&D's got burnt down.

[OI] Yes.

And, mm, got burnt down. And that night that he'd given me cigarettes and he come round during the night afterwards, you know, before we went home in the morning, 'no more smoking', you know, 'they'll, they'll have all the fire, all the water and them round here coming all round over that works'. I came in the following evening, walked up through the garden, side alley and across what should be the house garden, but it wasn't it was concrete, [0:30:00 405] into the, into the clock house and clocked on and I'd still got a fag on and automatic he walks up and he followed me all up the goddamn stairs till I got to...

And he sacked you?

Yes, and then said 'that's it, that's your lot'. Because I'd forgot to put my cigarette out, which was force of habit, you know.

[OI] Yes.

He condoned it by allowing you to walk up there with a cigarette in your hand.

Well, that was the point you see but anyway.

Of course, a modern industrial court you might be able to do something about it.

That was, that was a bloke named Gutty Joiner. Well, he wasn't named Gutty he was Dick Joiner but we all called him 'Gutty' Joiner because he'd got such a great corp.

And what was he, the night supervisor or something?

No, he was the, he was the senior neg, he was the pos neg developer.

Oh.

He was the God almighty.

He was the neg developer?

Yes, that's right. The two people what were the king and cods were the optical printer and the, and the neg developer.

Yes, sure.

[OI] Wasn't it Sid Joiner?

No, Dick Joiner.

[OI] Oh right.

You're thinking of, mm, oh Christ what was the bloke that always stunk of violets with [Pause] thick hair back? He used to look after Movietone News.

[OI] Oh yes.

And, mm, [Laughter] one bloke nearly went down to Southend... Don't, no I won't tell you that.

It's alright, it's all, all copyright protected.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

[OI] You went, you went to BIP?

Yes, I went to BIP and, mm...

What were you doing at BIP?

The same.

Activation mostly?

No, because I was drying wallah on negative with, mm, oh dear. The chap that took the pub at Uxbridge, mm, Bill...

Oh yes.

And he, he was promised to open a laboratory for Otto Kanturer, [ph 325] he got killed in an aircraft crash didn't he Otto Kanturer [ph 326]

Yes.

And he started a colour lab didn't he? [Pause] And, mm, Bill Shepherd. Bill Shepherd used to be neg developer at BIP's?

[OI] I don't remember, no.

Mm, he, he started to run it and promised me a job after I got to Technicolor there, but that was later on in life but... And then Otto Kanturer [ph331] got killed and that was the end of that colour lab. Bill Shepherd finished up with a pub up off the Atcherley Road before you get to... Oh it's got a pot, it's a rather, a very, very old pub. Quite good.

The Treaty House?

[Pause] No. The one on the left hand side before you get to Uxbridge, mm, mm.

Oh what from, from?

Coming from Hayes.

Yes.

It's on, it's on the left, it's on a turning going left and it's on the right hand corner. .

Oh that big pub?

It's quite, it's got, mm.

Yes, I, I know.

What was it called?

I know, I can't remember now. I know it, I know it quite well.

It's, mm, oh dear, oh dear. I can't think.

I know it quite well. It's, it's just by that school isn't it?

It's got two names hasn't it.

It, you know, that school is on the corner.

Anyway he took that pub and he, he had a heart attack in the end and we lost him.

Bishop's Holt is just by there?

Yes, I suppose it is.

Yes.

Mm.

Just before you go down the hill.

Is it the 'Treaty House'?

Anyway...

No, that's not 'The Treaty House' is it?

No, no 'The Treaty House' is on the way out of Uxbridge.

Mm.

Mm.

By the Swan.

How long were you at BIP Alf?

Oh, mm, I doubt if it was a year because I was at Kay's in Thirty-seven. I got a job at Tech, at Technicolor in Thirty-seven. What happened I went and saw Leslie Oliver in Thirty-six. I got a job, I had a terrible, terrible job getting, I had a terrible job getting a job because of this cigarette business and, mm, went to the Labour Exchange. Now I left school at half past four, I started work at five o'clock on the Friday I left school. I stayed at the butchers, got my Federation diploma, couldn't get a job to warrant it sort of business, got disgusted. Got a job at Kay's because I was serving them in meat at the time, I was serving Ernie Roy's brother's wife and, mm, she said to me one day 'you look, you look a bit despondent', and I said 'yes, I'm sick to death, sick to the teeth'.

Yes.

So one thing led to another, she said 'well, why don't you go and try and get a job in there? They pay good money'. So I thought 'good'. And I didn't realise you had to work seven days and nights a week for it [Laughter] but...

[Laughter]

Anyway, mm, I went there and I, as I've said Newton was on his holidays and, mm, I saw Roy and he took me on and I was tickled pink and that was it.

Ah.

And that's how I got into film game. And then, as I say, I lost my job over a cigarette. Every time I went in it, oh they, they put it down as industrial misconduct though I'd had never drawn a penny piece of, of, mm

Dole?

Dole. Which was only ten bob a week anyway. And of course, I had to sign on and, mm, they...

And they wouldn't pay you because it was industrial...

First of all they didn't know what to put me down as so I got put down as, because I told them I was a laboratory worker see they didn't know what to do about that film laboratory workers, put me down under rat catchers and others. [Laughter]

[Laughter]

That's a great help, I've never forgotten that. [Laughter] And because I hadn't, [0:35:00 371] because I'd been a good boy and never been there before they only stopped my dole for three weeks and it didn't make any difference and now I found myself... I got a job with E A Parfrey gave me a job they sent me a letter and it had got thirty-five on them, that's thirty five bob a week so that in a, I thought 'that's a mistake they must mean three and a half quid', you know, the sort of thing. Three pound five, I thought there was a prince there. So I turned up on the Monday morning for the job at BIP's and Parfrey had me in the office and I, because I asked to see him before I started work and he said 'what's the matter'? I said 'well, I've obviously got to start work', I said 'but I thought there was some mistake in this letter see', and, mm, he looked at it and he said 'no, there's nothing'. 'But surely the wages are wrong, that means three pounds doesn't it'? I remember I was paying income tax before I came with the overtime and all that sort of business that we were earning, and, mm, 'no', he said 'that's alright'.

Thirty-five bob a week?

Yes, and, and I had a terrible row with him for about half an hour. In the finish he said 'well, are you going to start or not'? I said 'yes, I've got no option have I', you know, 'with this business I've got to get started somewhere or other', I said 'but don't imagine you're going to give four quid to work all weekend because you're not'. [Laughter] Well, anyway [Laughter] he said to me as I was walking out 'oh excuse me a minute'. I said 'what's that'? He said 'I want you to do me a favour'? [Laughter] I said 'I already am'.

[Laughter]

I said 'I don't want you to tell anybody what you're getting when you get...' So I said 'you don't want to worry about that I'm just as ashamed of it as you are Barry'. [Laughter] And I went out of the room and I found there was a bloke he was working, I was working with blokes getting twenty-seven and a tanner.

[OI] Gosh.

What, doing the same job as they would have been doing in Kay's?

In the drying room.

Drying rooms?

Yes, among the developers. I had the shock of my life. I found out afterwards later on that there was somebody working there for about seven bob a week because his old man owned a pub up the site and it was a, to get him out of the way sort of business.

[Laughter] I don't know how true it was I don't know but that's the sort of thing you...

And there was a guy on the, on the production side who I understand was working there for nothing because it was a glamour industry because he could afford to work there for nothing, you know, it was that sort of... And, mm, anyway I was there, I was there for a couple of or three weeks and I went downhill. Now in the meantime I got trouble with the income tax people because we paid our income tax every six months in those days.

Yes.

Well, of course, being out of work they come unstuck

[Laughter]

So I wrote them a long sob letter and told them what I was doing and how much I was getting and all this sort of business and that got wiped off. I went down very ill, I had, I had, got flu and a cold and I had the thrush as well, you know, I was really bad. I suppose it was the worries of all I'd got. Anyway when I went back they gave me half a crown rise and I never did know why I got that. [Laughter] So whether the income tax people got onto him or not I got half a crown rise out of it, thirty-seven and a tanner. [Laughter] And I used to cycle from Finsbury Park to Borehamwood every day and back to, well you couldn't afford fares on that could you?

No.

Couldn't use a motorbike even.

And you couldn't run a motorbike on that could you?

Not at that money, no. [Laughter] So then I heard about Technicolor and Bert Newton said to me Technicolor are looking for neg developers. I thought to myself 'good'. He said 'you better go there because we want to get ACTT in there' so...

Who was that, Bert Crayton?

Bert Crayton

I thought so.

So if anybody wants to be, blame anybody for me being active in ACTT and getting under their neck, skin and one thing and another they better blame poor old Bert because he was the guy that sent me there.

He was a lovely bloke?

Yes, he was.

A lovely bloke.

But he sent the wrong guy to do it, you know, I hadn't got a clue. I wanted to join a union and I joined the union as soon as I got there because they said to you 'here you are, sign that' and that was as far as it got, you know, when I gibbed a bit at that but I finished and

I signed in the end. It was the way they told me to do it that upset me, I'd always been a bit obstinate, you know.

[OI] Okay. Now I'm going to change over.

[Side Two]

We're back on air are we?

[OI] Yes. Alf Cooper Side Two. Right.

So you came to Tech then in, in, mm, Thirty-six was it?

March Thirty-seven. I got...

March Thirty-seven?

He told me he'd employ me in Thirty-six and I didn't hear from him, he said 'you'll hear from me', I didn't hear from him and so I waited a few months and I suddenly got tired of that and I had another bash at him and I was in.

Who was that, Leslie Oliver?

Yes, Leslie Oliver.

How did you come to know Leslie Oliver Alf?

Just by applying.

Oh, right.

To Tech. And then I got to know him and he asked me what sort of life I'd led in the industry because when I got to Technicolor there were very, I don't know that there was anybody there [Pause] other than the American team that were teaching and bringing the process to this country that had actually worked on film before, and there was nobody I knew that I can recall that had actually worked on film. The bloke that was in charge of the neg developing there had been a ship's steward on board a ship all his life prior to going there and he was the foreman of the Developing Department. so that will give you some idea of the... But they had a team of Americans there who were...

Yes, McCains [ph 011] was one?

Quite bright lads.

Yes.

And [Pause] they enjoyed life to the full, but I'll say two things about it he'd work hard and they played hard but they were, they really knew their job. And, mm, I told Leslie Oliver about the conditions I'd worked at and the hours we'd put in at Kay's and all that and he said 'oh there'll never be anything like that here, you can rest assured on that'.

They're doing it now. [Laughter]

No, they, they always go home the same day. [Pause] But anyway we did have a whole week when we didn't go home and that was when we did the, the Royal Wedding but... No, and we worked to get the plant going and all that sort of thing, it was ticking over a bit and it improved and it was great, when we got in there the only crime that you could commit there was getting in other peoples departments, you were confined to your own department. That was the beginning of Technicolor.

Oh.

Everything was secret.

Yes.

Mm, even water had a number and all the weights had numbers and the weights corresponded to the chemicals being used in the, in the mixing, in the Solutions Department. The chemicals all had numbers and when making up the baths the weights and necessarily had numbers in those early days didn't they?

Yes.

And I came up against mechanical, mechanical mixers in making up baths and we used to do it with a bit of wood and our arms in Kay's days. [Laughter] Supposed to use a paddle with your hand but, you know, it was a bit quicker to do it with your arms, that's how I finished up with, mm, methol poisoning in my time in Kay's. But, and that was a funny thing to go to the doctor and he said 'you've got, you've got poultry rash'. I said 'I, no I haven't'. Then I told him about the other thing he said 'oh', [Laughter] but that was, that will be forgotten back to my days in, mm, in Kay's.

They'd never met it then had they?

Yes.

I finished up Lukey Sloe [ph 028] had it on the soles of his feet poor devil, [Laughter] oh it did itch. He got it on his feet because we used to run on duckboards in Kay's you know.

Yes.

And, mm, sometimes the drains would get bits of film ends over them and the duckboards would be lower than the waste level, you know, and it was 'oh'. And as I say

I used to lean over these tanks and mix up quicker with your hands because it was always, it was always popping away, you know. Change the baths in the small hours of the morning and, mm, that used to be life there. But at, but, as I say, and then when I came to...

Well, you'd got a whole Solutions Department doing that?

And then when I came, when I came to Technicolor and saw a mechanised Solution Department I thought 'good God this is paradise', [Laughter] and I didn't work in there and, mm, I wasn't sorry. [Laughter] And they had a Chemical Lab in which they'd got a degree chemist looking after the controlling of the solutions. And that and of course, there was a lot of toxic dyestuffs and things in there so it had to be a lot more. But, mm, we were, we had one period where we were using carbon tet as though it was washing up water, it didn't matter...

Did when I, when I went there, yes.

And I remember at Kay's...

We used to bath in it.

We used to, we used to, I used to clean up all, all the brown stain from mixing baths off our hands, we used to clean that with all sorts of things including carbon tet. I was staggered, and knowing what I knew about these chemicals later in life I'm staggered that we didn't have even myself have trouble from it.

Alf if you think about all the solutions, particularly carbon tet, which now causes harden hardening of the arteries and how many...

Softening of the brain and...

How many, mm, do you know that used all that carbon tet that are heart cases now and cholesterol they call it now?

I don't know.

It used to be hardening of the arteries.

Mm.

And you've got it, I've got it. [0:05:00 044]

Mm, yes.

And how many do you know that haven't got it from those early days?

I and I've, I've got Paget's Disease of the Bone and apparently they don't know how you get that, it's nothing to do with the chemicals because I've had the north of England health and people study, study that and they said...

What, what, where did you start then in, at Technicolor? Well, in the neg developers?

I started in neg developing, yes, on the old drums.

Yes. Well, they were still there when I, when I joined Technicolor, mm.

Mm, I hadn't been there very long and they had some trouble in the neg developing and Eddie got the push from developing and I took over on neg developing foreman down at Tech then for a while, mm, and...

But, mm, so your negatives would, would come in in the afternoon and evening wouldn't they? And they'd go [Pause] straight on these six foot drums and the baths were concrete baths.

No, they were wooden, wooden troughs.

Yes, wooden troughs with a concrete bottom weren't they?

Oh yes, but they were, they were half circle wooden troughs. You know like a, like an arc cut out of the bottom.

Yes, yes. They wound the negative on in the dark?

[OI] Yes, yes.

On to the pins and each drum took one roll of neg didn't it?

Actually it went between pins.

Yes, yes.

Yes, we had, we had, mm, circular hoops.

[OI] Yes.

A space right across and so you just wound it with...

Very carefully.

You put it on with elastic bands and, and staples.

Yes.

And, mm, you tensioned the string, you tensioned the, the, mm, the elastic bands and they were, they were fixed to the end of the drum and a guy at the other end would have a handle on the drum and then you would have a skid which is a, a long piece of, mm, hickory stick which was curved and matched the drum.

Yes.

With a guide and you pushed it through, through. It come off a roll and you pushed it through and went along, somebody come along with it and you wound the other guy's one on the drum and it just went through its own path, all the way through because it was like, there was like a thread.

[OI] Yes.

The pins were in, on the drum. All put in technically, it's got its name because everything that Technicolor did was technical, highly technical.

Oh everything had a drawing.

Every goddamn thing, which was a very appropriate name for the product.

[OI] Yes.

And subsequently as time has gone on I personally believe that the quality of Technicolor has never ever been worse than Eastman and in my view in many instances better.

Yes.

But the shelf life of Technicolor I saw when we had a go in BAFTA in Piccadilly on an odd occasion we saw red shoes, some old shots of red shoes that had been kept that had been on the shelf thirty-five years and they hadn't lost any of their, any of their concentration of colour and density and what have you.

That's more than you can say for, for Eastmancolor.

In eight years Eastman has virtually had it I would say with the stuff we were seeing then.

Yes, yes.

So I still think the industry has made a mistake going over to the other.

But...

I know economics might come into it but...

The Americans are sorry they got rid of an imbibition channel. They, they admitted that eventually, they wished they'd kept one transfer machine.

I think the Chinese have got the best of the deal.

Oh yes, yes, surely .

Their stuff will, their stuff will go on living, all the world will use that process, I don't know what the shelf life is of Eastmancolor.

Well, mm, Houston, one of the pictures, after we'd stopped Houston shot a picture in Australia and he went to Peking, Beijing now, to get it processed because he wanted three strip.

Who, who was the guy that made *Raging Bull* ? [Pause] He came over if you remember, he was so angry with the colour business that he, he made *Raging Bull* in black and white didn't he. And then we had a, and then we had this big do at BAFTA and he was going to, we were going to try and have a, do something about this shelf life and the longevity of productions and one thing and another and I told him one or two things and what would had happened, all the different things we were going, was going on about it. And he, he said, said he would get in touch with me and all that, he was going to start off a, something that forced them to go back to three strip.

Back to three strip, yes.

And I never heard any more when he went back to the States.

No.

Which was a great pity because the shelf life of a product is very important me thinks.

Well, apart from China there's no longer, mm I think there's no longer in the industry anybody with, mm, enough expertise to resurrect three strip in, in America or, or here.

[OI] Mm.

It's, it's too late now, you'd have to go to China now

Do you know...

We've all retired who, who spent their lives at it.

Do you know I told you I became foreman of the neg developing and I cannot remember how and why I suddenly went from neg developing to hyper, hyper sensitising. [0:10:00 090].

Yes, you were sensitising weren't you?

Mm, they must have been sensitising before I got there unless of course, this all happened in the very early days, you know, during, mm, mm, because remember I went there in Thirty-seven. The war started in Thirty-nine.

Yes.

Mm, I can't remember how I, whether it was because I was used to and had a lot of experience on wet machines, wet developers and that. Although they'd got the sound wave working upstairs and the Duke developers and that were working up there, it was only the negatives that were done on the drums.

I rather imagine it was because you were the convenor by then weren't you?

Well, I started the union, yes.

That's right.

That was, that was the job I was sent there to do by Bert Crayke . That's another side of it.

Well, that's the side...

[OI] Yes.

That's quite important Alf to this...

Yes. Well, mm, but I, I know that I then took over and I then became foreman of the, of the, and they took me off. I can't remember that. Mm, I just don't remember being trained from neg developer to sensitiser.

Sensitising was a day shift job wasn't it?

No.

Wasn't it. You did that on nights as well did you?

[Pause] Oh no, I did that day work. Yes, that's right.

That's right.

Day work.

Now whereas your neg developing must have been mainly night shift?

That's right I was on day work, yes, yes, that's right. I got day work for that.

I think Leslie Oliver moved you on to that job so that you'd have more time for your union work. Got...

Blimey I, we had a lot of time with that mate when you had to do four sets a day, and not only do you have to, not only did you, did you have to hyper sensitise them you also had to, to re-humidify and, mm...

Yes, but I can, I can remember George Newton and this is, you know, mm, saying 'where's Alf Cooper, he should be in the sensitisers and he's off at another bloody union meeting I expect'. [Laughter]

[Laughter] Well, that was always going on but you've got to remember that, mm, I spent a lot of time obviously getting in early for them, but we're not talking about the union that's another story.

[OI] No but tell me, mm, this hyper sensitising. What was, what was the reason for that?

Well, we used to hyper sensitise the three strip colour negs.

[OI] Yes.

Red, green and blue, which became the yellow side of magenta, mm, so as to make them faster to light.

[OI] Ah, ha.

Mm, and, mm...

[OI] What were you using for that? Was it mercury?

Mm.

No, no, I can't remember.

It was a silver stock.

[OI] Yes.

But it was a silver black and white stock?

[OI] Ah, ha.

It had colour pigments on it.

But it had, it had a backing on.

[OI] Yes.

That acted as a filter in the camera?

[OI] Yes. Ah, ha.

So that you, you got a, each neg took its separation in the camera because you were running three negs in the camera.

[OI] Yes, yes.

Two were side by side.

Yes. One as a bi pack.

[OI] Yes.

And one as a, mm, a single.

[OI] Yes.

At right angles.

[OI] Yes, with a prism.

Yes, with a prism, yes.

[OI] Yes.

Mm, you've seen the Technicolor cameras have you with the gold prism.

Yes.

[OI] Yes, yes.

Mm, diagonal. The diagonals first.

Of course...

Cube.

I know as Alf, Alf was on perforating too for a while weren't you?

Yes. I had the, I had the, I had the whole of that side to my responsibility. That was the hyper sensitising and perforating of all our stock, and curvature was one of our biggest problems.

Mm.

You see a lot of people talk curvatures when the two perforations begin to meet. Well, it isn't curvature.

Of course, it isn't.

No.

Curvature is the, is the fact that the roll of film if you lie it straight out on the floor it will go round the corners if you're not careful and collapse.

[OI] Yes, yes.

So it's, it is actually an engineering slitting problem.

[OI] Yes, mm.

That you get whether you slit metal or whatever you slit.

[OI] Yes.

It ends up as a curve laid out flat.

[OI] Yes, yes, yes.

And if the curvature extends, mm, exceeded twenty-five thou in a metre strip wasn't it? If it exceeded that on the gauge...

[OI] Yes.

You had a special gauge.

[OI] Yes.

You lay it on the pins, mm, and you tapped it.

[OI] Yes.

With a straight edge and then read off the ends.

There was a scar on the other end which gave you a reading.

A little scar.

[OI] Yes.

And as long as it was, was under the thirty thou or whatever it was...

[OI] Yes.

Mm, it was okay. If it wasn't you had to reject that, that roll. Mm, but you see Kodak's standards, [Pause] because when I first went there we, we, mm, measured every, the head and tail end of every strip of negative perforated was measured, that's every...

That was recorded.

Yes.

Every roll was registered.

Nine hundred and thirty feet or whatever it was. It was called a thousand foot roll as Alf says but, mm, you took a head strip and a tail strip which were kept and the perforator gave us on dry maintenance another head and tail strip which we miked up. We miked up five perforations on a toolmaker's microscope. Both sides, the margins, the inner rounds and the sizes of the perforations and, mm, our standards because of the register problem with three strip [0:15:00 138] our standards were half Kodak's. So, mm, mm, a perforation size you were allowed, Kodak were allowed four tenths of a thou up or down on perf size. But we were allowed two tenths of a thou.

[OI] Yes.

Misalignment, that's the, you know they're perforated in four...

[OI] Yes, yes.

Four at a time.

[OI] Yes.

The misalignment between one set of four perforations...

[OI] Yes.

And the next set of four perforations. Well, it was eight really, four each side.

[OI] Yes.

If the misalignment was more than five tenths it was NG and you've got to reset the machine, whereas Kodak went up to ten or twelve tenths of a thou.

[OI] Yes, yes.

Mm, which was unacceptable from the point of view of registration because...

[OI] Yes.

I'll tell you now. Our, our perforating maintenance was very often had to go over to Kodak's and help them out of trouble.

Oh, oh yes. We used to buy our, mm, the punches, the dies and, and the pilots from Kodak but we set the machines ourselves and we had if you, Alf remembers them very well, we had, mm, four...

That's the trouble. I don't remember too much.

Don't you. Oh dear. I'll, I'll remind you.

I can't even, what was the record I used to just had, that I used to just re, mm, oh...

[Pause]

Well, you've got to remember we were probably...

Re-humidify. That was the blue record, that was the red, it was the red one wasn't it, the red stock. The blue record was the river back.

The blue record...

Was red wasn't it, deep red.

Had, mm, a dark orangey coloured background.

That's right.

On it which acted as the filter.

[OI] Yes.

That had a pigment and it was a black background but it had a pigment on it.

Yes.

And that we only, we only, we only re, re-humidified that, we put that through. And that was another problem you see, the humidity in the air for drying.

Yes.

[Pause] The red and green, one was pale pink and the other was a pale green pigment on it, and they we put through some, I can't remember what my bloody solutions were. I know the last one it went through was glycerol. What the hell was in the bath? I can't remember. I can't, you see that's what I said people ask you to do this and that and it's gone.

Yes.

Anyway, mm, with the blue record that just had its pigment on but to make sure that they laid flat and that they're the same width...

Yes.

As the other two, because we did all this before they were perforated, we used to perforate them ourselves.

Yes.

Mm, so as to get them identical I used to have to re-humidify the blue record which was fed straight into the dry boxes with a steam, with a steam supply. And that we got about, oh blimey, we couldn't go above seventy one per cent humidity in that cabinet, and remember we were working in total darkness and I don't think it ever got down to below sixty-nine did we?

Well it...

I know it was very, very touchy.

Yes, very difficult.

Because if you went over the odds it would stick.

[OI] Mm.

Did they...?

And they'd got to be like that so that when they went into the camera... Oh and after they were, after they were sensitised then we perforated them. And after they were perforated then A:- we had, we had to check the curvature and A:- the first set had to be read up microscopically to make sure that they were going to re-register in the...

But do you remember Alf that you, the perforating room was the most controlled room in the plant for humidity and temperature?

[OI] Yes, yes.

And, mm, you couldn't start perforating until the humidity and temperature were right.

In the room.

In the room. What is more the negative had to have been kept in those conditions for twenty-four hours before it was perforated.

[OI] Right.

Because we'd do it....

You had to take it in the dark, open the can...

[OI] Yes.

And open the bag in the can and let the air get to it for twenty-four hours and then re-can it and then perforate it. So that the place was stacked out with neg all the time.

[OI] Yes, yes.

You know, have it, it had been sensitised, it had been humidified, the extra record, but it all had to be brought to exactly the room ambient temperature which was and humidity which were very, very strictly...

The technical controls in that place were out of this world.

Oh yes. But this meant, you know, that you, you did get perfect negative register because, because your perforation sizes were absolutely right.

They, they, they supplied the industry. I know it cost the industry but they supplied the industry with as near perfect as possible. Do you know if they took a, if they took a batch of - you realise when I say a batch, that's the three negatives.

[OI] Yes, yes, yes.

Onto the set and used some of it, that used to come back to me to check it again to see that it was okay to come back again.

Yes, it would have to be in good condition wouldn't it?

Yes, if they get stuff come back to me...

Yes.

To, and I take and open in the dark and start reading them up and say they're all alright again and send them out again very often. [0:20:00 189]

Oh yes.

[OI] Mm.

The, the service they gave was out of this world that but it was costly of course.

[OI] Yes.

But you, you consider that every, every day or every night whenever they were perforating negative you had probably forty to forty-five minutes to make it up before they could go. And if he were, he would be in the dark you see with all his machines threaded up and he'd just given you a head end off each, he couldn't go until you gave him the okay. And if one was out you'd got to go in there in the dark and put it right.

Currently a guest machine.

It was total darkness and you're looking for two tenths of a thou on the alignment, which was a little hexagon nut on the back of the, of the feed chute on a perforator, you know, and you'd just got to give it a tinniest twitch, and you've got to work out which way you'd got to twitch it.

[OI] Yes.

Just to change the angle at which the film was being presented to, to the perforator head, yes.

[OI] That's right.

Do you know, this is an aside. One of the most difficult jobs in the world is to put a thousand foot roll of negative, or 980 or whatever it was, back that had fallen out of the middle.

Oh yes.

Off the machine [Laughter] un-perforated and I, I... [Laughter]

You should have heard the language when it happened because...

Well, it's only somebody's carelessness. I didn't do all the perforating myself, I mean I used to, I used to actually do the sensitising, the feeding of the sensitising myself and sometimes I found that I was doing both ends, but that's another story.

Pop Wingrove was, was, mm, highly...

Old Pop, Pop was on perforating in the end.

Yes, yes.

Yes, but, but sometimes they'd forget to put the holding bar down.

Yes.

To keep the feed roll....

It would fall off.

Oh God and I'd go in there...

And it's on the floor.

And another time I, I can recall on one occasion somebody had left the print, left the perforators running and I went in there and I moved my feet in the dark, I thought 'Christ'. I bent down and down and it was perforating and it was all, it wasn't taken up and it was all over the floor. God, do you know we even saved that and weren't any come back either.

Shall I, shall I tell you? I, I remember Pop Wingrove very, very well because he, he was, mm, he was a mealy mouthed old sod.

Character wasn't he?

No, he was a mealy mouthed old sod. He would, he run straight to Oliver with everything. Everything that didn't suit him he'd got to, somebody had got to get the blame for and he'd straight into Oliver and Oliver would listen to him too, I don't know why he didn't tell him to clear off but he didn't, you know. Mm, mm, Wingrove could thread up those perforators in the dark without any problems, mm.

Wingrove?

What was his name. I've just said it, Pop.

Yes, Pop Wingrove.

[OI] Pop Wingrove.

Yes, Pop Wingrove. He could thread them up in the dark with no problem at all. But one day we had a problem of scratches or, or dust. I think it was dust.

[OI] Yes.

And, mm, it wasn't the perforators as it turned out. But Leslie Oliver was in there and we were in there because we were the engineers looking after it. And he, mm, he said 'well, thread this up for me, thread this up for me Wingrove'. He couldn't thread it up in the light without double punching it. Do you know that he couldn't do it in the light? I, and Pop Wingrove, mm, Leslie Oliver says 'you can't do it in the light can you'? So he took a bag and put it over his head, he said 'now bloody well do it' [Laughter] and he could do it then.

You'll never believe it but I taught these people to thread up in the white light and then they had to do it in the dark.

Yes.

And ultimately you do so much of it that it's a fact.

Now you do it, you do it...

Now I can tell you something about darkness. They kept me back during the war. I was never, I wasn't on a reserved occupation. There was only about a dozen of us, half a dozen or a dozen men was left in Technicolor when the war got going, all girls. And, mm, [Pause] we went from a monastery to a harem didn't we?

[OI] [Laughter]

Well, I heard about it. When I came back of course, there were still a lot of women worked at Technicolor.

Yes. Well, they guaranteed, they guaranteed the blokes their jobs back you see because the union was working then. And, mm, the girls we told them that they would, you know, we would expect them to go back. Now then what was I going to talk about?

[OI] [Laughter] Well, you've been, you've been talking actually about teaching them to, to load in the daylight and then go.

Oh yes. Well, well as the war progressed...

[OI] Yes.

They kept me back and, and every now and again they would send a little WAAF to me with a four hundred foot of, of infra-red stock and the whole plant used to complain because I used to hyper sensitise that in 880 ammonia.

[OI] Yes.

In total darkness. Now if you remember that a thirty-five millimetre has to go through something to remove the liquid from it before it goes in the dry box. So the dry box is upwards of the ceiling and the tanks are just above your waist in height, you know, up to about your breast height, and that gap between there and the top where it goes into the dry box there was a, mm, four squeegees, two either side. [0:25:00 245]

[OI] Yes.

With a suction, and the film was passing through that. That was a great asset that was, that was where you could blow your [Inaudible 246]

Yes, but the spool.

But that's another story. But this, this thing. No it wasn't a sucker it was a blow off wasn't it?

Yes.

That's right, used to blow it off. That's right used to blow it off. Now I don't know if you know much about 880 ammonia but that's about as strong as you can get it.

[I] Yes, yes.

[Laughter] Well, if you've got that blowing up there and, and blowing off across the top of the tanks you can imagine what the room was like. Everybody in the firm complained, nobody thought about me. But the thing was I could run round that machine in total darkness. Literally, I did.

[OI] Yes.

And once I'd put the mask on I couldn't find my way anywhere I was absolutely stumped. I worked in total darkness for such a long time then.

Yes. [Laughter]

And, and, and, as I say, I'm not, I'm not bragging I'm just saying a straight fact of life. I suppose miners probably have got some fantastic things in the dark that you'd never do in the light but the fact remains in that total darkness I could run round that machine. And there was three steps up to the wet end and three, two steps up to the wet end and down the other end. Never had any bothers or problems unless somebody had come in the dark without letting the door slam and then I'd bash into them. Mm, yes [Laughter] I did sometimes.

[OI] [Laughter]

But, but when I got this respirator on I didn't know where I was. I couldn't, so in the finish what I used to do. Do you remember we were working with no perforations in the main.

Yes.

Mm, but even with perforations you've got to remember that when the, when the film is going through liquid it stretches.

Yes.

So that we used to manually hoist them back over the sprockets and things when you were using sprockets. And this stuff had got sprockets and we'd got sprockets, we hadn't got sprockets on the machines but it still used to let the, mm, the bobbins go down once so it's just lift the trip back so as to keep the tensions right. And in the dry boxes they used to have a tendency to tighten and we used to put our arms between the things and, and loosen them off a bit. I could do all that with no problem.

Yes.

Never put my hands on the front, on the emulsion or anything like that. Now, and so the only way I could work was to do a bit of tensioning up, dash out, take a deep breath and head back in again sort of business. [Laughter] And invariably whenever we had this, these, this infra-red stock on there'd only be Bernard Happy and me in the plant because the sirens automatically used to go when I got that going didn't it?

Yes.

And, and we couldn't stop with that on board obviously so we just used to have to finish and keep going. But that was one little part of life that made, made, you know, part of the job that made life interesting. I think probably that's how they was able to keep me back all through the war didn't they.

Yes.

I always knew when something big was going on at night. Never knew where or what until something, you know, ages later and you'd think 'Christ that must have been so'. A lovely little Popsie used to bring me stuff in an icebox, you know.

[OI] Now you, yes, you mentioned the word then Bernard Happy which is a name that...

Bernard Happy was a great technician. [Pause] Oh, I wish you knew something about machines. [Laughter]

[OI] [Laughter]

He was the most impractical man you'd come across.

He was...

He...

He was a great technician but he hadn't got much idea about them.

No. You see I think the best technician that I met there Alf, I don't know whether you'll agree with me was, was...

Stu Brown.

Was Stu Brown, yes.

He was second to none.

He was, he was an American who became a naturalised, well he had to become a naturalised Englishman because the, the law says you can't work any longer unless you do.

Well there's another story to that later on when you start talking about the trade union movement.

[OI] Yes.

Yes, I'll say there is.

Stu Brown wanted to stay over. Leslie Oliver came to me and said 'Alf I want your help', his permit had worked out he'd had his permit extended but it had worked out.

That's right, yes.

He said 'I want your help'. Now we were campaigning about not letting these Americans take our jobs, you know.

That's right, yes.

So from the trade union point of view, and it's important, it's worth, this is important I think for people to know that the unions aren't all numskulls and bloody stupid. He said to me 'you know the kind of technician this man is'?

We need him?

He said 'I want, I want your support and all that', he said 'we want to get the government to increase his permit and let him stop. I need your help'? I said 'you've got it'. I didn't need, I didn't need any lecture.

No.

That man was a brilliant technician.

Oh yes.

He was terribly mean wasn't he? [Laughter] He used to drop his, drop his cigarettes out and put them back in the packet. [Laughter]

Oh yes.

And he was picking up the houses wasn't he.

I, I know that in 1952 he was getting sixty-three pounds a week when most of us were lucky if we could look at ten working all the hours God sent, you know.

Well I'll tell you...

Is that true?

I'll tell you about what a bloke said to me.

He was the LO.

What happened by one of our members in the controls [0:30:00 305] who ultimately became Managing Director. Anyway I said to Oliver 'yes, he, he not only, not only is he a brilliant technician but he's a great teacher'.

Yes.

Now that to me was worth anybody's stopping because he taught a lot of people their job, and he was very good and he was keen on teaching, everything he knew he tried to pass on.

Oh yes, yes, he never held anything back.

And he was a great guy. And, mm, him and Happy got the, made all the necessary information to go to the cams and all that to the dumb teacher, for the dumb trainer.

Dumb trainer, yes.

I know George Gunn got the MBE but it was Harry and Bernard, it was Bernard and...

George Drum had nothing, nothing, nothing to do with it.

It was Bernard, Bernard and Stu I think personally was my view that got us.

Yes, yes.

But anyway. So anyway he, they got that out and that, that I think is one of the things that people ought to know about trade unions. If, if, if there's justice there and right they always have, we, we've always cooperated, you know.

[OI] Yes.

And, mm, but later on...

I...

Of course, Stu had trouble with, he married, he married a famous model and had some children and then they parted and there was a lot of trouble about his, mm, about his maintenance to the children and he never used to stump.

That's right.

And in the course, [Laughter] and in the course of the newspapers reporting and all that they mentioned his wages.

Yes, and in, in court they...

So Littlejohn who was, [Laughter] who was a control man in those days...

Yes.

Gee did I get some stick from him supporting him and he was getting more money than anybody else [Laughter] was doing then.

Yes, more money than anybody in the plant, yes.

And, and this guy ultimately became the Managing Director, I think that 's something.

Littlejohn, yes.

The impact was amazing. And, and it was staggering and I thought to meself 'I know', I always used to know that the people that cried most, the people that cried the hardest on the shop steward's shoulder when things went wrong...

Were the management?

And were, no not the management, were the top line right wingers.

Oh yes, oh yes.

Oh Christ there's no mistake about that.

Oh yes, that's right.

Those that cried hardest and wanted the unions help were the very people who did the most harm to the unions.

Yes.

And many of them had only got tickets because they had to have them. And, mm, I'm under no illusions about this business of cursing and killing trade unions.

Yes.

There are too many people. As I've said before and I say it again there is nobody but nobody that hasn't got to thank the trade unions for the money they're getting.

That's right.

Because when the shop floor boy gets a pound the foreman gets two pounds a week.

That's right.

And when the foreman's getting two pounds...

The supervisor gets four.

The department gets five.

That's right.

And when he's getting five the boss gets ten and so it goes up.

Yes.

And everybody, whether they've never, and I've heard people saying 'oh I never thank the unions for anything'. A factory without a trade union's in it their wages are based on what the guy down the road is paying the trade unions and it's about time the public knew that.

[OI] And that's quite right.

Well, getting, getting back to Stu Brown, see I, you knew him longer than I did.

Oh he was a nice bloke.

I found him a very, very pleasant, one of the few Americans who was very pleasant. He wasn't one of these, mm, 'let's go' blokes, you know, he, of course, that's all most of the Americans that we had over could ever think of to say was 'come on let's go, let's go and let's get on with it, let's get this floor, show on the floor fellows', and all this crap, you know.

[OI] Yes, yes.

When everybody's working their guts out anyway to get the job going.

[OI] Yes.

But, mm, you see I knew that Stu Brown. We all knew it I hope that Stu Brown could go into the cutting rooms and cut a negative. He could go into the printing room work out all the opticals and print that negative. He could grade it, grade the print and reprint it and he'd view it and he'd set the machines right on the way. He was a brilliant technician.

He was a, he was a, he was a brilliant technician.

He was the doyen of technicians as far as I was concerned.

Yes, and, mm...

And, and I don't like saying that about a Yank to be quite honest.

[Laughter]

You know. [Laughter]

[OI] You said he became an Englishman did he?

Yes, he became naturalised, yes. Mm, of course, later on...

He died over here, mm, a little while.

Yes.

Soon after he retired. He retired early, he got, he got browned off and retired early.

Of course, I, I remember when his...

Bought a fruit farm.

Yes. His daughter, mm, came to Technicolor, I can't remember her name now, she was a right little tart. Do you remember her, a right little tart?

She were lovely though wasn't she? [Laughter]

Well, I, I suppose so but she, but she was a right little tart.

He went out with a heart attack. He bought a, he had a beautiful Mercedes two seater sports job.

Yes, yes.

And he bought this fruit farm. Now was it Dorset?

Somewhere, yes.

Somewhere down that way.

I think it's Dorset or Somerset, yes.

I've got it, I've got it somewhere at home. And, and he was driving along the lane and he went through a hedge and they found him in the field with his... And he'd gone with his heart attack. It's a pity really because he went out before he was sixty-five. [0:35:00 371]

He might...

I'm living on what used to be his back garden at the moment.

[OI] Really?

My house was built in his, he had a, he sold, he sold, mm, [Pause] Drayton Manor.

Yes.

For eleven thousand I think it was to the council. It became the council offices. It had a beautiful park all round it didn't it?

Yes, beautiful.

Park and he bought Harmondsworth Hall for nine I think it was, and that had a great big orchard at the side of it in the village, it goes back to Domesday. And, mm, it had got a lot of dry rot and God knows what in it, this is a famous hall you see Harmondsworth Hall and, mm, he wanted to sell it. Oh he sold all the ground, nearly all the ground. He got twenty-four thousand for two point two acres of the ground and my house was built on it. It cost the builders thirty thousand to bring the services on and buy the land and he built thirty-six up. He built, [Pause] nineteen pairs I think it was of, you know, semi-detached on this, on this plot, thirty-six of them anyway. No, eighteen pairs wasn't it, thirty-six, mm, on this lot and I bought one of them and I'm still on it. And then later on he sold the little bit of garden he had left and there's only just an old archway left in the bit of ground that he's got left. It goes back to the monastery, it goes back, oh, about four hundred odd years or so and now that's turned into a guest house this big... But that was Stu Brown and then he sold that up you see and went down the... Because when the, when the council, there was a Labour Council at the time and he said he couldn't afford to do this could they pull it down and rebuild something or other and he said 'no, sell it to somebody that can'. [Laughter] And none of it's been down and it's still there.

Do you remember, mm, he became more or less divorced from the plant didn't he and, and they set up this, this...

I know he got involved with the, 'The 2001' wasn't it, that was when he got really involved when they, when they made '2001' with all the...

[OI] *Oh yes.*

With all that...

[OI] *[Inaudible 403]?*

That was the one, yes and everything.

[OI] Yes.

Oh God. What with Stu Brown and Technicolor, the Technicolor attitude in those days was the thing had to be right, there was no let it go, not like when we got another Managing Director in and somebody else bought the firm up and then anything went, you know, if it would go through the projector it doesn't matter what was on it sort of thing.

It's just another lab now, yes but then...

But in those days...

But then it had to be perfect.

It...

It went in the bin if it wasn't.

It was, it was...

We didn't let the customer find out if you've got the perfect...

[OI] No.

The classic, the classic example that I had to say to Oliver on one day, he came round one day and somebody had been on top of the cabinets right up by the ceiling and found some dust on it. And that was one of the American team that had come over, every now and again they'd have an American team come over and inspect the plant, and they got up on a ladder and they wiped the top of my cabinet which was about that much from the ceiling and they found some dust. Oh did I get, cor dear.

Yes.

Oh lord. You'd never believe, you'd thought I'd done a murder. And he went on at what I'd got to do before I started up every morning and, mm, that was in the sensitiser. I said to him in the finish, I put my hands in my pocket I said 'well, it's quite, to be honest with you Mr Oliver you've got to make up your mind whether you want me to clean the machines every day or whether you want me to process', I said 'because if I have to do any more I'll never start up in the mornings'. That's the way it got didn't it?

Yes, yes.

You see you'd be screaming out for negative and there's the perforators, these lads were keeping milled up, they keep milled up to dinnertime sometimes in my perforating room because it wasn't just so.

Yes.

And it was unbelievable.

We couldn't let it go you see. We...

It was unbelievable the standards that firm had, and what a, and, and looking back you could be proud of it, you know.

[OI] Yes, yes.

Because you knew full well that the company, I mean Oliver would never agree that I could get bad stuff from Kodak.

[OI] Yes.

No dirt on a negative ever came from Kodak.

Oh.

Imagine my delight. You remember the negative that had a little green pigment on it.

Yes.

What was there red, green? No, it wasn't the green it was the red wasn't it?

It was the red, yes.

And the red record. I actually found a piece of shirt material under the emulsion, God that made my day. I went out of that room, he talked about, he talked about old Pop Wingrove going into Olly I don't think a door ever got shut before I was through his in that, with that, because and I said 'look', and no way could it have been us, it was under the emulsion.

Yes.

And that's it. I said 'this is Kodak', [Laughter] just like that after he looked at me.

Oh yes.

[Laughter] You can imagine my delight can't you?

Yes, yes.

Oh God.

We, we had, we used to get dirt problems in there.

We had to measure our stuff but, mm...

But there was no wet printing then, see now we're going back to the early Fifties.

[OI] I see, yes, yes.

No wet printing. So you, you got a lot of dirt problems.

[OI] Yes.

You got a lot of static problems because the humidity wasn't high enough sometimes, you know. [0:40:00 444] They still get it now you know.

Well, you know, trying to control steam, let's face it.

Yes.

[OI] Yes.

The temperature of the steam alone will give you trouble. I mean a bloke once said to me when we were having, we had some guy come round and they were re, they were going to give me a new double system. 'Oh excuse me Mr Cooper', he said 'can you tell me how much liquid you've got in, in a, one foot of negative'? I looked at him and I thought, [Laughter] I said 'no I can't, and if you want to know you'll have to work it out yourself'. It's possible, I mean you've only got to weigh it and dry it, you know, you know, right.

Yes.

But I'd never got down to that level because you, do you know how much? I mean what's the humidity.,

That's right. I tell you what Alf...

Supposing it was sixty-nine degrees in it or sixty, seventy-two degrees what's the difference in weight? It's measurable.

Alf, Alf you could put your hand on a piece of film and say that, 'I'm not putting that up it's too wet'.

Oh I, yes.

[Laughter]

I mean you've got, you've got an idea when you're working on it.

Yes, yes.

[OI] Yes.

But, but to for a guy to come and ask a technician how much, how much liquid there is in a foot of film that wants some...

[OI] Some answering?

Yes.

They must have gone and worked it out I suppose I don't know, but the system was better afterwards.

Yes.

[Laughter]

Yes, [Laughter] right.

Which was thankful, I was pleased about that.

Yes, I, I know recently they've been worried about static in one of the developers at Technicolor, you know, and, mm, being, being the supervising engineer of the developers I, I said 'well, you know, it's quite simple, you, you just haven't got humidity, look at it', you know.

[OI] Yes.

And I took a clock in there and said 'look at it', you know, 'you, this, this should be up round about seventy, seventy-five if you want to get rid of your static'. 'Oh we're not working under those conditions'.

It can't go up to seventy-five.

'Oh we're not working under those conditions', [Laughter] see. I said 'well, sorry but, you know, that's the job?'

[OI] Yes, yes.

It used to be running down the walls when you were in, in the developing rooms wasn't it?

[OI] Yes.

Once upon a time, yes.

Of course, it was.

They used, they used to put, they used to put, mm, wet blankets up.

That's it.

[OI] Yes, they did.

In, mm, Kay's, yes to keep these conditions. But it's a fact that Technicolor was a, you could be real big headed working there, you know, because you knew full well that they were prepared, that was in Oliver's days.

Well, when it came down to it you knew more about film processing if you were a reasonable technician at Technicolor than anybody else knew in this country, mm, because of the standards required.

Mm.

And because of the fact that it took a long time for you to learn your job properly you know. You could go to Technicolor as a skilled technician and you've got to start again haven't you?

Mm.

I went there as a skilled engineer, I'd got to start again.

[OI] Yes.

You see...

They wanted it Technicolor's way.

They never achieved it, they never achieved it. Well, probably they did sometimes I suppose but somebody told me that you would never get tolerance zero on, on technical drawings for engineering. Well, I know it's virtually, it's impossible, but in point of fact they used to put that on some of their drawings didn't they – 'tolerance zero'.

Yes, yes.

Tolerance nil. Now people, engineers, good, good skilled toolmakers have told me 'oh no they never, they've always got...'

You've always got a couple of tenths of thou but...

That I would agree that, mm, that fit.

[OI] Yes.

But as far as their drawings were concerned they used to put 'nil' on didn't they?.

[OI] Yes.

[End ofTape]

[Tape 2 Side A] *I remember saying at a meeting once what...*

[OI] *Alf Cooper Side Three.*

Right.

At, there was one period, there was one, there was one period when, when Technicolor got a, a first I think, there was one way, when that was when they did the Royal Wedding was it?

Yes.

Colour which was a absolute perfect, perfect new really it was a believe apart from, apart from the Dufay colour which Cave put out of the, of the Jubilee Celebrations which went out as a film more than a newsreel. And Technicolor then produced the Royal Wedding in Colour which actually was a newsreel, full length newsreel.

I'll tell you what we shouldn't forget Alf, and it's an important piece of film history which we were all involved with, was, was the, mm, the Olympics.

That was another set up yes, and I was going to say as a matter of fact I probably am the only person that worked on both those colour reels. The Dufay, of the Jubilee Celebration and the, and the Royal Wedding.

[OI] *That was, that, the Royal Wedding was for Pathé was it?*

That, I'm not sure who we did it for.

We eventually took over Pathé.

[OI] *Ah, ha.*

I'm not sure who we did that newsreel, I know that the firm we worked there for a whole week without going home and they supplied us with lilos and food and all that

sort of business and, and those who didn't clock were better off than those who did, [Laughter] who were worse off, who were better off than that who did click off and went to kip. [Laughter] But it was a, it was a quite exciting week that was.

[OI] *Yes.*

With so many of us. And as a fact I personally think I was the only guy that's worked on both those colour. Subsequently now of course, newsreels are in colour but in those days they weren't.

[OI] *Yes. You were talking about the Olympics.*

Oh Expo, Expo, that was Canada wasn't it? Expo...

No.

[OI] *No, no.*

The first one...

The British Olympics 1948.

[OI] *Forty-six wasn't it? Was it Forty... no Forty-eight.*

Forty-eight yes. That I, we, we, when we worked on it we got free tickets to go, mm, but the interesting thing about it was that we, we had what was known as a dup developer, mm, which was a straightforward sprocket developer, a wash, develop, fix and wash virtually, you know. Mm, that dup developer was turned into the first single pack colour developer. Now this was... This was Eastman colour we were using. Now this was when Technicolor and Kodak had a monopoly, and Technicolor were a monopoly and Kodak agreed not to sell their colour material to anybody because they were getting enough money I guess out of three strip.

And matrix dot?

And matrix dot, yes. And, but in order to get the Olympic Games out we weren't going to be able to do it on the transfer machine so it was photographed in an Eastmancolor monopack, which, which was the forerunner to the present Eastmancolor, and the developer that was used was a black and white dup developer which was modified slightly to cope with this. And these films were coming in all day and all night weren't they, do you remember the negs were coming in all day and all light.

Mm.

And having been processed we then put them out on Eastmancolor monopack. And that didn't...

[Inaudible 040]

Were you in charge of matrix and dup developers at one time?

I went, I went off with, I went off with...

Sensitising disappeared.

I went off with sensitising and went onto IBs.

Yes.

I took over...

[Inaudible 042]

The dup and matrixing. No we came in with another thing. I took over matrix and developing. I took over the reclaiming. [0:05:00 044] I went and took over the Eastman plant later didn't I and the seventy mil. business.

That's right.

No, no John Cunningham [ph 046] left it didn't he?

And then after that I took over the eight mil. estate and staffing. I wonder how or why I went organising, one period I became plant liaison, that was wandering round all the plants....

At one time you were, you were the shipping.

Oh yes I took over because they sent me in shipping.

Absolutely.

When, when I first went on the staff after, after, after the lockout.

That's right.

Oh yes, I went on strike in the lockout. Ah well we're talking about union now, well of course, as I said earlier that Kate said to me 'they want [Inaudible 051] down at Tech', I said 'yes I know, so he said 'well you want to get down there and get that jumped ACTT in there'. So I said 'right'. So I went back and saw Oliver and I started on, I started in the March of Thirty-seven there and there wasn't a trade unionist in the firm, well if, or if there were the kept lights under a bushel. Some of them were in the ETU, some of them were in the AEU.

Yes.

But there was no union shop in the place. And I started organising, I realised by the types of people that they'd been taking on that I'd got to box very clever about my politics having seen the fiasco that was going on in Kodak.

Yes.

Which never should have happened in my view. So I kept my political views to myself in those days although I think it was very difficult if the idiots didn't know what I was, because as I said earlier because after the mess of the Great War I knew that no way could I ever see the right wing side of views again. And I'd worked out that the blokes that were most popular and most mouthy among my colleagues were the best people to get interested first so I got, told one or two people that had university educations and well up with mummy and daddy's attitudes and they were, they were great, it was... And it worked but the unfortunate part about it Bert Crayke, George Elvin, Ralph Bond, Sid Cole, individuals we used to meet in either The Three Magpies or the, or the... Oh dear what's that one? Either, on the apex beginning of the...

Yes, it, it was a nice old pub and now it's, now it's a roundhouse place isn't it. And what's it called?

Anyway there were two pubs that we used to, used to go to and we'd, we'd call a meeting and George would turn up, or Ralph and George or Ralph and Sid and George, and I'd turn up and they'd buy me half a pint or a pint and we'd all go home. That went on for quite a bit. But ultimately we got the boys listening and we started having meetings and we, and we built up a union. And ultimately we thought we'd got enough, or I thought we'd got enough people to start tapping Mr Leslie Oliver to recognise the union. But the unfortunate part about it, not being a mathematician I couldn't understand any of the difference between seventy-five members and seventy-five percent but we had enough, as I thought, to get started and we ultimately built it up with the result that we didn't have 1,350 ACTT members but we had an agreement covering 1.350 people at one time in the records of ACTT.

That's right.

It covered draughtsmen, nurses, electricians, carpenters.

Engineers?

Engineers, canteen workers, everybody that was anybody working for Technicolor up to any level other than the top management were eligible to join and the people were covered under the terms of our agreement with their grades, departments in there. And our agreements, worrying about lib, Women's Lib, their agreements were rate for the job.

Yes.

It didn't matter whether it was a male child, a female child, a male or a female adult, if they were doing the job they all got the rate for that job at least in the book.

Yes.

Some by their own skills and worth got more but nobody got less, and that was the beginning of, and that was ACTT as it has always been and it didn't need any extra business to see that women got their rights.

Oh no, no we didn't...

If the women had got what it took they went up. We had women in charge of departments, we had a woman who was next to the head of the, of the, of the Control Departments, the Lighting Departments.

Yes.

So that, and that was the way that union agreement was running in that firm which was employing the biggest bunch of ACTT technicians in the country. [0:10:00 090]

[OI] *Tell me, tell me, mm, AEU and ETU were included in on that agreement?*

They were all, they were all covered in.

[OI] *Yes.*

And the members at that time were happy about it.

[OI] Yes.

And we had no, we did have some trouble with NATKE at one time, Kelly started giving me stamps to sell to people that were projectionists and all that and ultimately with the result of the tripartite agreement between ETU, NATKE and ACTT, which I was involved in the negotiations of that we ultimately caved, they ultimately caved in on their, on their claim to the laboratory technicians.

It was agreed that projectionists as far as NATKE are concerned would not be NATKE if they worked in a laboratory, they would be ACTT. Right?

Mm, mm.

So that you found all, all the projectionists round Water Street and in all the cinemas were NATKE, and all the usherettes and what not, but all our projectionists were ACTT.

[OI] Yes.

But the AEU, the AEU members, one had to have a lot of sympathy with them, bearing in mind that the AEU in those days covered their, I mean they actually got their mortgages from the AEU. Now you couldn't expect a man like that to renounce his ticket.

Oh yes, they were on AEU pension schemes, everything.

It wouldn't last. But what we did, we covered their grades with their cognisance without any inter-union problems or squabbles and we did it with all of them, and for many, many years we did it with the ETU but in later life we did have some problems with the ETU members and that wasn't so much the ETU as the individual.

They were all, it was...

The statutory amount that they were still covered.

Yes.

And when AEU people's rates went up outside, ETU rates went up we ultimately succeeded in obtaining the same standards under our own ACTT agreements, and there was no aggro between the major unions at all with it. And I think that is a record that needs to be exploited.

Yes that's absolutely, that's absolutely right.

I personally am very, very proud of that.

That's, that's why that whoever was the head of shop stewards at Technicolor was called the convenor because...

That's what they were, they were the convenor, yes.

And the other unions were involved, and the other union bosses, their General Secretaries, although we always invited them to sit in as sleeping partners really at final negotiations they allowed us complete control of the trade union situation in all the labs really didn't they, but particularly at Technicolor and then at Rank's. Rank's had some problem with their AEU members at times.

I could tell you now that one of the leading ETU members...

He was one of the assistant convenor wasn't he for you?

One, one...

The one who worked in the Camera Department, what was his name? Smith.

No, no, oh him, no, no not Smith. He was, he was a great guy but he was a great guy. No there was a guy during the war who had to work on systems and that and he came here, ETU, he was an ETU Branch Chairman and everything else and he was a member of the ETU and I'll tell you now he was well pleased with his, with the activities of ACTT when he left after the war and went back to his own sphere of life, but he had... Now you remember the centenary of the [Inaudible 122] recently, the last one, but prior to that they put out a big record of a book...

Yes.

After fifty years was it?

Fifty Years March.

[OI] Yes.

I've still got it.

[OI] Yes.

And then recently they did another one, the big TUC business didn't they? The, is it the centenary?

I think something like that, yes.

Is it the centenary? No it wouldn't be the centenary of the TUC. Earlier on they did something and this guy, this guy was, was chairman of their branch and all that sort of thing, he was a big noise actually, he actually gave me his copy in appreciation of ACTT's activities in, after and during the war. That's because we, nearly all women, you know, it was a hell of a job doing that but. And that was another thing that the ACTT get, get a lot of credit from other unions and the Postmen's Union

Miners?

Yes, Miners, yes. We ought to remember those things.

Yes.

So anyway we ultimately built up, built up the union and got, got our first agreements book come through.

And became 100% shop in about early Fifties didn't we?

Sorry, I don't remember the dates, no good asking me about dates.

No I don't.

I know we, we did very well.

Roughly.

We did very well. And the other thing was that because of the union I got the girls to join the union, when the blokes were being called back I got women to come and join the union to preserve their boy friends and probably boy friends, husbands and what have you to look after their interests in the jobs and everybody that was called-up was brought back again. And considering the union when we first started there we hadn't even got an agreement, which I didn't know about. [0:15:00 138] The time when I was, I hadn't, I hadn't got a clue, you know, that ACTT hadn't got agreements there. So we had agreements within a few months at BIT with Bill Shepherd and Bert Crayke, it shook me rotten when I found that out, you know, and I thought it was... Because you've got to remember that in those early days employment wasn't all that clever.

Yes.

And it didn't do to get too stropky.

That's right, it's like it is now a bit.

And I didn't realise, at times I didn't realise how closed things were. And then when, as I say, we got agreements down and life becomes in. Some of the incidents we were getting agreements were quite interesting, some of them were dismal. But that, that lab, that lab actually was the biggest shop covered by one agreement this industry, this union's ever had isn't it?

Yes, oh I think so.

It must be.

But of course, Leslie Oliver we know now was sympathetic, his politics were sympathetic.

He had a job to do.

That's right, he had a job to do.

He, he was basically honest in my view.

And, and humanitarian.

A lot of people, a lot of people...

I liked him.

Said nasty things about him but if he said something you could rely upon it. You may not like what he said but you knew where you stood with him, and that's one thing, that's one thing I will always respect a man for. He, he would, he would stand by his word, and I remember one occasion I was having an up and downer with him on the IB shop floor and it got to the political side of trade union life and this, that and the other and we were arguing hammer and tongs and suddenly he suddenly stopped and said 'we'll wait, go back and read the Marx and Engels more you've got it wrong'. [Laughter] I said to him 'you're telling me to read my Marx and Engels'. He said

‘well don’t you think I’m capable of reading the works of a great brand’. I said ‘goodbye’.

Well I, I, you see I can tell you something about...

Can you imagine that? [Laughter]

About Leslie Oliver. Yes, Leslie Oliver, his brother Beau who I wouldn’t say anybody could get on with including Leslie...

Oh Beau was a...

Beau was difficult, he was a bit of a crap arse really.

Yes.

But he did tell me all of Leslie Oliver’s life history, and that in fact they...

[Inaudible 160] Russia. Him and his wife, Violet, Elvin and Harold went over on the same boat to Russia as a honeymoon.

George Elvin and Leslie Oliver and his... Was that his second wife?

No Harold Elvin. No, no his first wife was, was Violetta Elvin wasn’t she?

Yes.

[OI] The ballerina, yes.

Yes, the ballerina. Elvin’s first wife, Harold Elvin and Violetta went on the same boat to Russia for their honeymoon, the two pairs.

Yes, yes.

Ultimately Harold was divorced wasn't he?

Yes, yes.

But Leslie, and ultimately Leslie was divorced.

Oh yes. But what, you see, what I found out about Leslie from Beau Oliver, and I suppose it's historically of some note, was that, that they were the sons of an under gardener in Gloucester. Mm, Beau was the bright one, he got a scholarship, Leslie didn't. Leslie at fourteen was put into an engineering workshop as an apprentice and Leslie became interested in photography. And then he became interested in the Carbro process, now that's the original, mm, matrix type colour process.

That's where he worked with...

And he went over to Hollywood as a stills man and got in with Kalmus back in, oh, 1917, 1918 when Kalmus was only just coming out of, out of his railway truck. And of course, because of his knowledge of still colour photography he had a very good working knowledge of what Kalmus's proposals for the imbibition process were. I mean you could see it was just, it was just a mechanised Carbro process anyway. I say 'just', I mean that is a terrible understatement but, but that was the fact, you know. In fact Leslie Oliver, if you remember Alf, Leslie Oliver once gave an exhibition in the main sound theatre of, of his early work. Do you remember it?

Didn't go to it.

Didn't you?

No.

It was beautiful. I remember a Black and, 'Black and White' Whisky advertisement which he'd done for money in colour, the bottle with its labels. A glass with a tiny bit left in the bottom and a drip running down the side. A superb photograph, he was a beautiful photographer before he got involved with Technicolor.

He was also a reasonably good engineer as well.

Oh yes, well he'd served his time as an engineer, you know.

Margaret Taylor worked with him in the early days, you see that's where she first met Olive Taylor.

[OI] Oh yes.

Yes. Well you see Alf and I fall out over Olive Taylor because...

Olive Taylor...

She was a member of the Communist Party at one time, you see and Ralph Bond knew her quite well as a member of the Communist Party. [0:20:00 189] And when we were on the strike and lockout Olive Taylor went in, she blacklegged. Now I never forgave her for that, Alf is inclined to.

I don't say I ever forgave her but she was only a member.

When I told, when I told, when I told Ralph that Olive Taylor had gone in he was shocked beyond measure. Quite honestly he said 'oh no', he said 'oh no'.

Well you've got to remember...

I said 'yes she has, she's gone in'.

That the brain and the heart are two different things and Les, and Doug Elms was a different kettle of fish and she was up on supervisor level at that stage.

She was only assistant supervisor wasn't she?

Well alright.

She never made any more than that.

But I'll tell you what, there weren't a lot of men then who had done the job as well as she did.

She was a good grader, she was a grader. Yes, a Latin, a Latin.

She was also a good organiser and she went in. Well I didn't, I didn't get locked out, I was a foreman, but they had the decency to come to me at the time of the lockout, they had the decency to come to me at the time of the lockout and say 'well of course we're going to talk to all the foremen, I don't suppose it's any good inviting you to stop in with them', and I said 'no, thanks very much, I'm glad you knew that', which I did respect them for, they knew full well that whether my job was on the line or not I wasn't going to stay in and I went out.

[OI] Yes, mm, tell us about the, you know, tell us the background of the lockout. What was that about?

Oh the background of the lockout was very difficult. You see we, I suddenly lost my, I lost my shop steward's job. Was I Chairman? I wasn't was I?

Yes.

I was Chairman, Chairman of the shop and I wasn't a convenor.

And that, I was...

And I was Chairman of the Laboratory Branch wasn't I? Because I had that job for years didn't I?

Yes.

Chairman of the lab. Anyway and, mm, we had a Communist, we had an active Communist shop steward.

A plant I think.

And, and...

Ray Sharpe.

And as far as Technicolor was concerned with this lockout I had to go on strike. Len were you a foreman then?

Mm.

Oh. So you went on strike?

I was on strike.

So anyway Len and I were active but we weren't on the committee with a great deal of influence, the Commies and the Left had got that.

We were on Lab Committee weren't we?

Yes.

And we were on General Council.

We were on, I was Chairman of the Shop wasn't I?

Yes.

And that, you know, it was everybody, wonderful, you know.

[OI] Have, have, have a confrontation attitude that was the...

Anyway the lockout resulted, as far as Technicolor was concerned we needed money to keep our boys happy. Now I'm one of these guys that think that the strike weapon is a weapon you must never let go, you must never let it get tarnished, always be ready to fire, and like the atom bomb you should never let it off if you can help it. That's my attitude to strikes. But once you let it off you don't stop you don't stop firing, that's the way I look upon strikes because I don't think strikes... I know the bosses lose a bit of money but the bit they lose we make up for them as soon as we get back so, and we never get back what we've lost so...

Yes.

But you've to be able to...

Too expensive.

You've got to make up his mind that when the strike is called it's got to be backed 100% but you don't do it unless you have to. You don't, and you have to... And it's my experience that it's very difficult to get the mass of men to sit down on their bottoms if it affects their money, especially with mortgages and that, but I still believe that you've got to have the right to do it. Well we had this strike...

[OI] What was it over actually?

Well it started with the neg developers didn't it, do you remember? Mm, no, we've got to go back before that.

I've lost sight, I've lost sight of all that of all that but it was a differential wasn't it?

The situation was that Alf lost his job as convenor, for two or three years he was still Chairman of the Branch and Chairman of the, of the Lab Committee and General Council member. But we had come to us when GFD labs closed down, the shop steward from GFD, Sid Hetherington – this was Fifty-one, Fifty-two – and Sid was then convenor. They fell out with Alf, the members fell out with Alf for some reason

or other, I don't know what he'd done but I'm... Now and again he used to say too much, he would admit that now perhaps.

No I wouldn't...

There are times when silence is bloody golden and Alf didn't always know that he was too straightforward, he was too straightforward to be a good politician, let's say this, and he'd say what was on his mind, which was fair enough...

The only time I, the only time as a, as a technician and as a foreman technician or a teapot man's lid the only time I've never not said what I believed to be true is when you've got a bloody good operator who hasn't got what it takes to perform.

That's right.

And you can't promote him, and that, that was the only time in my life that I found the truth too difficult. [0:25:00 245]

Yes.

And I'm sorry to have to say that. I got, I got to rely on a couple of good blokes who there wasn't, there wasn't a technician, there wasn't an operator in the department come anywhere near them but you just couldn't...

They weren't foreman material?

No because, you know, and it would have persecuted them to have done it to them, you know. And, and I found that to tell a bloke that to his face that's the only time when I... But with the employers I used to avoid the truth sometimes because it would pay dividends but I wouldn't tell them lies.

What, what happened was anyway, Alf, Alf for some reason or other got his nose out of joint with the, with the shop...

But it was left wing undermining wasn't it?

No before then, before then. I don't know what it was but Sid Hetherington was sitting there and he was experienced, he was a member of the Lab Committee, he was a member of the Negotiating Committee if you remember, and he was a nice bloke, Sid Hetherington.

Oh he was alright, nothing wrong with him.

He was straight, you know, and so he became the convenor. But of course, by then the left wing agitation has started, what we'd called the Trotskyites now I suppose, was then the...

The Communists?

The Communist Party, yes. And this Ray Sharpe turned up at the plant and got a job and he was a dyed in the wool Communist who was getting his instructions from outside. And inside, we had one bloke in the control who never took an active part in anything but Ray Sharpe used to...

We met him the other day didn't we?

Eh?

We met that bloke the other day didn't we?

Yes. He, Ray Sharpe always went to him for his latest instructions. Now Ray Sharpe, he was a very sort of a bloke in many ways and a, and a very nice fellah in many ways but...

You're not wrong there.

His attitude was personal attack and he continuously and personally attacked Oliver at all the meetings we had and Leslie Oliver and he built up a genuine real deep

dislike of each other which wasn't Leslie Oliver's fault in my opinion it was Ray Sharpe's fault because he was under instructions, he, I mean he used to, he used to say things which we didn't say in those days which was 'oh it's all right for you on your money' and, and 'yes it's all right for you you can go home when you like', and all this, you know, he'd go on and on insulting him all the time and eventually this problem brewed up in the neg developers about differentials. Both the foremen and the neg blokes were very upset because the printers, the optical printers had had quite a good rise. And there was always this problem in of in laboratories of the rate of pay differential between developers and printers. Right Alf? You had enough of it.

Got it in the end, didn't we levelled them up in the end.

Yes, we levelled them up in the end.

But that wasn't in his time that was in my time again.

But, yes that was in your time again. But this was blown up to the point where the negative developers went on strike of their own volition.

Why was the rest of the...? I can't remember what the rest... Oh I'd, I'd, I was in...

We, we were at the time in the middle of a negotiation with the AFLE or someone it was...

That's right.

[OI] They locked the lot out and...

[LR]And, and Oliver decided that he'd, he'd give Ray Sharpe a bit of a lesson, and we'd got the neg developers back on reasonable terms, and then we refused to sign this agreement, and I can tell you a little aside about that too a little later which, which involves, very much involves Alf because it was a most amusing incident. But he, Oliver got so upset, and the OFLE, but I think Oliver was leading them in my opinion at that time.

He was the Chairman then wasn't he?

He was Chairman, yes. So all the laboratories were either on strike or locked out, locked out according to their tank. If they were above chargehand then they were on strike, if they came out, if they weren't they were locked out. So he closed the industry down, the whole of it. And we were out for what, a fortnight?

Oh no, I don't know. I made a speech on the loudspeakers didn't I on one occasion.

You made a speech. Don't you remember that as soon as the strike was on Ray Sharpe had succeeded...

He thought, oh no that...

He proceeded then, we used the local pub which was then called the 'Bricklayers' Arms', I think it's now called 'The Air Hostess', just a little way down from Technicolor...

It's disappeared hasn't it?

[LR]On the Bath Road.

It's disappeared hasn't it?

[OI] Yes, no it's the 'Skyways' or 'The Skyline' or something that took the licence over, and we used to meet there as a Strike Committee and all the blokes came along there. And of course we, we had a rota for our pickets.

Pickets. But I said to Len one day 'look at Sharpe, it looks to me as though he's going to bloody die'. [0:30:00 305]

Yes, he had, he had a nervous breakdown.

He was walking round the colour of that wall.

He didn't say a word during the whole period of the strike.

We had to take over.

We took over, he would, you did, we both did factory gate meetings at our place.

I used to take a bloke with me for protection.

That's right.

I took Stan Clarke because...

He was a light-heavyweight boxer.

He was a black man who used to be in charge of the boxing teams on London Airport. We knew the, who this bloke Stan Clarke had beaten in the Army , the various people, because he was well steeped in the boxing world, the professional world.

Yes.

We knew who Stan Clarke had knocked out in different fights in the Army and that and he wanted, he wanted Stan Clarke, he lived on the corner of my road.

Yes.

And he was a member of ours, ACTT .

Nice bloke Stan.

And he wanted, he wanted him to turn professional, he reckoned he could have been the champion of Britain.

Yes.

That's how good he was, light heavyweight. I went to 'The Fairies' and I went to 'The Grand' and that got so bad I used to have to take him around with me. Do you know you'd never believe it some of the people because we were all on strike and shut down more to get money to pay the boys, you know, to keep them going.

Yes.

And in the finish it got to the state so I used to take him to work with me to the factory gates and he used to stand there behind me. I never had anything slung at me.

[OI] No trouble at all. [Laughter]

Nobody ever...

But at the same time I went round all the studios.

And that's absolutely true, you'd never believe that in those days.

I managed to stop them shooting at, at Pinewood, at Elstree and at Shepperton while I addressed them all.

And we got...

And we collected quite a lot of money, you know, they were very sympathetic when they heard the story. Anyway we didn't mention of course, that, that from our point of view, and we had told this and we told it to Bert Crayke and we told it to the General Council that there was no need for this bloody strike, that it was, she should never start trouble except at a time of your own choosing, and here we were going on strike and lockout at a time when it happened to be the dead period in production for all of the branches that's why they'd taken us on.

Yes.

You know, and we said, you know, 'we're not against...' They accused us of being anti-strike and anti-union because we said 'no, in two months time you have a strike and they'll cave in because they'll have production round their ears, but now they're happy, there's nothing in the labs.

It was the wrong time.

'There's nothing to process, they don't mind', you know. And, well we talked ourselves into the ground, I think we both knew we'd had it.

Yes. And when I got on the microphones outside, outside the...

Oh outside Technicolor.

Outside Technicolor one day and I saw Oliver leaning out of the front window of his office, and I thought to myself 'well now I've got to give you a lesson', and I told him who he was hurting and what he was doing and everything else and soon after that we were called together weren't we? But that was outside of the branch with the microphone.

Oliver, the blacklegs who were in were just sitting in the canteen, they weren't doing anything, they were, there was no way they could run the machines.

They used to give us, they used to give us, send us out hot coffee, hot drinks and what have you.

Yes, in fact one of them told me later he said 'Leslie Oliver came down here when we were looking smug and he said to all of us in the canteen "look as far as I'm concerned I couldn't care less about you lot those boys out there are the people who matter"'. It just took them down a little bit. [Laughter] But I, we were talking about Leslie Oliver weren't we, you know...

Daft they put me on the staff wasn't it?

That's right.

Do you know what? He never... And, and then, and then later on...

We both got promotion as soon as we got back.

He put me on the staff and I became Transport Manager or whatever they call him with the vehicles, they had bloody lorries, they had nine or ten bloody lorries. Mind I had a bloody lovely car though, do you remember that, when that, when that Con...

Consul, Consul.

Consul first came out, Consul,

Yes.

I loved the Consul [Laughter] running around and was, I thought to myself 'I don't like this job'. But anyway I had it and, and from there on in I was doing different departments.

I don't know I think we're missing a lot out about the strike though Alfred. If you remember what happened was...

Oh yes. I can't remember all the ins and the way in the end.

The, ACAS got involved, ACAS got involved and, and George Elvin said 'I think we can pick ourselves the right chairman for us all to meet under if we're prepared to accept his...'

Arbitrator?

Yes, an arbitrator, 'his judgement'. And we thought about this for a bit, he said 'he's going to come from Durham University', he said 'and I know my friend at ACAS will

*invite him', and he was a professor somebody or other. And we were all called...
Where was it we went to?*

I can't remember that now.

*It was a big place, I remember we sat, all the employers sat down on side and we all
sat down the other and they were up on a dais.*

I think Mike Allen was there though wasn't he?

Oh Mike, Mike Allen was there, yes with Leslie Oliver.

Oh wait a minute, Mike Allen was Managing Director when I remember him sitting
on the tribunals.

Oh no, no, no, that's later Alf, careful.

That's when he, that's when he offered me, told me I ought to have been on that side
of the table. [0:35:00 371] And I said too him 'well Mike, you know, the only person
that could put me on that side of the table is you', I said 'and I'll come on that side of
the table if the job's right ' I said 'but remember you ain't going to buy me'.

[Laughter]But...

He offered to put me on, he offered to pay all my expenses and become, to become a
bloody Mason. True, Mike did. He said 'why don't you join the Masons, I'll pay all
the expenses for you'? And if I'd wanted a woman I could have had one, you now, he
used to take us out to, he'd take us to...

He went to his club in Jermyn Street .

Yes. Took the dials of the Raymonds.

Yes. We had, we had a meal and a drink. He, he really pushed the boat out, Mike Allen did. I remember dancing girls came on you see.

And the daughter of one of our members was on there.

Yes. I, you know, I didn't want anything to do with them in fact, but I said to Mike Allen 'my word she's a big girl on the end there'. He said 'yes, do you want her'? Called the waiter over.

[Laughter]

I said 'no I don't want her Mike'. He said 'you can have her if you like', he said 'it'll all go on the sheet', all go on Technicolor's expenses. Anyway, anyway I think that's died...

You got tied up, I didn't know you'd been in that one, I've never been in one of them. One night as we were going home he says 'too early to go home isn't it'? I said 'well what do you want to do'? He said 'lets go and have a...' and we bowled in there. And the waiter says 'oh good evening Mr Allen...'

[OI] *'Good evening Mr Allen...*

We sit down, up comes empty glasses and then come full bottles on the table.

Oh yes., gin, whisky, vodka, splits.

And then one of the topless dancers come over 'do you want one'? [Laughter]

You only had to mention... I said, you know, 'she's a big girl isn't she'? 'Do you want her, do you want her'? He's a Scotsman. We went to this, we went to this damned great meeting, you were there Alf I don't know why you can't remember it because it's, it's right in, in my mind now. And we were sitting, as I say, at long tables opposite one another and these, this arbitration board was sitting up there., and we had...

I've been thinking who the guy was, he was the, he was involved, he was left wing.

[OI] Was it Wedderburn?

Who? Wedderburn, no. He was a professor from Durham. Now what he was a professor of I can't remember. He was, he was very punctilious but he, he questioned the trade union side and the employer's side.

You would never have known he was, he had a leaning our way, you know, while he was there.

No you wouldn't. What he did say in a very noisy aside to one of his assistants about Leslie Oliver, who I thought was the most decent bloody employer on their side of the table, he said 'who'd that goddamn Yank'? Well Leslie Oliver wasn't an American but he still had his strong Gloucester accent, he never lost it, you know. And yes 'who's that goddamn Yank trying to tell us how to run our country' or something like that, loud enough for everybody to hear, and he meant, he meant it to be heard and we felt a bit sorry for Oliver at the time. Do you remember, do you remember that incident? But anyway it was settled you see, and there is another aside in a moment I'll come back to, but it was settled and so Alfie Cooper took us all back there and we had, we had our immediate meeting and we, the Negotiating Committee meeting, we'd now got to put it to the members and sell it to. So Elvin, Ralph Bond, Ralph Bond would chair the meeting. That's right, we decided we wouldn't have Alf chairing the meeting because, because he was too partisan, we'll bring in Ralph Bond to chair this meeting, and we held a meeting in Hounslow of all laboratory members.

Mm.

And Elvin explained what had happened and why we ought to buy it. And I remember we had one very right wing member who was locked out, the woman, she was on the transfer machine, a trouble-shooter – what were they called? Dina Wegang. [ph 430]

Dina Wegang [ph 430]

Yes. Do you remember her? She was very right wing and I know that she said to me after the meeting 'where did you get such a nice conservative gentleman to chair our meeting'?

No it was Ralph Bond, biggest Commie in the union.

And I told Ralph this and he, he laughed until he peed himself nearly I think, if you'll excuse the expression.

Well we had a job...

Well he, he doesn't really remember it now.

We had a job to, we have a job to sell it, we had a job to sell it at the time but we...

We did, we sold it, but you see it was hard work, bloody hard work.

You see, you see, you see I used to have a maxim when I was a shop steward, and it was as much as I could for as many as I could as often as I could.

Yes, that's it.

Now that the maxim.

Yes, we believed really that...

And it didn't matter whether they were members or not they had to have it .

You should, you shouldn't refuse money, you should go back for some more [0:40:00 444] but don't refuse it.

Oh no, on another occasion at Technicolor when we got eleven pence an hour rise for the printers. That was at Technicolor not... I got this and what was the name of our Managing Director, he was a nice bloke.

What at Technicolor?

Yes.

Kalmus?

No he was, no he was the Prudential rep wasn't he?

No that was Ray. Or Roy, Ray that was.

No, he was the Managing Director and he used to spend half, half, what was it...?

Kalmus or Knight?

No, no, no, no. When he had the, when he had the, the secretary that had a mink, a mink cover on her toilet. Mm... [Pause] Originally we had two joint Managing Directors, Oates and Fasnak [ph 457] Fasnak [ph 457]

Yes, I remember Fasnak [ph 458] very well.

Fasnak [ph 459] wasn't it?

I remember him when we had a, a trade union problem with all the, all the reps.

He was a, he was a chap, he was a, he was a... Kalmus, Dr Kalmus was the creator of Tech and Fasnak [ph 461] and Oates wasn't it?

Well Fasnak [ph 462] told us didn't he, if you remember, that he was a control operator back in Twenty-six and he'd got his YATSE [ph 463] on him and he'd never been in arrears yes. [Laughter]

Was Fasnak [ph 465] our Managing Director? Now wait a minute who was the Managing Director?

No. He was the, he was the American, he was the International Vice-President.

What was the name of the Managing Director before we had all those second rate lot come along?

[End of Side A]

[OI] Okay, this is Side Four.

We, we during the period just leading up to the strike we were in negotiations with the AFLE and they were being very difficult, and Alf Cooper, one negotiating session we were on nights so we come off nights at seven o'clock in the morning, we go and get freshened up and we'd got a meeting with the AFLE at 11.30 or something like that and a meeting in George's office at 10.30 you see. And we're not very bright, we're not feeling all that well after a night shift. Middle of the week, it was about Thursday, we've already had enough of that week's night shift anyway...

I had ulcer trouble.

Yes. You, oh you always, yes no wonder what you used to eat blimey I'm not surprised you had ulcers.

[Laughter]

Anyway we came up to this meeting and there were Stan Warby and who was the, who was the Vice-President of the time? Pat...

Frank Farrell?

Frank Farrell.

[OI] No Fuller.

Frank Fuller that's right, Frank Fuller and various others that I can't remember now. And we had this offer on the table you see and we're going in to, to reply to the AFLE, or FLA or whatever it was called then, and we're sitting down in Elvin's office and having a chat around and Alf said 'well', he said 'I don't know', he said 'it's not a bad offer you know', he said 'I think we might be bloody silly to turn it down', he said 'it doesn't grow on bloody trees and it'll be an awful lot of bleeding trouble if we don't accept it, I'm not so sure we shouldn't go up there and say yes'. And George Elvin said 'why don't you go home and go to bed Alf if that's your attitude'. 'Oh bugger it', he said 'I'm coming up'. He said 'well you don't look as though you're going to be any bloody good to us today', you know. Because Alf, Alfie used to be quite useful because he'd stand up and have such a go at the bloody Committee that he'd dumfound them and then George could get in and do the negotiating. Anyway up we go. We're now in top floor 2 Soho Square, newly equipped Asquith Room aren't we?

[OI] That's correct, yes, yes.

You know. And they start off by detailing their offer, you know, and that took about five or six minutes I suppose. And then there's a moment of quiet and Alf stood up, having said what he'd said in the office, he said 'you lot ought to be bleeding ashamed of yourselves to bring forward a piddling bloody offer like this at a time like this', he said 'I'm not going to listen to any more of this bleeding rubbish' and he walked out and we all followed him.

[Laughter]

And minutes after he'd said 'I don't know that we shouldn't accept this'. I said 'well thank God for that Alf, we can go home and go to bed'.

[Laughter] That's a fact yes.

Woke up in total disorder.

I'll tell you one time when I embarrassed myself and everybody. They had an accountant, and I can't think of his name at Denham who, who ultimately they, he got pushed out with fiddling or something or other...

[OI] Mahler?

But he had a wooden leg.

[OI] Oh yes.

And he was the accountant.

[OI] Yes.

And they said something to us one day up there and old, now what was he? He was, he was the big noise at Denham that was in the chair that time.

[OI] Bill Harcourt?

Bill Harcourt

[OI] Call me Bill.

I said 'who do you think we are? I'm not going to sit down with lazy, one-legged, wooden legged layabouts around here'. And there was deadly hush. And I'd used the word 'all' see. Little did I know that one of the guys sitting at the back had got a wooden leg. [Laughter]

I told you, he often, when silence is golden Alf throws it out of the window.

[Laughter] And, and, and everybody looked at me and I thought to myself 'oh', I knew I'd done something wrong. Afterwards they told be about this guy. [Laughter]

Well I wasn't far wrong because he finished up a wrong 'un didn't it. But anyway, you can never believe that but it just shows you what you can do not knowing everything.

Yes. I'll tell you another thing about that, that strike...

I'll tell you what, we got what we wanted in the end but it was a pity that. I would never have done it if I'd have known.

No of course you wouldn't. But we had a meeting of the Executive Committee in the downstairs room at 2 Soho Square, I don't know what...

That's right, it used to be the, where the toilets are now, they used to have the General Councils in there at one time.

And the BBC came along and photographed a part of the meeting...

That's right.

To put it on the News and we were invited round to watch it. But one of the things that struck me now, and this is all on the record and I'm not, I don't care who hears it anyway, was that we wanted to stay out. Is that right Alf?

Mm.

We thought once you've got them, out another few days of suffering might well be where the unimprovement...

That's what I've said, once you've used your gun you've got to keep on using it until you've... [Inaudible talking over 043]

That's right. But do you know what, we had a number, we had a Dame of, two Dames of the Tory Party [0:05:00 044] on that Executive, Winnie...

[OI] Ewing.

Crum Ewing and Teresa Bolland wasn't it?

That's it, Teresa Bolland. We had Sid Cole and Ralph Bond and what I know is that it was a shock to me, maybe not a shock to Alf at the time, but he will remember it was that it was the Communists and the Tories together that put us back, that made us go back by a majority vote against us. That's a fact. And I thought 'well, you know, you shouldn't lie very happily in those beds either of you'. Well I'd say it to Sid and...

[OI] Yes.

And Ralph Bond, I wouldn't be, you know, I'm not worried about it. But that is a, is a fact that it was the Tories and the Communists on the executive that, that outvoted us, the lab members.

[OI] Did, did you go back with nothing or did you...

No, oh no, no, no, we got some...

Oh no well we've always got something and...

We got a forty-four hour week because we had previously been working a forty-five hour week and an increase...

But it took me ten years, I promised them a forty-four hour week when I started and it took us ten years of passing a motion at the annual conference every year. And I tell them sometimes that we make these, we pass these motions in all good faith and it's up to us, up to, not the representatives, I don't like people being called, I don't pay money to be led, I don't, I don't look upon George Elvin or Alan Sapper [ph 058] I respect them, I in fact I, I think the world of them. I thought the world of George and, but I never paid my subs to be led and I never accepted high office or power to get high office in the union.

That's right.

But I was never a leader, all I was was the mouthpiece of the people I represented. I hate this bloody leadership business, I wouldn't pay some, take somebody to lead you. I'm not a bloody dog.

No, no, you pay a professional to represent you at the right moments.

I pay somebody to represent me...

That's right.

And I expect him to give me back his well thought opinions of what we should or shouldn't do, and that's what I expected to do as a representative and if they didn't want my opinion they either had, got somebody else or kept me going, and I was very proud of the fact that they've kept me going for a hell of a long time but...

[OI] You've got, you've got a forty-four hour week out of this, what else?

We got...

We got a rise.

We got the forty-four hour week and we, we didn't lose any money on it and we got a rise. There was a lot of talk of going down from forty-five to forty-four because some of the other labs had got the forty-four and we hadn't at Technicolor.

That's right.

And we got it. Ultimately we got it for everybody and of course, as you know, we got it down to forty eventually. But, as I say, with all the goodwill in the world...

It took us another ten or twelve years.

It's no good talking about having passed motions at general conferences and it hasn't been done, it isn't the representatives that who've got to do it it's the people on the shop floor, they're the union, I wasn't the union.

Of course it is, of course it is, that's right.

At one period at Technicolor they used to talk about Cooper's union, it was so stupid, it wasn't Cooper's union, without all them members I wouldn't have been anything.

But why, another interesting sidelight on that was when, when we eventually met the FLA and signed the document Leslie Oliver said 'I want you all, all to come out to lunch with me'. And he took us to, I can't remember the hotel now, and he laid on a fabulous lunch, a beautiful lunch and said 'these family squabbles must be settled more amicably in future'.

There's another little, there's another little sideline. That man, that man had a respect for the union. I remember when he wanted a new, a new works, a new personnel manager.

Yes.

We'd been up to town to a meeting, we were going along the Bath Road back in his car and he said 'are you going back to work Cooper'? I said 'yes'. He said 'have you got to drive'? I said 'no', so he said 'well you can come with me'. I said 'alright okay thanks'. He took me back in his car. We stopped just past Magnatex on the Bath Road and he sat down and he said 'Alf I want to have a talk with you', and he said 'you know that we're losing our works, our personnel manager'.

Which one was that that...

I believe it was George Pemberton wasn't he, or something like that. And he said 'I want to talk to you about the new personnel manager'. And he sat on the side of the kerb and I thought to myself 'I know who the best bloke for that job is'. [0:10:00 090] I wondered if he was going to, I wondered if he was going to offer it to me and I'd,

I'd always thought that a good trade unionist is the best shop steward, is the best personnel manager.

Of course he is, yes.

Elvin once said to me 'if ever you took that job I'd never talk to you again Alf'. And I thought 'Christ, well that's it', and I had a lot of respect for George.

He said the same to me later.

And I had a lot of respect for George so I thought to myself 'well I hope he doesn't to me'. And he said, he didn't offer it to me and so I said 'well I'm not applying for that job'. He said there was Redfearn who was my treasurer at the time.

Redfearn?

Redfearn.

Yes.

And I realised that Redfearn had got, the same as I realised that Leslie Oliver had got a job to do, never mind about his political beliefs and his opinions and all that he had a job to do so I, I knew that his job was to look after Board of Directors.

Red was alright.

His job was, but I knew that with, with Red he would have to do the work of the bosses, but also I knew that I'd get some compassion out of him. So anyway we had a long talk and he said and he said 'oh well I'm glad of your opinion thank you very much'. I go back, there's talk, I don't know how it got round, there was talk like I was going to be made personnel manager. And the secretary of the personnel manager at the time...

Stanley Axon?

Yes, who was Axon, June Axon. She came up to me and she said 'I hear you're going to be the personnel manager'. I said 'so'? She said 'well I can tell you, I won't work for you'. I said to her 'June what makes you think that you would if I became personnel manager'? And we left it at that. But I knew who it was going to be see. [Laughter] And he did, he became personnel manager. Now...

[OI] And that was Redfearn?

That, that was Redfearn, that was Redfearn. And that shows that the union was respected by some of the management. In fact I'll tell you now, some of the management I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have got near if I could help it, I wouldn't breathe the same air in the room, but the bulk of the affiliated members at least I could, I could trust them and I had respect for many of them, and I certainly had a lot of respect for Oliver.

Oh yes, oh yes.

And I had a lot of respect for Mike Allen in the end.

Oh yes.

But, but Oliver, Oliver had a job to do.

Well I, I think just as an aside Alf, Oliver, his second wife ran for the Council at Stoke Poges, the Parish Council, as a Labour member, in Stoke Poges, and Oliver was her campaign manager. So, you know, when it came down to it I know what his politics were, you know.

Oliver was a, was a guy...

But he had a job to do, that's quite right and I used to say that as a, as a shop steward and, and as a foreman. I've still got my job to do as a foreman because the plant has

got to provide you with a living, and it's not going to provide you with a living unless it's efficient.

Mm.

And if I don't do my job it's a part of the inefficiency.

You know ACT has got a lot to be proud of because he, before the airport came to Technicolor, became on the Bath Road as big as it is now Technicolor was the place everybody round there wanted to get in didn't they?

Yes, oh yes.

For the wages. And I got satisfaction that having a good shop there hundreds and hundreds of children had a better standard of life thanks to our efforts in Techs because of they way we went on and the people there.

You see at a time when...

That's something the ACTT, you know, should be proud of, a lot of kids have had a better standard of life because of the advent of that film company coming there and the union getting in.

But it, there are a number of factors Alfred that we shouldn't forget that...

You, Leslie was shocked, one day they took on a north of England engineer, a man, the Chief Engineer, what was his name? A little, tiny fellah?

Oh God.

Nearly your size.

A good bloke. Peasgood, Harold Peasgood.

Harold Peasgood. Now he'd, he'd been, worked at Cadbury's firms where you stood and you looked at your toe caps when the foreman talked to you, do you know, that sort, that sort of business. And he come from that area, you know, and if a bloke got a shilling an hour then the woman would be lucky if she got fourpence, you know. And he came to Technicolor as Chief Engineer didn't he? And he wanted to take us back to the Middle Ages. So we get going and I thought to myself 'you've got to be cut down to size', that was my own personal thought because 'if we let this bloke get away with too much there's no knowing what will happen'. So we get into a bit, we get our knickers into a twist and sitting up in front of the lot one day and Oliver's chairing the meeting, I'd got all my boys with me and he'd got all his lot with him on his side and he'd got his Chief Engineer there, and he said I'd made some sort of mistake and I looked at him and I thought 'I know full bloody well I didn't', I didn't know whether I'd made it or not but I didn't believe I could have made it. I said to him 'no Mr Peasgood', I said 'I'm sure I didn't make that mistake, no I wouldn't have said something like that', I said 'because, ah, that wouldn't have been true', I said 'and liars have to have good memories and I haven't got a good memory so I can't afford to be a liar because in three years time someone might pick me up on it', so I know I hadn't made a remark like that. And in a loud voice I said 'well now remember that one Peasgood'. Then I thought to myself 'Christ, fancy saying that to your Chief Engineer in front of all there people, all, the opposition and all that. I'll never forget that.

I found him, actually as an engineer he was very supportive actually. [0:15:00 138] he was a very good Chief Engineer. Mm, I know that we had a...

Oh yes, but he wanted everybody to work for love.

Yes, well maybe, maybe, but I, I, he always gave me a rise whenever I asked him for it so I can't complain. [Laughter] But he, the situation was I remember one... Do you remember Roy Mitchell, the printer supervisor?

Yes, Mich.

We, we had a lot of trouble with scratches, and when I say scratches what we were getting was a, the faintest scratch you could only see with a glass under a good light in the margin area. That, that was the scratch that he was NG-ing all the machines for, you know. So we were taking these negative movements down and polishing the leaves and going barmy. And one evening one of my blokes had got this printer movement on the bench and he's polishing away, and down comes Roy Mitchell and sat next to him to watch him do it, it was Bill Rennie. Bill Rennie, an old soldier, he wasn't going to have that, he was dealing with the question so he's put it to one side, got his pipe and tobacco and walked outside, just like that you see. Roy Mitchell goes racing up to Peasgood, 'they're not working on my machine'. Down Peasgood comes with him, and I was there and so was Bill Rennie, and Bill Rennie said 'well', he said 'I'm, I'm not used to being overlooked while I do a job, I'm a skilled man I do the job. When it's ready I'll tell him and it'll be done as quickly as I can do it'. Peasgood said 'that's quite right', he said 'Mitchell', he said 'I don't watch my engineers working so I'm bloody sure you've got no right to, you stay in your department'.

I could tell you, I could tell you...

That, you know, that, he's not such a bad bloke who takes that attitude.

Would you like a recording of a funny incident, which I thought was funny?

Ah.

He talked about, he talked about Black Harry, who was the, that was when the Americans was over here when they were building the company up.

Yes.

And it also concerns another what ultimately, a man who ultimately became secretary of the trade union, to one Sean Brannigan.

Mm, mm.

Sean Brannigan came to Technicolor and he was known as Paddy Barrack, and Sean Brannigan's idea of life was a beautiful bowl of fruit, a lovely sunny day, a big tree with a nice covering – this is my opinion of his – and a very good book with his back to the tree, reading the book and the fruit in the sun. Well that was my opinion of Paddy in those days, Paddy Barrack as he was known.

He was just a lovely bloke.

As he was known, Sean Brannigan was his real name. And that was because his father was shot in the early days of the Irish problems.

Yes.

He had to change his name for various reasons. But anyway ultimately I met him later in life and he was Sean Brannigan. Well anyway it was a crime to double to double punch matrix printing, no perforate it rather, and Bert and George...

Bullentot? [ph 169]

No your, your...

Goodman?

George Goodman, he was the foreman with the dry maintenance that Len was working for in those days and this, this guy had double punched the set of matrix, and when they double punch they, they muck up punch and dies which means the whole machine's got to be stripped down and the punch and dies have got to be reground and cleaned and God knows what and all the machine set back again and a whole roll stock's up the creek. So George goes in to McAynes [ph 174] while I was in, I was actually talking to McAynes [ph 175] about my machine at the time, and I was shop convenor of something, and in come George 'Mr Raynes, look'. [Laughter]

He was right arsehole crawler, George, apologies for the expression.

Yes. 'Look, look'. He said 'who did that'? No McAynes [ph 177] used to say 'get the fucking hell out of here', you know, when he sacked anybody'.

Yes.

He said 'well, er, er, er the Barrack Mr Raynes'. He says 'we'll see this guy, who's this guy', so we go storming and I thought 'Christ this time it was [Inaudible 179] because I'm shop steward. So, and I knew Paddy wanted the sack, he wanted the sack. Mitchell was his gaffer who was his...

They couldn't stand him could they?

Nobody had got the guts to sack him you see. So I thought 'this is going to be good, I reckon he'll kiss him when he sacks him'. I'd never have believed it, when we get down there there's all the white lights up in the perforating room and Paddy's got a pair of trousers on and a singlet and he's standing there like that.

And he was a big man.

Like that.

A very big man.

And he used to get his boots, and he was in rough business at one time. And McAynes [ph 184] bowls in and he slams the first door open and they were like trap doors then 'who the bloody hell's done this'? So he said 'are you looking for me Mr Raynes'? He said 'yes, you sure did a bloody good job didn't you when you did this. [Laughter] He hasn't got the bullet and he wants the sack. [Laughter] [0:20:00 189] [Inaudible 189] Until he became, he was the secretary of the Variety Artists wasn't he?

[OI] That's it.

Yes, and then he became part of, of...

He was,, he was secretary...

[End of Recording]