

Kay Mander (documentary filmmaker and continuity 'girl') b.29/9/1915

by [admin](#) — last modified Aug 27, 2008 03:33 PM

BIOGRAPHY: Kay Mander entered the British film industry in 1935 as a 'continuity girl' at London Films and in 1937 she became the first female member of the ACT. In 1940 she moved into documentary filmmaking as a production assistant at the Shell Film Unit, before joining Paul Rotha Productions in 1943, where she directed four instructional films for the home-front propaganda campaign. Mander and her husband, documentary producer R.K. Neilson Baxter, formed Basic Films in 1945. Among their first productions was Homes For the People (1945), commissioned to promote Labour party reconstruction policies. Mander continued to direct films in Britain in the late 1940s, before moving to Indonesia in the early 1950s to set up a film unit. She returned to Britain towards the end of the decade, directing films for the Children's Film Foundation and later working in continuity for a number of international productions.

SUMMARY: In this largely fascinating interview conducted with Sid Cole, Mander discusses her early career in the publicity departments at London Films and Fox-British Studios before moving into continuity. She provides many interesting details about the continuity department, particularly its relationship to the editor's role. Asked how she went about directing her first project, she states 'I just went and did it'. Mander claims to have directed over fifty documentary films, and her recollections of these years are the most valuable part of this interview. The interviewer describes this period in her career as 'adventures in documentary', to which she responds, 'Oh Sid! They weren't adventures.' She makes some interesting comments about her experiences as a woman in the film industry, but refuses to be drawn into a political discussion, saying 'I have got too much to bother about in my life without having to bother about being a woman!'

BECTU History Project - Interview No. 57

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Transcription Date: 2003-01-06

Interview Date: 1998-09-28

Interviewer: Sidney Cole

Interviewee: Kay Mander

Tape 1, Side 1

Sidney Cole: The copyright of this recording is vested in the ACTT History Project. Kay Mander, continuity, documentary director. Interviewer Sid Cole, recorded on the 29th of September 1988, Side one.

Sidney Cole: Tell me about when you were born, and your childhood

Kay Mander: Yes, I was born at 194 Marlborough Avenue, Hull, and it was 1915 - September 1915 - my father, who was an accountant, was working for an American company which had foundries and various plants in England and all over Europe. In Hull they had a large - their main foundry - and they made these 'Ideal' boilers, which still exist today, oddly enough, and radiators and things. And we stayed in Hull until I was seven, and when I was six I went to school. I went to a wonderful school called "Miss Sawden's", which was in an old church hall, and goodness knows how many children there were, but all the classes were in the same room, with three teachers at the bottom, children all sitting up in layers! And I went to school with some Carmichaels, and some Greenwoods. The Carmichaels are certainly Ian's family, and the Greenwoods are also tied up in some way with the Greenwoods that one comes up against in the film industry. We wrote on slates, and we learnt to read and all the rest - we learnt a little bit of French, and when I was seven my father was transferred to Paris, and so we went to Paris and got a flat, and I was put into a French school where nobody spoke any English, so I learnt a little bit more French. And then we came back to England, and in 1931 - we stayed in France for seven years - in 1931 my father was sent to Berlin, which was a very interesting time to go to Berlin. He had his hat knocked off in a Hitler parade on one occasion, because he didn't take it off when Hitler passed by. And we lived in Berlin until 1935 at the beginning of which year my father said he was being transferred back to England, and I'd jolly well have to go and earn my living. I was just eighteen, and I'd failed to get a scholarship at Oxford - I thought I'd like to be a schoolteacher - have nice long holidays to go travelling! And so my father said I had to get a job when I got back to England, he wasn't going to keep me any more. So an American friend and I - she spoke English, Italian, French and German, and I spoke English, French and German - got ourselves taken on as receptionists at the 1935 Berlin Film Congress, under the patronage of Dr. Goebbels! But that was very interesting, because we met all sorts of people, apart from the people that I've pinpointed. I attacked all the people from England, which included John Myers, who was Korda's publicity manager, and Imperiali[?] Katie Boyle's father, Nigel Tangye, who was aviation advisor on the film that Korda was making called 'Conquest of the Air', and also Andrew Buchanan was there, and I said, "I want a job when I come back to England," and they all said, "Come and see us." I went to see Andrew Buchanan first, because he was the easiest to get to!

Sidney Cole: Can you say more about Andrew, explain...

Kay Mander: Well, I didn't know anything about him at the time!

Sidney Cole: You didn't know him! But since you did...

Kay Mander: Well, he was a maker of short films - the end. I don't know, I think he was a very estimable gentleman. Did you know him?

Sidney Cole: No - well I've met him in the past, but I know in his day he was well thought of.

Kay Mander: He was very - he was a typical Wee Free I think, he was tall and thin and already grey-haired, and a rather severe schoolmasterish type - delete that!

Sidney Cole: [Laughs]

Kay Mander: Anyway, I went to see him first because I thought he was in Diabolo Street somewhere nice and convenient, and he said, "What experience have you had in the film industry?" And I said, "None." He said, "Well go away, dear, and when you've got some experience come back and see me." So then I went to see the London Films people down at Isleworth - Worton Hall Studios. And they said, "Oh, no, no, nothing at the moment." So we all went off on holiday down to Cornwall. After I'd been there for about a couple of weeks there was a telegram from Alex - at least from London Films - saying, "Come and see Cunningham, ready to start work on Monday." [laughs] Or words to that effect! And they wanted an interpreter, a German interpreter - English-German interpreter - for Hans Schneeberger, who was the lighting cameraman on 'Conquest of the Air', (I can't remember who... Yes, that's right,...) and he had a focus puller called Karl Matthews. That's important because of what happened subsequently. So there I was, I was dumped on - it was the silent stage, they'd moved it from... (Where did it come from, that silent stage?) Alex had bought it, it came of an aerodrome, didn't it?

Sidney Cole: Yes, this is at Worton Hall?

Kay Mander: This is a Worton Hall, and that was the first time it had been used as a set - as a stage, and it's the one that is now the silent stage at Shepperton.

Sidney Cole: Oh I didn't realise that!

Kay Mander: That's where it started.

Sidney Cole: Quite an eventful history that stage has had, hasn't it!

Kay Mander: [laughs] Absolutely! Anyway, I wasn't much use as an interpreter because, never having worked on a film set, I didn't know what all the lamps were called, I didn't know what anything was called! Fortunately the focus puller, Karl Matthews - who was half German - did know, and so he did all the necessary interpreting for Schneeberger. But the film industry was very different in those days, it wasn't, sort of, fighting for your job or anything. If your face fitted, everybody was nice to you. So they put me into the production office, with the production manager who was doing Alex's set of short films. There was Lobsters... (what was it?) The Gannets...

Sidney Cole: 'The Private Life of Gannets'...

Kay Mander: ('Private Life of Gannets') Not 'Scruffy', Bernard Brown was doing that as a separate one. I remember Lobsters and Gannets, and he was Caroline Lejeune's husband, the production manager - what on earth was his name?

Sidney Cole: George Brown?

Kay Mander: No, Thompson. Something Thompson. Roffe Thompson! And the first thing that happened to me, they set me up in the Production Office, and Nigel Tangye came in and said, would I take a letter? And of course I couldn't type! [laughs] So that wasn't much good either - they were terribly nice about it, and they sent me down to the publicity department, to the studio

publicity man, who was... (can't remember his name!)... Carter! Can't remember his Christian name. John Myers was in town, and Carter was at the studio. And that was wonderful, because I had to take everybody round, all the visiting journalists, and everything, and I got to know everybody in that way. And I was very lucky. That was from May 1935 to October 1935, at which point Alex sacked us all - or at least all the lower grades - because they were moving to Denham. So, October 1935 I got myself a job at Fox-British, again in the publicity department, with a very very clever young man called Geoff Davis who did the most wonderful cartoons. And our chief job there was doing the campaign sheets.

Sidney Cole: Where was their headquarters - where did you work?

Kay Mander: Wembley.

Sidney Cole: At Wembley, yes.

Kay Mander: Yes, the old Fox-British studios, which are now - [Lees?]. You came out of the railway station, they were just across the road - tube station. Our main job at that time was doing the campaign books.

Sidney Cole: Can you say a bit more about what campaign books are, for people who - you know - wouldn't be in the business, and might listen to this some time?

Kay Mander: Well, to start with, it was the day of British 'quota quickies' and Fox were very well organised - they worked six months a year, and they worked with two crews, and I think they had - if I remember rightly - three weeks schedule. Leapfrogging.

Third Person: For how long a picture?

Kay Mander: I think it was a three week shoot, if I remember rightly.

Third Person: But how long screen-time, pinched?

Kay Mander: What was a 'quota quickie'?

Sidney Cole: Well it would have been about an hour - hour and ten minutes, an hour and a quarter.

Kay Mander: About an hour...

Third Person: These were the pound-a-footers, were they? Or...

Sidney Cole: Yes, because three weeks sounds a long time, the ones I edited were usually shot in ten days.

Third Person: It does.

Kay Mander: Well I may be wrong about that.

Third Person: But Fox might have been a bit more...

Kay Mander: But, you see, Eddie Dryhurst would know because - I was coming to this - Eddie Dryhurst was one of the assistant directors, and I can't remember who the other one was... (Oh yes, it was, Um....) No, you'll have to ask Eddie that.

Sidney Cole: Yes, well it'll come to you, I should think.

Kay Mander: Roy...

Sidney Cole: Are you thinking of a director, or?

Kay Mander: No, I'm thinking of a cameraman...

Sidney Cole: Kellino?

Kay Mander: Roy Kellino was one of the cameramen. Ossim Oz[?] was one of the focus pullers, and they had people in them like James Mason, George Sanders doing his first real acting part, Alistair Sim, Fay Compton. Oh dear! The ones that I remember now, there was one called 'Troubled Waters', that had James Mason in it, there was one called 'Blind Man's Bluff', which also had James Mason in it. Oh, Virginia Cherrill came over for one of them, and they did a musical which...

Sidney Cole: What was the musical called, can you remember? [NB 'Rhythm In The Air']

Kay Mander: No, but Carmen Dillon would, because she was assistant art director on it! Ralph Brinton was the art director and Carmen came in - it was her first job in the industry - as Ralph's assistant. And of course, she was wonderful, because I mean she knew it all, she was a trained architect, and first of all she got ticked off Ernie Gartside for wearing trousers on the set, and she said, "Well how am I supposed to climb around up there without trousers on?" And that was - they had this enormous... What was the American's name - Donahue? Jack Donahue was the dance man who did that particular musical, and Carmen was also - of course the other beautiful Fox story is that she was going through Ralph Brinton's filing drawers on one occasion and she found socks filed under 'S'!!! [General laughter] Didn't she tell you that? She should have done!

Sidney Cole: She hasn't been interviewed yet, so that's a good... Can we backtrack for a moment, if it doesn't throw you, Kay? Did you have any inclination - you sort of drifted into the film business, did you? When, if ever, did you start thinking in terms of films or theatre or anything like that?

Kay Mander: I wanted to travel, and my idea was to go all over the world, so I thought being a schoolteacher would be nice because I'd have three months every year. Thank God I was never a schoolteacher, both for me and the children! I then got involved with acting at school - Oh! I've missed out a bit, haven't I? I was sent back to boarding school when we were living in - at the

end of the period in France, when I was thirteen I was sent back to boarding school in England, because my mother thought I should learn to play hockey.

Sidney Cole: Whereabouts?

Kay Mander: Eastbourne - where else! [laughs]

Third Person: Oh! Eastbourne College?

Kay Mander: No, something called 'Queenwood', where Martita Hunt, Enid Stamp-Taylor - they were all before me, but they are all old girls, and Dora Nahabidian[?] who was in the film industry - she was at Gaumont-British in the thirties. Quite a lot of people sort of impinging that I've tracked down down the years. And while I was there, we put on a play - each house put on a play every year and we had a school play and I got involved with all of that, and I got interested in stage managing - being a bossy type, so I was told! And so when I was living in Germany after I'd left school, the British community used to put on a play every year - amateur play - which I had the lead in one year, and that was the year that we did it for the Nazi 'Winter Help' fund.

Sidney Cole: What was the play?

Kay Mander: Oh dear... I've got the programme and all the reviews and everything still at home. I can't remember what it was called now, it was one of those...

Sidney Cole: What sort of part did you play?

Kay Mander: Oh I was the ingenue - the leading lady, let's face it!

Third Person: Bet you tuppence it was 'Private Lives'!

Kay Mander: No, it wasn't, it was - oh dear! How stupid of me!

Sidney Cole: Not to worry.

Kay Mander: I'll let you know - I'll send you a little note.

Sidney Cole: It'll come to you in the middle of something else probably. I see so that was your interest...?

Kay Mander: Wait a minute, so I'd also been doing some writing for the local English language paper - they only sent me to flower shows and dreary things like that, so it was a toss up as to whether I wanted to be a journalist, or something to do with acting. I tried to get an acting job to stay on in Germany, because the man who had produced the British play had also got a small group together of English-speaking German actors, taking English plays and bits of Shakespeare round to schools and that sort of thing, and I got involved with him, but they couldn't take me on

because I couldn't get a work permit - and actor's card or whatever. So - films, it sort of just happened. [laughs] No further convictions, I'm afraid.

Sidney Cole: When you were in Berlin and - did you meet among the people you met there connected with the profession? Did you meet Leni Riefenstahl or any of those people?

Kay Mander: No, I met a number of people connected with films, but none of the well known ones, they were always sort of my age - assistant directors and people like that. But there was a place that they always used to go to called the 'Kameradschaft der deutschen K◆nstler' which was a sort of - well it was like BAFTA, you could eat there, and drink there and meet your friends.

Sidney Cole: Did you see a lot of films in Berlin?

Kay Mander: Oh yes! Masses! - I saw 'Man of Arran' in Berlin!

Sidney Cole: What - with German titles and things?

Kay Mander: I can't remember - it must have had, I suppose! And I saw 'Ek Staza'[?] and I saw a lot of rubbish.

Sidney Cole: Mmm - well you would have seen a lot of rubbish anyway, of course, yes.

Kay Mander: Yes. But when we were in France, we used to go to the cinema every - every Sunday I think we used to go, and I saw the original 'Napoleon' when that first came out.

Sidney Cole: Oh! With the three screens - Abel Gance?

Kay Mander: Three screens, yes. And I saw the first talking film, whichever it was - I never know which one it was, 'Singin' In The Rain'.

Sidney Cole: No, no.

Kay Mander: 'Broadway...'

Third Person: 'Singing Fool'

Sidney Cole: 'Singing Fool'

Kay Mander: No. Oh, that wasn't the one, it was 'Broadway Melody' or something like that.

Third Person: 'Broadway Melody' was later. 'Singing Fool'....

Sidney Cole: With Al Jolson was the first one of all...

Third Person: On discs.

Kay Mander: And of course we used to go and see a lot of French films in those days.

Sidney Cole: Well it was a period of interesting directors - Marcel Carne...

Kay Mander: No, this was pre-Carne, I'm back in the late '20s, pre '31. And there was a wonderful film that I always remember - a French one about railways that was called...

Third Person: 'La Bette Humaine'?

Kay Mander: No, no, no, that was years later. Much later, yes.

Sidney Cole: I know the one you mean, and again I can't remember the title. It was a silent film.

Kay Mander: [laughs] It was a silent film, yes. And when I was at school in Paris they used to take us to the crypt of the Eglise d'Auteuil and sit us all on hard wooden benches and show us films there, and I saw one incredible film which I've never been able to trace called 'Comment, Je tu et mon Enfants'[?] and all I remember about it was a woman walking along by the sad waves and the grey sea-shore, wringing her hands. What it was I don't know! And I saw 'Comin' Thro The Rye' when I was staying with my grandmother in Barnes, in what is now the sound recording studio, next door to the church.

Sidney Cole: 'Comin' Thro The Rye' - that would be a silent film, that would have been earlier, when you were...

Kay Mander: Yes. Well it was Hepworth, wasn't it, 'Comin' Thro The Rye'?

Third Person: Yes.

Kay Mander: It would have been 1923 is - '23, '24.

Sidney Cole: So you had quite a background of going to the cinema...

Kay Mander: Oh I think everybody did in those days, don't you?

Sidney Cole: Well, I suppose so, yes. I don't know. But certainly you seem to have done. So does that bring us back to Twentieth Century Fox, having taken that dive back into the past?

Kay Mander: Fox-British!

Sidney Cole: Fox-British, not Twentieth Century, I'm sorry!

Kay Mander: Oh, No, no! Just Fox-British. Well I think it brings us back to - yes - Fox British. They had us for six months you see, by which time they'd done their programme, and I went back to Denham.

Third Person: You were telling us, if I may interrupt, about campaign books, which I...

Kay Mander: Oh yes!

Sidney Cole: Yes, if you could say something about them?

Kay Mander: A campaign book - I think they still exist - is something that accompanied each film, and they had a synopsis of the story, and little tidbits about the actors and what their hobbies were. James Mason collected model elephants! (laughter) It was just a broadsheet.

Sidney Cole: For local journalists where the films were playing.

Kay Mander: Yes. But that was interesting because it taught one to do layouts, and paste up and that sort of thing, and there was a very nice - not very nice - but very efficient and pleasant to work with, man called Sam Pullen that other people will know, he was at head office, Fox head office, and he was the man that Geoff Davis worked to, and one of the people that we got to know very well was Herbert Kretzmer[?] who was a working journalist at that time and used to come down and go round the studio and talk to people. So...

Sidney Cole: And what happened then.

Kay Mander: Well it was at Fox-British that I joined ACTT, because that was early '35 and you were having - ACTT was having a drive, and - was it Jack Cox, the sound recordist?

Sidney Cole: John...

Kay Mander: John Cox, the sound recordist, recruited me.

Sidney Cole: What sort of - can you remember the background of people at that time. For instance, do you remember how much you were earning...

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: and what sort of money people were getting which was the background to the formation of the ACT of course.

Kay Mander: (laughing) I was earning four pounds a week I think. I didn't earn seven pounds a week until I did my first semi-continuity job and then I didn't earn it - well can I come to that later?

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Kay Mander: I think I was earning four pounds a week. Yes I must have been.

Sidney Cole: And the hours were unlimited, were they?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, well in the publicity department we did, sort of normal office hours but we'd stay on if there was work to do. Shooting hours - no Fox were pretty good, they worked pretty regularly.

Sidney Cole: But if you worked overtime - you personally for instance, if you ever did - did you get paid anything or did you...

Kay Mander: Not until later. That didn't happen until I was at Denham when we got the first ACTT agreement. No nobody got paid overtime at all, you just worked and that was it. To my knowledge - I never did, anyway. So October 1936....

Third Person: Just a second - whereabouts were you living at that time?

Kay Mander: That's a very good question. I was living - my parents had come back to England, we had a flat overlooking Brooke Green. My father was working then for a company that had offices in Kings Street, Hammersmith, I can't remember what they were called, but they also made bathrooms and things, that sort of thing.

Sidney Cole: You were next door to Wardour Street - I mean that was a sort of peripheral connection with the film industry, yes.

Kay Mander: [Laughing] Yes.

Sidney Cole: So anyhow, there you were at Denham.

Kay Mander: Well I went to Denham, I don't know how I got back to Denham, I don't remember how it happened, but I went to... Well, first of all Denham was - fine days in the summer, we used to go and swim in the river at Denham, when we were still working at Worton Hall and I got to know the gardener, [laughing] who was later the studio controller at MGM. What the hell was his name? Nice man. Anyway this is all irrelevant, you see what I mean.

Sidney Cole: No, it's not because its sort of stream-of-consciousness is a very good idea...

Kay Mander: [Laughs] Anyway, I was asked to go - Who on earth would have rung me up? - to go back to Denham and work as assistant-cum-secretary to this new man called Mel Templeton who was being brought over from America to run what was the 'Budget Department'. This was a new thing in British films because the object was to give everybody a daily report on their expenditure. They'd got Bower's machines in the accounts department, and every item that was ordered every day got put through - although it hadn't been charged or anything - so that you got an up-to-date daily thing by twelve o'clock.

Sidney Cole: Like a cost account?

Kay Mander: Mmmm, which was absolutely new, and that was very interesting, I found that I liked doing that - an awful lot of nasty typing, but I learnt a lot.

Sidney Cole: And when did you learn typing?

Kay Mander: Oh, it just happened. [laughing]

Sidney Cole: Really? Just came to you?

Kay Mander: [laughing] I still couldn't type, even. I didn't really learn to type until the war. That's another story. But I knew what keys did what and that you had to move things and... But I couldn't type fast or anything like that at all, nor could I do shorthand. I went to evening class to learn shorthand at Pitman's in Southampton Row, but that was terrible, I didn't persist with that.

Third Person: That's where I first met you then! I went to night school at Pitman's at just about that time.

Kay Mander: [laughing] Oh well, we never spoke!

Sidney Cole: Too busy wrestling with the attempt to decipher those hooks and things! So then you were at Denham in this new accounts department. What happened then?

Kay Mander: Well there I was getting five pounds a week, which was luxury.

Sidney Cole: No, it wasn't bad. This was, what would it be now, 1936-7, '36 I suppose?

Kay Mander: It was October '35 into '36 and I wanted to go on to production, and this is the story I always tell - everybody knows by heart. Alex Korda - Alex was a wonderful person to work for because he knew all his staff. Even when it expanded to Denham he was very good indeed, and he took a personal interest in everybody, and he would not - he always said, "You mustn't do continuity, it's not a nice job!" (laughing) What in fact, he said, "No, you are a nice girl, Katie"! He regarded continuity as sort of 'camp followers' I think - unit hug! [general laughter] Anyway, so then I worked for - I left the budget department, and the budget department got itself into a bit of a muddle, and I've a strong feeling that there was something rather peculiar about Mel Templeton, something about renting a house and all the silver disappeared, I never knew anything about that or what happened to him, but he left anyway.

Sidney Cole: Maybe you mean the house that all the silver was charged on the daily cost sheets or something?

Kay Mander: I never knew the rest of that story, and - where have I got to?

Sidney Cole: Well, you left the accounts department and...

Kay Mander: Oh yes, Charles David and E[indecipherable] C[indecipherable] Molinier were over here and I got taken on as Charles David's P.A. most of which consisted of writing - typing out - well, taking down first of all, and typing out very long letters to Jacques Prevert, full of private jokes which I didn't understand - in French of course! It was very interesting, and they

were making a film called 'Taras Bulba' [A.K.A. 'The Rebel Son'] with Harry Baur. They were re-making the French version.

Sidney Cole: Who was directing it?

Kay Mander: That's a very good question. Pat Roc was in it, it was her first big film.

Sidney Cole: Was it Antony Asquith.

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: I remember the title 'Taras Bulba' it's been remade several times in fact, here and on the continent.

Kay Mander: And what they did with this, they used Harry Baur from the original film and sort of filled in with doubles and this that and the other and it was very complicated, um... (My mind is going, you see...) Ted Moore was on it, Ted Moore was working on it if I remember rightly.

Sidney Cole: What, as operator, or...?

Kay Mander: Yes, he would have been operating in those days. He'd only just started operating. Um, Jack Cardiff was working on 'Wings of the Morning'.

Sidney Cole: Were you shooting sync. by now?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, we were shooting sync. sound at Fox-British.

Sidney Cole: Oh, you were.

Kay Mander: Oh, definitely, yes. Years before.

Third Person: Yes, yes because sound was well in by then.

Kay Mander: I think we still had a sound booth at Fox-British, if I remember, and not portable equipment...

Sidney Cole: [indecipherable] I don't know. What do you think, Alan, as late as '35 would you still have been in booths?

AL: Not for the camera, no. The sound department.

Kay Mander: Berth. Yes

Sidney Cole: Oh the sound department, yes, yes, the sound department, yes.

Kay Mander: Oh, the cameras were Vintons with those enormous coffin blimps...

AL: Yes, they were Vintons, and probably Mitchells, or were they...

Kay Mander: I don't remember Mitchells, we had Debries at Denham.

AL: I think you may have had Debries at Wembley.

Kay Mander: I don't remember, I think we probably had Vintons. Debries at Denham because I remember Gus...

AL: Holdberg? Drisse.

Kay Mander: Gus Drisse! Was a most beautiful operator, he was just like a ballet dancer, you know, the whole movement, because he was on a friction head and all the rest of it, he was beautiful to watch.

Sidney Cole: You seem to have spent quite a time on the floor, even though in those days you weren't actually part of the unit.

Kay Mander: Oh Lord, yes! I know, I never was away from it, it was too interesting. As I say I left Charles David and got my first - Oh! That's right... I'm getting very confused about dates now, because there was a period when Angela Martelli was doing continuity on a film, and I managed to sort of do bits and pieces as her assistant.

Sidney Cole: Which one was it, can you remember?

Kay Mander: That's what I can't remember.

Sidney Cole: Can you remember where?

Kay Mander: Oh! At Denham.

Sidney Cole: At Denham, yeah...

Kay Mander: I'll have to go back and check on that, I just remember doing that.

AL: No doubt Angela will tell us when we interview her.

Kay Mander: Have you not interviewed her? She may or may not remember because I wasn't I sort of flitted in and out, now and again I did things to help her. I wasn't really a permanent assistant to her. Anyway I got myself a job as dialogue continuity on an 'Old Mother Riley' film! [general laughter]

Sidney Cole: What was a dial... I've never really heard of a dialogue continuity, you mean that there were two continuity girls, one on...

Kay Mander: There was a continuity girl called Florence, the director was Oswald Mitchell, Tommy Myers was on the boom, and the dialogue continuity had the job of getting down Arthur Lucan's ad libs so that they had a rough idea of what he was saying. And that was one called 'Old Mother Riley, MP'.

Sidney Cole: A remarkable man really, Lucan.

Kay Mander: Oh, yes, brilliant.

Sidney Cole: I mean that impersonation of the old lady was amazing.

Kay Mander: And he was wonderful to watch because he would go into a set and just work up his routine just by trying this, and improvising, try it again a little differently. And he did that before every major scene, just working it out without Kitty.

Sidney Cole: Where was that shot, can you remember?

Kay Mander: Nettlefold's.

Sidney Cole: Ah, Nettlefold's yes, down at Walton

Kay Mander: Yes, we used to go swimming in the river at lunchtime, it was nice and clean in those days.

Sidney Cole: That was the site of one of the earliest studios in England - the Cecil Hepworth studio, yes.

Kay Mander: That's right. There was a lovely lady across the road who did bed and breakfast, where one used to stay. In those days I often used to take a room in a house near a studio. When I was a Worton Hall I stayed with one of the carpenters, just down the road - that was very nice. And there was an old lady opposite the studio at Nettlefold's who did bed and breakfast, and she was the one who used to bring tea over on a silver tray every afternoon for the director and the artists! Sort of practically having it piped across the road! [laughs].

Sidney Cole: Lovely! Can you remember what the charge was for bed and breakfast at a place like that - must have been extraordinarily little compared with today I suppose?

Kay Mander: Yes, it was something like seventeen and sixpence.

Sidney Cole: For the week?

Kay Mander: But I got caught at Nettlefold's, because for the first time in my life my money was seven pounds a week, which was very good indeed. The first day was a bank holiday - the Monday - so we started shooting on the Tuesday, so we worked five days that week.

Sidney Cole: Five days?

Kay Mander: Instead of six, you see. In the second week - oh no, it must have been we started shooting on the Tuesday, something like that, anyway there were five days in the first week, five days in the second week and finished on the Friday of the third week, so he never once paid me seven pounds! He only paid me for the proportion, and he said, "Your contract says 'at the rate of'."

Sidney Cole: Oh! That was Oswald Mitchell?

Kay Mander: No, it wasn't Oswald Mitchell, it was a funny little man who was the accountant cum studio manager, who's name I don't remember now.

AL: Wasn't that Doc Sullivan?[?]

Kay Mander: No. He was at Warner Brothers.

Sidney Cole: He was at Warner Brothers, yes, at Teddington...

KM:... where I never worked.

Sidney Cole: When did you start - you must have got more associated with the Union in those days, had you?

Kay Mander: I think I was - yes, I was on the General Council, wasn't I?

Sidney Cole: You must have been one of the very earliest women to be on the General Council.

Kay Mander: I was, I was the first. I was the first woman member. This is the thing that I asked ACT if they could sort out, because my original membership number was 145, and this was the period that we were having trouble with demarcation, and although I had joined when I was in the publicity department, when I went into the budget department at Denham, Tom O'Brien insisted that was - I had to lay down my card.

Sidney Cole: And have a NATKE card?

Kay Mander: No, I didn't, I refused to join it, I just didn't have anything. And when I went back onto production, I re-joined - said to ACT, "I'm coming back," and they gave me a new number. And I've never been able to get the original one back, I don't know what happened.

Sidney Cole: That is now - they've changed things down the years, so that the numbers mean very little in relation to when people joined. I mean apart from Arthur Graham, who's always hung onto number 1!

Kay Mander: Well I wish I'd hung onto 145 anyway.

AL: In fact those numbers didn't really mean anything because they were parcelled out in lumps.

Kay Mander: [surprised] Were they? You mean Fox-British probably had 100 to 200?

Sidney Cole: That's right, yes and Arthur Graham got number 1 because he was down at Elstree and he had 1-100 or something, so naturally he took 1 for himself. [Laughter]

Kay Mander: The first - I don't remember what sort of meetings I went to, but the first ACT meeting I went to was in an office in Shaftesbury Avenue - very small office - and we all sat on top of the filing cabinets.

Sidney Cole: Yes, that's right, that tiny office half way up Wardour Street.

Kay Mander: No, no, Shaftesbury Avenue.

Sidney Cole: Oh Shaftesbury Avenue, the one on the corner by the Guinness sign? The sign that was outside the window there, and it was a kind of triangular office.

AL: Something 'Mansions' it was.

Sidney Cole: 'Piccadilly Mansions', that's right.

AL: 'Number 2, Piccadilly Mansions'!

Kay Mander: So when would that have been?

Sidney Cole: That would have been '35

Kay Mander: End of '35, shortly after I'd joined. So probably, as there were very few members, and I was the first woman, they probably invited me along to a General Council or something.

Sidney Cole: That's right, yes, because certainly that must have been the first time I - and probably Alan - met you, I should think.

Kay Mander: I don't remember who was there at all, I was far too nervous

Sidney Cole: [To Alan] Yes, because you were treasurer at the time, weren't you?

AL: Who was the Gen. Sec.?

Kay Mander: George, only just.

Sidney Cole: George Elvin.

Kay Mander: George took over in thirty...

Sidney Cole: three.

Kay Mander: As long ago as that, really? There was a period where - delete this - there was a period when George - sort of - took me to dances and things.

AL: Yes, yes.

Sidney Cole: Really, that's interesting, I didn't know that. George under that exterior that one knew - very business like exterior - obviously concealed a lot of... [general laughter]

Kay Mander: [sighs] I remember one in the - what's that hall of the Marylebone Road?

AL: Yes, 'Seymour Hall'.

Sidney Cole: In those days the Union used to have dancing.

Kay Mander: A regular Ball, yes, we had some very good ones at the Astoria with Joe Loss and it was the only time in my life I danced the soles out of my stockings! But that was with Peter Butcher - Peter Butcher? A sound man.

Sidney Cole: Probably - I don't remember. But they were very good those dances.

Kay Mander: Oh wonderful dances!

Sidney Cole: Because we used to get a sort of cabaret very often - I think we had Gracie Fields and...

Kay Mander: Yes, that's right.

AL: All the top people - Frankau.

Kay Mander: Did we? No!

Sidney Cole: Ronald Frankau

AL: Ronald Frankau - wonderful!

Kay Mander: Anyway, I've got myself to Nettlefold and it's 1936.

Sidney Cole: How are we doing on the tape:

AL: We're doing fine.

Kay Mander: [laughing] When you can't stand any more, say so! I then got my first real continuity job, which was Dan Birt's first film as a producer, called 'The Young Person In Pink' [a.k.a. 'The Girl Who Forgot'], directed by Adrian Brunel, written by Louise Birt.

Sidney Cole: Tell me something about - there are some interesting personalities - Dan Birt, who's not with us any longer, of course, but he was a nice man, did you like working with him?

Kay Mander: He was a great friend of ours, yes, a very great friend. He and Louise were best man and what-have-you when Rob and I got married actually. He was very talented, yes. Infuriating man, he was as vague as 'all get out.'[?] [laughs] Lovely!

Sidney Cole: And what about Adrian Brunel, how did you get on with him.

Kay Mander: Adrian was great. Very nice indeed. A very good director, again. And who was in it? Ralph Michael and Elizabeth Allan were the two leads. It was a nice little film, you see - that's always a damning...

Sidney Cole: Where was it made?

Kay Mander: Nettlefold. Yes, straight on. And I was still keeping in with Denham in some way - I can't quite remember - and I got... There was a slump in 1937.

Sidney Cole: One of the recurrent slumps, yes. [laughs]

Kay Mander: My first experience of a slump! And at that time I earned my living, which was five pounds - well I aimed at five pounds a week minimum - by reading for MGM.

Sidney Cole: Ah! You'd have done that up in town would you?

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: Or in your spare time?

Kay Mander: Well, when I wasn't working - I mean it all came to an end, and we didn't work. And I would go down to Denham and collect books, and you had to read them, do a synopsis, and if it was any good you had to write ten pages, double spaced foolscap telling the story and everything. And that was interesting because I...

Sidney Cole: And did you make comments of your own on it?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, you had to say whether it was suitable - who it was suitable for, what sort of a film it was, and...

Sidney Cole: Did any of the reading you did lead to any films?

Kay Mander: I have no idea, it was all French and German, mostly German actually, that I did.

Sidney Cole: Oh I see, you were asked to do them because of your language qualifications, yes.

Kay Mander: Yes, and at the same time - I get very confused here, because while I was doing that we were also trying to set up a film with Bill Duncalf, who later went to television, and Michael Chorlton...

Sidney Cole: Oh Michael Chorlton, yes indeed.

Kay Mander: (Do you remember Michael Chorlton?) - who was a mate - and Ching Mounteney [a.k.a. Carlisle Mounteney]. They had got a film, they'd made a film about the 'Dominion Monarch' - which was a ship which had just recently been launched - and they had all worked together on it, and Ching had recorded it and everything, and they had plans for making another - a feature - and in some extraordinary way they got access to Twickenham Studios, which were in the hands of the receivers, and a gentleman called Ben Drage, of Drage's furnishings, was looking after the receivership - in and out of the studio - so he was interested in trying to get a film into production.

Sidney Cole: This was after Julius Hagen had left?

Kay Mander: We camped out in Julius Hagen's boardroom. So I don't know what date that was, I think it was '37.

Sidney Cole: It would be certainly '37, yes.

Kay Mander: And we used to go round potting at all the lights outside the stages with an air-gun. [laughter] But the cutting rooms - you know the cutting rooms at Twickenham and that long [darkroom?] that was wonderful. And we had a sort of a canteen which meant that I made the tea down there. And Desmond Dickinson came along one day and tried to rent us a pin table!

Sidney Cole: Oh yes, that was the time...

Kay Mander: Did you remember his pin table? [laughing]

AL: Yes, yes!

Sidney Cole: Pin tables and - he had slot machines too at one time.

Kay Mander: Did he? Oh this was pin tables.

Sidney Cole: Mostly pin tables. But he finally gave it up, didn't he, he just abandoned them.

Kay Mander: I don't know - he probably got a job.

AL: Also it was a dead loss - they were losing on it.

Sidney Cole: Ah. So what happened - did this film get made?

Kay Mander: Well, no this film - something else that I'd like you to pick up with people, there was a strange man, who was running something called 'Independent Producers and Distributors' - he was a Russian.

Sidney Cole: Not Sir Gaylord Randolph [Gaynor Bancock?][??]

Kay Mander: No, no he was a writer, old Randolph.

Sidney Cole: Well, writer and director, but he was a Russian.

Kay Mander: No, no, no. This was a big Russian in Wardour Street, and he set up this so-called production and distribution organisation.

Sidney Cole: IPD or something?

Kay Mander: And I can't get anybody who can remember him, I can't remember what his name was - I think his name began with a 'G', and I think I may have met him.

Sidney Cole: Not Grimble[?]

Kay Mander: No, he was Denham Labs. Max Grimble[?]. No this was a strange man, he came and went.

AL: It wasn't [indecipherable]?

Kay Mander: No. No. I don't know if he ever managed to get a film going.

Sidney Cole: Anyway we're interested in this film you and your friends are trying to...

Kay Mander: Yes, well we got a script out, and it was a murder mystery set in a film studio, which would have been very cheap to make, you see, because we'd got all the film studio there.

Sidney Cole: What was it called?

Kay Mander: I've no idea! [laughs] It involved electrocuting somebody with the old thunder, but beyond that I don't remember. - The lightning, yes, the two things...

AL: The two carbons.

Kay Mander: Yes, in water.

AL: We're going to turn over the page as it were, so just hold on a moment. [End of Tape 1, Side 1] [Tape 1, Side 2] AL: Kay Mander, side 2.

Sidney Cole: Right, Kay, we were talking a bit earlier about money and so on, and you were saying you earned the amazing sum - for its time - of seven pounds, although you were a bit

cheated about it. But there is something about even when you earned the princely sum of five pounds that happened, you were - what happened?

Kay Mander: I bought a car. I borrowed some money from my mother - fair enough - and I had a very nice Austin Ten, which of course was essential - not essential - for getting to the studio, it was a very great help for getting to the studio. And that packed up...

Sidney Cole: What did it cost, can you remember?

Kay Mander: It cost eighty pounds.

AL: Second hand?

Kay Mander: Second hand, yes. And that packed up because I didn't know you had to put oil in the gear box! [laughter]

Sidney Cole: But the gear box did!

Kay Mander: The gear box did, and the gear box complained bitterly when driving up the back of Poole on the Purbeck Hills, one day. And so I traded that in with Mr. Henley, for something that cost sixty pounds which was a Standard Nine. Yes. And that went wrong after a week. And it was all so wonderful in those days, because you could do almost anything. I rang up Henley's and he had offices next door to that church at the bottom of Albany Street, and I complained bitterly that I was a working girl and my car had gone wrong, and I hadn't done anything to it. And I actually got to Mr Henley's office, and sat facing Mr Henley. And he took my car away and reconditioned it and gave it to me, and ...

Sidney Cole: Without charging?

Kay Mander: Without charging at all. And that one I think cost seventy nine pounds.

Sidney Cole: How much did it cost to run in those days?

Kay Mander: Well Petrol was 1s 6d a gallon I think.

Sidney Cole: And those cars, of course, did an enormous number of miles.

AL: Did you insure it? I can't remember if one insured in those days?

Kay Mander: I think one did. I had to pass a driving test - the first year of the driving test. And I learnt to drive while I was working at Denham, with one of the 'sparks' who lived in Maida Vale and had a very small Morris and took two other 'sparks' to the Studio with him, and I drove them each morning - all down Western Avenue, which of course was full of cyclists and everything at the time - and then at lunch time we would meet, and we'd drive to a pub at the back of Denham, and have a pint or two and drive back, and that's how I learnt to drive!

Sidney Cole: That wasn't the pub that had watercress beds, was it?

Kay Mander: It's still there, it was over the - do you remember the water splash?

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Kay Mander: It was just by the water splash. You went over the water splash to it.

Sidney Cole: Oh I know - into Denham village, you mean?

Kay Mander: No, no. Going towards Harefield.

Sidney Cole: Oh, yes. It might have been the one I'm thinking of, which was, you could get a watercress sandwich, and the watercress beds were in the river there, and they were cut fresh out of the water and chopped into the sandwich.

Kay Mander: [laughing] Probably! Anyway it was a very good way of learning to drive, with no large 'L's on top of the vehicle or anything - any nonsense like that. And also at that time, Alex Korda had got a lot of money sewn up in Germany, and elsewhere on the continent. And he said anybody who was working there, he would give them a wonderful rate of exchange if they wanted to go on holiday. And we took this car - my mother and a friend, Sonia Thorburn, who later married Charlie Frennd - and we went over to the continent. We dropped Sonia off in Munich, and I went to see some friends in Oberammergard[?] who I'd met when I'd been skiing when we lived in Berlin. And we then drove on to Vienna, where somebody else that we'd met - oh, the British Consul, who was in Vienna - and then we went on to Budapest, where Alex had given us some introductions to various actors and people like that. And we had a most wonderful journey, and all at a fantastic rate of exchange, you see, getting rid of...

Sidney Cole: This would have been what, about '37?

Kay Mander: This was '37, yes.

Sidney Cole: I was going to ask you actually, about - in reference to your acquaintanceship with Berlin in those days, were you at all aware of the political things that were happening, with Hitler and all that?

Kay Mander: We were aware of what was happening, because the brown shirts used to drill outside our house - drilling and singing songs - and a lot of my friends were students. But we didn't... [sighs] It's very strange this, I can't explain it. The 'night of the long knives', we were down in what is now East Germany, at a place called Oberhoff[?] which had a wonderful golf course. And they'd just had a golf competition, which a lady called Gwen Whethered, who was a well-known female golfer had been playing - from England and everything - and it was the end of the tournament dinner, and it all suddenly went nasty and everyone disappeared, and that was the 'night of the long knives', but we didn't know what was happening. And the awful thing is - the natural reaction - if you hear somebody's been arrested, you automatically think they've done something wrong. Or you did in those days - now you wouldn't because a lot of people get

arrested for nothing. And from the other point of view - all the people that I knew in Bavaria, the local village boys who were wonderful skiers - they were in heaven, because they got grants to go round the various ski championships and things. If they got injured they got free medical attention in the most wonderful sanatorium. It was so peculiar!

Sidney Cole: Yeah, sure.

AL: You'd have been very young...

Sidney Cole: Perhaps, nineteen - twenty, you'd have been...

Kay Mander: Yes, oh I was about eighteen, nineteen, something like that. Because I came - we came back from Germany in 1935.

Sidney Cole: Oh, you were only, what? Eighteen? Yeah.

Kay Mander: Yeah... twenty. But I think I was totally apolitical. I just liked dancing and other things.

Sidney Cole: But then going forward again to that time - what was it? '37 when you had this trip which finished up in...

Kay Mander: Budapest. The chief thing there was that everybody was talking about Mrs Simpson. I was reading a paperback called 'Simpson', and that of course...

Sidney Cole: All about Mrs Simpson.

Kay Mander: Every time you stopped at a garage to get petrol or anything, they saw this in the back of the car and said, "Oh! Simpson!"

Sidney Cole: That was '36, the abdication.

Kay Mander: Was it? Oh well it was '36 we did that trip then. And I went back to Berlin in '37, that was it, for a brief holiday. And I didn't like it, because by '37 there were things written all over the shop windows and... No, when we were there, you see, up to '35, it wasn't as overt as it became later.

Sidney Cole: Well no, because it had only just happened, hadn't it? After all '33, you know, it was also the time when I suppose Hitler wasn't so totally in control because the Reichstag trial went wrong for them, and that was '33, '34.

Kay Mander: Yes, I was at school in England when the Reichstag burned, so that would have been '33. So where was I - babbling about cars!

Sidney Cole: Yes, we were talking about cars, yes, learning to drive and driving down Western Avenue which was very different then from what it is now!

Kay Mander: Very different! The Firestone[?] factory was there.

Sidney Cole: It's amazing looking at old films - the American films, too - that what at the time when one saw them in the thirties, what you took as main roads, look very peculiar now.

Kay Mander: Of course, Western Avenue had a bicycle track down both sides of it at that time.

AL: Firestone - you don't mean Firestone, you mean Hoover. Hoover factory in Western Avenue. Firestone was in the Great West.

Sidney Cole: That's right, Hoover was...

Kay Mander: I mean Hoover, yes.

[break in recording]

Sidney Cole: After that, when you used to drive down Western Avenue to Denham, what happened after - what was the next production you were involved in, can you remember?

Kay Mander: Well, that was when we got a phone call, and I'm still earning pocket-money by reading for MGM, and I got home one evening, my mother had had a phone call, somebody wanted a continuity girl to do an all-night script session at Pinewood. And, she said, "It's very strange, they'd got the right number, but they hadn't got your name, they'd got somebody else's name. But when I told them that, they said, 'Well does she do continuity?'" And my mother said she'd told them that I did, so they said, "Right, tell her to come to Pinewood at seven o'clock tonight, and we'll feed her and - all night script session." So I got there at seven o'clock. At nine o'clock, the man I later married walked into the hall at Pinewood, and said, "I'm terribly sorry, we forgot all about you!"

Sidney Cole: That was Rod

Kay Mander: Rod! [laughs] It was snowing at the time. So they didn't feed me, but we went up and had this all night script session with Tony Havelock-Allen and Rodney Ackland - Rodney Ackland?

Sidney Cole: Rodney Ackland, the writer, yes, right.

Kay Mander: Yes, and Herbert Mason, the director, and the man who's - Tony Havelock-Allen asked me what his name was and I couldn't remember it then, and I can't remember it now - he was a Czechoslovak writer...

Sidney Cole: Not Kepek[?]?

Kay Mander: No. I may remember it, because I did remember it subsequently and he's cropped up. I think he's still around, I'm not sure. And my job was to make notes of everything they said,

and it was all about "Dragisha, Barkov, Frekov and Zonnemann." And "Doblevich" and - I can't tell you - I didn't know which were people and which were places! [laughter]

Sidney Cole: What was Rod, a production manager or something?

Kay Mander: Rod was eventually a first assistant... no, he was production manager. Anyway, I typed up my report and took it down to the studio the following day and they thought it made sense and they said would I like to work on the picture?

Sidney Cole: And you can't remember what the picture was called?

Kay Mander: I can! It was called... [laughs] It was called 'Chinese Fish'.

Sidney Cole: 'Chinese Fish'. Did it ever get made?

Kay Mander: Yes, it was a remake of a French film, and it wasn't called 'Chinese Fish' when it came out, and it starred Valerie Hobson.

Sidney Cole: Who was with Anthony Havelock-Allan...

Kay Mander: Yes, at the time. That's right. And Megs Jenkins was in it - her first film I think.

Sidney Cole: Lovely lady.

Kay Mander: Megs Jenkins, beautiful lady. And... oh! One of the little old ladies, I can never remember which one it was.

Sidney Cole: Not Athene Saylor?

Kay Mander: Yes, it was, it was Athene or somebody like that. And I'm not sure Rex Harrison wasn't in it.

Sidney Cole: A young Rex!

Kay Mander: What on earth was it called at the last analysis? [N. B. Probably 'The Silent Battle'] Peter Bsasini[?] was the editor - that was why we had fish and chips, because they were making 'Chips' at the same time [laughs] at Denham - we were fish and they were chips!

Sidney Cole: I see, you were the fish, and 'Goodbye Mr Chips' were the chips!

Kay Mander: Yes, that's right. So that was 1937, wasn't it? And Erich Pommer was at Denham and it was either at that time, or on the subsequent picture, which was 'Window in London'...

Sidney Cole: 'A Window in London' - a very good film.

Kay Mander: Yes, which Rod was also PM on and I stayed on in the production office and doing second unit continuity... that we got the first ACT agreement.

Sidney Cole: Did you have anything to do with that - you must have done because you were on the General Council, weren't you?

Kay Mander: I don't remember - I must have done - but I don't remember going to meetings or anything. It's very odd. I'd like to know when I first went on to the General Council.

Sidney Cole: Well the minute book will still exist...

Kay Mander: Does it? I think I went on later, you see. I think on at the end of my - when I'd really started doing continuity, because I don't remember being associated with that agreement. Anyway, it was sixty hours a week, and half a crown if you worked more than sixty hours!
[general laughter]

Sidney Cole: A great triumph in its day!

Kay Mander: Terrific, yes.

AL: Yes, that's the sixty hour agreement, I remember that!

Kay Mander: And it was also sometime around then - Percy Stapleton was the studio manager at the time, and they had a - the Prudential got very tough and said they'd got to economise and everything, and so they cut everybody who was earning less than ten pounds a week. This must have been earlier because it was when I was on five pounds a week, and they cut me to four. I mean the most incredible logic, to save money. [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Well I mean it's standard for the course - it's happening now in a way, isn't it? When in doubt cut the money of the people who are least able to defend themselves.

Kay Mander: Absolutely! No I'm afraid, as a vehement member of the ACT, I remember very little about that. I don't think that I was very active until we started having Caxton Hall meetings - when was that?

Sidney Cole: Well that would have been during the War, really.

Kay Mander: During the war, yes, I think that's when I got onto the General Council.

Sidney Cole: Before that, we were at the Beaver Hall in the city...

Kay Mander: Oh no, I remember those, yes!

Sidney Cole: Yes, but that was pre-war.

JS: That was pre-war, yes - And post-war. My first AGM was at Beaver Hall, and I'd just got out of uniform, and I'm absolutely certain of this, because a club I belonged to at that time - the 'Little Ship Club' - also had its meetings at Beaver Hall, and so I really knew my way and I was amazed...

Kay Mander: Was Beaver Hall the, sort of, shallow one, with big windows.

Sidney Cole: Yes, yes. That's right, yes. It think you're right actually, because I seem to remember an occasion when - I think you're right John, because I seem to remember an occasion when we had, as the guest speaker, Harold Wilson, who was then President of the Board of Trade, and I think Beaver Hall was during and post-war.

[indecipherable - all talking at once] JS: I'm pretty sure about that because I remember, you know, feeling that having got out of uniform, I was now allowed to go to a Trade Union meeting, which was at Beaver Hall, which as I say, I knew well, because of the 'Ship Club'. Beaver Hall was, kind of, rather modern, whereas Caxton Hall was old fashioned, I can remember the difference. AL: Beaver Hall was the Hudson Bay Fur Company, that's why it was called Beaver - killing all those innocent creatures...

Kay Mander: So, 'Window In London'.

Sidney Cole: 'Window In London' was a very good film - now who directed that, it wasn't Michael Powell was it?

Kay Mander: Wait a minute, no, no, no. Arthur...

AL: Not Crabtree?

Kay Mander: No. Arthur - tall, dark, Arthur - dead now.

Sidney Cole: It'll come back. [N.B. Herbert Mason] It was a very good film in its day.

Kay Mander: It was a fascinating film to work on, because we did a whole lot of actuality stuff on the 'tube', from Baron's Court to wherever, on that long straight stretch, with the actual murder being done in the window.

Sidney Cole: Oh yes, I remember that was very to see from the train, yes and the chap...

Kay Mander: Yes, Rod was directing all that, and the stuff on Waterloo Bridge - not this Waterloo Bridge, but the previous Waterloo Bridge - they were building it.

AL: Was he Gilkinson?

Kay Mander: No. That was Tony. [laughs] No Arthur - oh God! He'd worked at the Bush.

Sidney Cole: I know. He'd been around a long time, because I think he was even at BIP.

Kay Mander: But he wasn't old.

Sidney Cole: No, no, but after all, BIP could have been in '35 or so...

Kay Mander: But I've got that at home, because I've got the unit lists. And Dora Wright, dear Dora, who's just died, was at Denham at the same time doing 'Fire Over England', or 'Arsenal Stadium' - I can't remember...

Sidney Cole: Oh! Thorold Dickinson's picture 'Arsenal Stadium Mystery'.

Kay Mander: Yes. - No she was on 'Fire Over England'. She was with Pommer anyway, which [indecipherable] doesn't say in the obituary.

Sidney Cole: Did you work with Pommer?

Kay Mander: No I was there at the same time. I mean I knew him. Never worked with him. So we've got to there - 'Window in London' when Rod and I really got friendly. And - what happened after that?

Sidney Cole: Apropos of Rod, by the way, one should for the record say that Rod Nielson-Baxter was his name and he succeeded you, Alan, didn't he, as treasurer of the Union. But I don't know if he was treasurer at that time, Kay when you first met him.

Kay Mander: No, he wasn't even a member of the Union, I had great trouble in converting him! [laughter]

AL: I lasted one year as the treasurer, they got rid of me.

Sidney Cole: Really, were you only one year?

Kay Mander: Rod was eight years, and he was got rid of because they said he was a Communist, which of course he never was, and they got Jack Rogers instead. That was the big upheaval, do you remember, and they turfed us all out. Because Rod never was a Communist that was the ridiculous thing, he always refused. I spent - while I was learning to type properly during the war. When the war started I decided I wasn't going to get myself involved in anything that was going to tie me up - I didn't believe in the war, anyway, at the time. And so, we were living in Brook Green, as I say, and just down the road there was the divisional petroleum office, going towards Hammersmith Broadway, in a church hall of some kind. So I got myself taken on as a clerk, issuing petrol coupons. And we then moved to Acton, to that enormous Ministry of Pensions building in Action...

Sidney Cole: Oh yes, that's still there.

Kay Mander: We had a bit of that, and I was put into the typing pool, which was a wonderful way to learn to type, because all one did - for some unknown reason, undertakers got very special treatment! [general laughter]

Sidney Cole: Perhaps they were anticipating the worst in terms of air-raids!

Kay Mander: And there were masses of undertakers applying for additional petrol! And all I got - the man in charge was F. E. M. Beatley, who was a funny little man, I think he was an ex-naval gent. And he had these enormous very formal letter, a whole page of foolscap, and they were all identical, because we didn't have copying machines or anything like that at all, so each letter had to be typed out - it was a very good way of learning to type.

Sidney Cole: Why do you think you had so many undertakers - did they use their hearses to go to horse races?

Kay Mander: I don't know! Oh, but it was very funny, the divisional petroleum office because you got absolutely mad people writing in. There was an Irish woman who used to write long letters about this that and the other, full of, "For the Grace of God, I must have some more petrol," and all the rest of it.

Sidney Cole: This was during the phoney war period.

Kay Mander: During the phoney war period, and at that time I was earning two pounds, three and sixpence a week - Now you want to know about money!

Sidney Cole: Ah! So you'd taken a considerable drop from what you could earn in the film industry?

Kay Mander: Yeah. I think it was two pounds four and sixpence a week, actually. Because I was under twenty five. I would have got two pounds eight and sixpence a week if I'd been over twenty five, I believe.

Sidney Cole: These were, sort of, Civil Service rates, were they?

Kay Mander: Yes. And I earned a little bit of overtime by sticking up envelopes at night - for the Divisional Petroleum Office, you could say, "I want to do some overtime." They'd say, "Right, get down to the post room and seal up envelopes." And I was so - I was living in a bed-sit off the Bayswater Road, I'd left home for various reasons, mainly connected with Rod.
[laughs]

Sidney Cole: You mean your family objected to Rod?

Kay Mander: They didn't like him at all. I don't know why. He was quite innocuous! And I used to walk. It was, what? Three and a bit miles from where I lived to Acton - because it saved fares. Trouble was it wore out the shoes, and I ended up with lots of brown paper inside my shoes, because I couldn't afford to have them repaired. I was paying twenty one shillings for my bed-sitter... I can't remember how it worked out - oh! I know, I was still paying - I'd bought a new car by then, I'd borrowed forty pounds of Zolly Korda. This is strictly off the record, isn't it? Zolly Korda lent me forty pounds and I bought a brand new Morris Eight open tourer for a hundred and forty pounds - that was it - and I was paying it off over two years at a pound a week.

AL: Was this Maggie? The Morris that I knew?

Kay Mander: No, Maggie was the two-seater that we bought after we'd got married. No this was a nice little open tourer, the little Morris Eight, which was a joy. And I couldn't afford to sell it, because I couldn't get enough to pay off the hire purchase, so I had to go on paying the hire purchase, but of course I couldn't afford to run it. And so that was two pounds one. And the rest of the money was all mine to spend on food.

Sidney Cole: Golly, Three and sixpence.

Kay Mander: That's right, and you could get a very good lunch for sixpence in the canteen at the Ministry of Pensions, because you could have all the vegetable and gravy for sixpence - which was very nourishing - so we had that, and Rod and I were courting at the time, and he used to come and see me, and I used to feed him boiled onion with a dollop of butter on the top!
[laughter]

Sidney Cole: What was Rod doing at the time?

Kay Mander: Rod was working on an extraordinary film, that was on location at the South of France. It was an Eric Ambler story and Rod was production manager on it. He worked on a film called - not 'Forever England' - but something like that, which was one of these terribly patriotic things, I think...

Sidney Cole: Not 'This England' at British National.

Kay Mander: No. Again, I should have looked all this up. I never know what I want to look up, I know where it all is. That was all shot down at an air field, the one that I'm thinking of. And then he went off to the south of France on the Eric Ambler thing. Now was that before war was declared, or after war was declared, I can't... It must have been before. It must have been August 1939, something like that.

Sidney Cole: Just before war broke out, mmm.

Kay Mander: And I think Herbert Mason was directing that one too, and Anton Walbrook was in it.

Sidney Cole: That would be before you were at the Ministry...

Kay Mander: No, I went there as soon as war was going to happen.

Sidney Cole: That would be '38 - '39. When they were digging trenches in the parks in London.

Kay Mander: That's right.

AL: I was issuing gas masks!

Kay Mander: You were issuing gas masks, God help you! Anyway, eventually I managed to sell my car for twenty pounds, and I then met up with another Hungarian...

Sidney Cole: Apart from Zolly, you mean?

Kay Mander: [laughs] Well, one of the many Hungarians...

Sidney Cole: Did you know Zolly when he was doing 'Elephant Boy'?

Kay Mander: Oh yes.

Sidney Cole: And you knew Charles Crichton, then did you, who was cutting it?

Kay Mander: Well, we were all children together at Worton Hall, Charles and...

Sidney Cole: Robert Hamer, was he there?

Kay Mander: Yes, but he was rather sort of - he wasn't one of the gang.

Sidney Cole: Charles Frend?

Kay Mander: Charles Frend, yes. Peter Brooke. Anthony whats-his-name.

Sidney Cole: Peter Brooke was the infant prodigy.

Kay Mander: No. Different Peter Brooke. This was a Peter Brooke who became Anthony Carson[?]. And Cornelius, Henry Cornelius was there.

Sidney Cole: Of course, yes.

Kay Mander: And that was all Worton Hall days, when we all knew each other. I'm trying to think - Ray Poulton? He came on later. Peter Bizarsinay[?] was one of that group. And Charlie - Charles Bennett - no...

Sidney Cole: No, Compton Bennett.

Kay Mander: Compton Bennett!

Sidney Cole: Who subsequently went to Hollywood.

Kay Mander: That's right. Anyway...

Sidney Cole: So there you were at the Ministry. What happened when war became more serious, like in 1940.

Kay Mander: I was in a bus somewhere, and I met this Hungarian! [laughter] And he said he was making a film, and would I like to come and do continuity? And I said, "Yes please!"

Sidney Cole: What was his name?

Kay Mander: [laughs]

Sidney Cole: You can't remember?

Kay Mander: I can - but I can't!

Sidney Cole: What film was he going to make? I mean, was it a feature or...

Kay Mander: Yes, it was a feature. Um... Ray Elton?

Sidney Cole: Ray Elton, yes...

Kay Mander: Yes, Ray Elton's wife, Veronica, was also working in the office, that's where I first met Veronica, and she and I typed all the script, and it was called... I can't remember what it was called, Maurice Elvey directed it, and it starred Francis Day and Vic Oliver. [N.B. Probably 'Room For Two']

Sidney Cole: Ah! And where was it shot?

Kay Mander: It was shot at Twickenham.

AL: Who financed it?

Kay Mander: I don't know!

Sidney Cole: This was the time when Vic Oliver was going around with Churchill's daughter...

Kay Mander: He married her!

Sidney Cole: He'd married her by then? What was her name - Sarah?

Kay Mander: Sarah. And, Bryan Langley was the lighting cameraman. I can't remember who the others were on it.

Sidney Cole: And you were...

Kay Mander: I did continuity, yes. And from that - again, I can't remember what the connection was, but I was going on to do a picture at Worton Hall. Do you remember Thornton Freeland? He was going to direct it, and it was Cecily Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert - and what was that one called?

Sidney Cole: Not 'All the King's Men'?

Kay Mander: No. And T. Freeland then went off to America, so it must have been - war must have - well, war had started. This was 1940, I'm up to 1940.

Sidney Cole: Must have been about the fall of France time, probably.

Kay Mander: That's right, well it was because they did nothing - Courtneidge and - well Courtneidge principally - did nothing except listen to the radio all day long while we were shooting.

Sidney Cole: Did you meet T. Thornton Feeland's wife, June Clyde?

Kay Mander: No, well I never met T. Freeland, because he went off to the States, and Maurice Elvey took over once again, God help us!

Sidney Cole: How did you get on with Maurice?

Kay Mander: Well, nobody got on with Maurice at that time! [laughs] I don't know why, because he was a very competent director, but he just upset everybody.

Sidney Cole: Yes, he had that reputation for some reason.

Kay Mander: Well the best trick that happened there, was that he'd got a very, very - superb - cashmere jacket - sports jacket - which I suppose he'd got from the States or somewhere, and all of a sudden it disappeared, and nobody could find it anywhere, and panic, panic, panic! And just before the end of shooting, when we were all on the stage one day, it came down... [laughter]

Sidney Cole: On a spring?

Kay Mander: No, on a chain! And hung in front of him!

Sidney Cole: That was a comment from one of the sparks?

Kay Mander: One of the sparks had taken it - no it was one of the riggers. We did know. We knew that it had gone up there, we didn't know really, we kept quiet about that!

Sidney Cole: Okay, since we're rapidly approaching the end of the feature film part of you life, do you have any thoughts about - did you enjoy being continuity girl and...

Kay Mander: Oh, I just liked making films!

Sidney Cole: ... what was different about it, would you think, from what happens now?

Kay Mander: Oh dear! That takes a whole three hours to explain to you. Whole film units are different now - completely different. The main...

Sidney Cole: How many copies of your continuity sheets did you - can you remember, you used to do in those days?

Kay Mander: Six. But then we had different kinds of typewriters.

Sidney Cole: Sure, yeah. But it used to take you - you'd be typing those to a large extent after the day's shooting was over, I suppose?

Kay Mander: Well, none of that has changed, it depends... the number of copies you take doesn't affect how long it takes you to type them!

Sidney Cole: No, no, but I mean how far you could keep pace with the shooting schedule.

Kay Mander: There again it depends entirely on - it's got worse and worse and worse down the years because people are working faster. The thing that makes a continuity girl's life easy is having enough prop men, so that you get a table and the table gets moved around to where you need it. That doesn't happen any more.

Sidney Cole: Doesn't it not?

Kay Mander: Oh no! Even if you have prop men, they've come from television and they don't know that it's anything to do with them at all

Sidney Cole: They don't want to do that. How many set-ups, typically, were there in a day in the time you're talking about.

Kay Mander: Well, once upon a time, eight to ten was good, wasn't it? It was half an hour a set - wait a minute what am I saying? - An hour a set-up.

Sidney Cole: It would depend very much on the film, I mean those 'quota quickies', for instance, the...

Kay Mander: On those you'd do about fifteen, sixteen, twenty, yes. We did sixty-seven one day on the MGM 'Dirty Dozen' series.

Sidney Cole: Oh, but how - because some of them were just very much knocking off a very similar set-up?

Kay Mander: No, we had five cameras! [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Oh God! Awful!

Kay Mander: [laughing] One continuity girl and five cameras!

AL: And a lighting cameraman complaining somewhere!

Sidney Cole: Yes, it must have been bad for everybody when they use that kind of...

Kay Mander: Well it was exteriors, yes.

Sidney Cole: Boxing matches and action things like that, because it was bad - difficult for the continuity girl, and speaking as an editor - which I was then - it was awful, too, when just all those angles were poured into the editor's lap, with sometimes the director not having the faintest idea, really, what he wanted to do with it.

Kay Mander: Absolutely, I know. Well that's the way they shoot television series now.

Sidney Cole: I know, I know.

AL: Well it's - you know - you give the editor every possible angle you can give him, and let him get on with it - "Thanks very much!" [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Yes, it's a policy of course.

Kay Mander: But the whole conception of a crew being a crew has vanished. I went down to Pinewood on - I went into Pinewood as I was coming down, and I went into talk to Terence Young, and he had an American producer with him at the time, and I don't know how we got onto the subject, and they say, "Oh, it's wonderful having..." I said, "The worst thing that happens nowadays is that everybody tries to do everybody's job. There's no discipline, there's no trust that that person does that job and can be relied on to do it. Now everybody does a little bit of this and a little bit of that." And this American said, "Well that's wonderful, you see, absolutely great! Wonderful to have the electricians working out there helping laying tracks, that's the way it should be." They don't understand that there was a sort of smooth discipline that used to operate in a good crew. You must know, Sid.

Sidney Cole: Oh sure, yes. And, you know, people like a well trained grips and so on - it's absolutely essential. And the old Hollywood thing, of course, always was that the cameraman had his crew which included a gaffer and grips and everybody.

Kay Mander: And the worst thing that they've done now, I think, is the combination of lighting cameraman and operator. Because nobody appreciates the fact that the operator is a vital link between props and continuity and the stand-ins, if you've got stand-ins. I mean, he's getting everything organised, so that when it's lit you bring on the artists and there you are. Whereas now there's nobody to answer questions, because he's away lighting and it's crazy. It's a stupid piece of economy which just doesn't work, because it throws the whole balance of the working crew out.

Sidney Cole: [indecipherable]... Alan, if I can check with you, that it used to be in the early days of films, the lighting man used to also operate sometimes.

AL: That's true, but it's when talkies started it started to swing away, and that's when the operator came in...

Sidney Cole: And operating is a different thing from lighting.

AL: Exactly! I mean, once the director and the lighting cameraman have decided what they are going to do, the operator gets on with it.

Sidney Cole: It really is such a specialised job...

Kay Mander: And you sort out things like mike shadows, and that sort of thing, whereas nowadays you never sort out mike shadows, or anything.

Sidney Cole: Also it's a joy to watch an elaborate panning and tracking shot done by a really master operator, isn't it. You know, the whole thing is smooth, you don't even notice it unless you're a technician yourself.

Kay Mander: I know.

Sidney Cole: So, have we come to the end of feature films for the moment? Is there something you want to say, Alan?

AL: Yes, the thing I was going to ask, Kay, in those feature days when you were there, what was the most important thing for the continuity girl. What do you reckon was the most important thing in those days?

Sidney Cole: You mean in terms of a job?

Kay Mander: I refer you to the article I wrote for the journal, when I said I was the editor's fifth column.

AL: Fine, yes.

Kay Mander: In other words... it's very difficult to say what a continuity girl's job is anyway, because it varies from picture to picture, but basically you want to know that it'll cut together, and that it's going to look right. And to tell the editor what you've shot and what he's got to do with it.

Sidney Cole: Which brings me on to - you know as an ex-editor myself - at what stage did you, you must have, when you started continuity, gradually more and more realised the importance of your job in relation to the editor. When did you actually going into a cutting room and see what was happening?

Kay Mander: Well I'd always been in cutting rooms, I mean, even before I was doing continuity, because I was always wandering down to find out what was going on, and how it all worked.

Sidney Cole: And going on the floor... yeah. So when you started doing continuity you already had some idea of what happened with the results of what was filmed on the floor, yes.

Kay Mander: Oh yes, absolutely. I'm just trying to think, you see Dan - Dan Birt.

AL: Had Dan been an editor? Dan Bert.

Kay Mander: Yes, and... I don't know, it all just happened really, it wasn't all separate, like that. And I used to go and watch Corny [N.B. Henry Cornelius] cutting and see him putting things together, and learnt - automatically one learnt about how you filed your cuts, without actually doing it.

Sidney Cole: You never - did you ever want to become an editor yourself?

Kay Mander: Well, we did, in documentary we did everything.

Sidney Cole: Oh, later in documentary, but at that time?

Kay Mander: No, I wanted to be with actors, I was interested in actors.

Sidney Cole: You wanted to be where the thing started, yes.

AL: Was there any - in your father's family - was there any contact with the show business, at all?

Kay Mander: Don't think so. I don't know. I shouldn't have thought so, no. Nor in my mother's.

Sidney Cole: We didn't say much about your mother - did she have a job at all at any time, or was she just...

Kay Mander: She was a sales girl at Whiteleys.

Sidney Cole: "Just," there you are that's a male chauvinist thing, but was she content to be a wife and mother?

Kay Mander: Well I don't think it arose, I mean she was born in 1880 and she was one of fourteen children of whom twelve survived.

Sidney Cole: Where did she come from, was she Yorkshire, too?

Kay Mander: No, no, no. Neither of them, they were both Londoners. She was born in Dulwich, and my grandfather worked for a firm of accountants in the City - 'Cope, Stake, Williams' or whatever their name is, in St. Paul's Churchyard, or whatever it calls itself.

Sidney Cole: And did your mother work before she was married?

Kay Mander: Yes, she was a sales girl at Whiteleys.

Sidney Cole: At where?

Kay Mander: Whiteleys.

Sidney Cole: Whiteleys, oh - famous name...

Kay Mander: And she 'lived in'.

Sidney Cole: Oh, they did in those days.

Kay Mander: Mmm - must have been quite a girl, I never followed that one up, I was sort of... yes.

Sidney Cole: It's like one of H.G. Wells' stories.

AL: I was going to say, it sounds like an H.G. Wells.

Kay Mander: Yes. But she was very beautiful, and she got off - or on - with one of the young Whiteleys. [laughter] But nothing ever happened. I don't quite know the story of all of that, but I've got a photograph of her looking absolutely magnificent in one of those ball-gowns and everything. Looking absolutely beautiful with her hair up, and she was going to a ball with one of the young Whiteleys. But then she married my father, and he was just a clerk - he was a shipping clerk in the City. But he did alright.

Sidney Cole: He did very well, yes, for his family.

Kay Mander: [laughs] Extravagant bastard, he was!

Sidney Cole: Which lived longer of your two parents?

Kay Mander: I don't know, because I don't know when they died.

Sidney Cole: Oh really? Had you lost touch with them after you married?

Kay Mander: Completely

Sidney Cole: Oh that's a shame. That was because of the antagonism to Rod?

Kay Mander: Well, they separated. And I didn't like my mother much, and she didn't like me, I rather gather.

AL: Were you the only child?

Kay Mander: Yes. And I just completely lost touch with them.

Sidney Cole: Oh. And you don't know when they died? Oh well...

Kay Mander: No, no idea. I keep on meaning to find out, but...

AL: Kay, you almost taught me to cut, when did you - no you didn't quite, but I learnt a lot from you about cutting - when did you first actually get your hands on a bit of 35mm - can you remember?

Kay Mander: At Shell.

AL: At Shell? So we're into the documentaries.

Sidney Cole: So we were going to stop there.

AL: We'll stop there, that's fine, because we've come to the end of that side. [End of Tape 1, Side 2] [Tape 2, Side 3] AL: Kay Mander, Side 3.

Sidney Cole: Kay, we've talked a lot about your early experiences in feature films, but now your real career, in a way, starts with going into documentary. How did that happen?

Kay Mander: Well, it's all tied in with the circumstances of 1938, the pre-war period, with political inclinations and contacts made through different associations. There was a very interesting Russian technician called [Leoninon Plantskoy?], who had worked with Vernon Sewell - I discovered when I read Vernon Sewell's autobiography - and he came down to Denham Studios, and was working for Warner Brothers doing research into the improvement of fine grain emulsions for...

Sidney Cole: Dupes.

Kay Mander: Dupes, etc, etc, etc. And he was a very interesting man. I got to know him fairly well. He and Henry Cornelius, and Henry's subsequent wife and I used to meet and play cards and eat, and Leigh was a wonderful cook. And he was very left wing, and he interested me in politics, which I had never been interested in before. And I then got involved with the Left Book Club, and used to go to regular meeting of the Left Book Club. Which dovetailed in with certain people I knew in ACTT who also used to attend those meetings, and of course one of the leading people who used to come was Sidney Bernstein, who we all got to know. And another of the people I met was Max Anderson. I'm going back now to what - 1938-9 - no, pre '38 even. And Max at that time was working with... Davidson - what the hell was his Christian name?

Sidney Cole: Jimmy.

Kay Mander: Jimmy Davidson. They were editing the 'History of the...' What was it called, John, you know what it was called, the big film, the Persian Oil film?

JS: [indecipherable] AL: Oh yes, I know perfectly well, I'll think of it in a moment.

Kay Mander: Jimmy was knee deep in film in the cutting room and Max was his assistant. And Max and I used to go into the Highlander every Friday night.

Sidney Cole: A great resort of the documentary movement!

AL: I'll tell you who worked on it, Dylan Thomas wrote some of the script for it, I know the film I'll remember it's name.

Kay Mander: 'The Anglo-Iranian Film' it was called.

AL: That's right!

Kay Mander: And Max said, "What do you want to do?" Because at this time I was either not working, or working on features. And he explained to me how interesting documentary was, because you got to make your films about real subjects, social subjects, all of which sounded interested. And he said, "Well, if you come into the Highlander on a Friday evening, you'll meet everybody there, that's where we all get our jobs!"

Sidney Cole: That's quite true, yes!

Kay Mander: And so he and I used to go in every Friday night, and I'd buy him a beer and he'd buy me a beer and it cost us sixpence each - i.e. a shilling each for each others, you see! [laughs] And eventually word went round that Shell Film Unit were looking for people - it was 1940 then by now - were looking for people and I was introduced to Arthur Elton, and Arthur said, "What have you done?" And I told him what I'd done, and he said, "Well we want a production assistant, Geoffrey Bell's making a film. Do you think you could do it?" And I said, "Yes, I'm sure I could," not having the faintest idea what it was all about, and so I started work at the Shell Film Unit. And Geoffrey Bell, who had already directed a fabulous film called 'Transfer of Power', which was quite beautiful, I'd never seen anything quite like it, it was an absolutely brilliant film, it was beautifully made, and it was an absolutely clear explanation of a subject that one had not approached before.

Sidney Cole: Which was?

Kay Mander: Levers, the principle of levers. Oh God! It was wonderful!

JS: 'Transfer of Power', it began with windmills, and went on to the epi-cyclic gear. Beautiful film. Sorry, I interrupted.

Kay Mander: No, I'm not sure that you're right [laughs]. I'm not sure that you're right, but I won't argue with you! And there were other wonderful films, there was a man called Peter Baylis, who was doing wonderful things with animation, and Frank Rodker who was the animator, who was a minor genius. They were all absolutely brilliant. And Geoffrey Bell, who was tall and had very long legs, and therefore walked very fast, he and I and Erwin Hillier - three man crew - started to work on a film called 'Transfer of Skill', which was about people in wartime doing things that they hadn't done before. For instance there was a man who always used to make fishing rods, doing something with gun barrels and there was a - Feranthes electrical machinery and so on and so forth, were making fuses - detonators and so forth. Anyway, we went away on location, and we shot this film. And it was absolutely fascinating, I carried more heavy tripods than I'd ever met in my life before! And because it was a three man crew, I learned a lot about - well first of all I had to organise all the transport, the

accommodation, everything, all the contacts with the factories that we were working in, the food and so on and so forth, so it was quite a...

Sidney Cole: And hump the machinery around.

Kay Mander: Well, hump the camera [laughing]. We only had a Newman, but we had these very heavy giro tripods, the big tripod was exceedingly heavy. And we came back from that - I think that must have been when I got into the cutting room, because I probably helped in the cutting of that, I'm not quite sure. And I was then asked if I would like to make a little training film at De Havilland's, for myself - me directing - and I said, "Yes please". That was called 'How to File' and it was [makes action presumably] that sort of filing, it was for training apprentices.

Sidney Cole: That was the first time you directed?

Kay Mander: Yeah. And I drove everybody mad, because I wanted to track - they'd never tracked in documentaries before, and me coming from features, I wanted to go into big close ups on lovely pieces of metal with a lovely gleam on them, and the file going to and fro. [laughing]

Sidney Cole: That was before people had got - it had become common to have a zoom lense.

Kay Mander: Well, it didn't exist!

Sidney Cole: Well it existed, but not in general practice.

Kay Mander: What? Not in 1940.

Sidney Cole: Yes.

Kay Mander: Oh ho ho! I will argue with you!

Sidney Cole: Well the first time it was used as far as I can remember was to cover the entire Derby in '39.

AL: Oh, with the zooms? No, no it wasn't, no they were...

Sidney Cole: Anyhow...

Kay Mander: Anyway, Shell had a wonderful cameraman called Sid Beadle, who'd been an electrician, and had become a cameraman. Stan Rodwell was the chief cameraman, and - have you done all this?

AL: No, no, go on.

Kay Mander: And Sid Beadle was the second cameraman. Sid Beadle was a natural. He'd never had any formal training, but he knew enough about everything to work things out. He was the cameraman on 'How to File' and it worked out alright and was great fun. And shortly after that I

was put on to making two films for the fire service, which were photographed by Pat Gay, who was an old feature cameraman, and the trouble with Pat Gay was that he used so many lamps that you couldn't get near the camera or the set or anything![laughing] And of course in those days it was all toques[?] and pups hadn't been invented, it was toques and bowlbys or whatever we called them.

AL: Pups.

Kay Mander: Well no, we didn't have pups, pups were much smaller, we had one k's[?] and... Anyway, we made our two films for the fire service, and then - on all of these one was doing one's own research and cutting and going right through to mixing, which is where I'm very indebted to a gentleman called George Burgess, who was the sound recordist at Riverside, who was an RCA man.

Sidney Cole: Very elegant?

Kay Mander: Well, he was so - he taught me everything about tracks and

Sidney Cole: Very elegant looking person.

AL: No he wasn't.

Kay Mander: Yes, George - he'd worked in Belgium for a long time and had a French wife of a Belgian wife, that's right, beautifully - yes, elegant. But he taught me how to 'bloop' which of course nobody knows about any more - painting bloops!

AL: Gosh, as late as that, were you blooming?

Kay Mander: Well, I'm only in 1941.

AL: I know, but even so!

Kay Mander: Well, some people punched them, but that made a horrible noise.

Sidney Cole: Explain about blooming for the benefit of people who are not in the industry.

Kay Mander: Well, your sound track - your picture was on celluloid and your sound was on celluloid too, and in order to get your film together you had to cut them, and your picture you just joined with a joining machine, or Edgar Anstey showed us how to do it with a piece of blotting paper and two paper clips! [laughter] We were trying to get a film out in seven days at the Shell Film Unit! But when you were joining sound you did a very fine join on the negative joiner, but it still made a little noise when it went through at recording, so you had to paint a sort of - um swirl...

Sidney Cole: Triangular shape.

Kay Mander: No, a swirl with black what was known as blooming ink, which deadened the bump of the join going across. So - where have I got to? After we'd made the fire service films, by which time I'd learnt quite a lot about cameras and so forth, they were making a film about malaria, and Percy... Um, Percy - the man who did the 'Secrets of Life'... Percy Smith!! - Had done all the...

Sidney Cole: Percy Smith and Mary Field producing.

Kay Mander: Well, she - yes they did, but Percy Smith had been commissioned by the Shell Film Unit...

Sidney Cole: They had been doing it from 1900 or something.

AL: From Welwyn, from Welwyn.

Kay Mander: Well wherever. But Shell had commissioned him to do the life-cycle of the mosquito and this that and the other, which he had done absolutely brilliantly, but they were missing certain shots that they wanted for the film. They wanted a close-up of the mosquito laying eggs, and they wanted a mosquito feeding so that you could see its body swelling, with blood and plasma coming up the tail and so forth. And a few other odd shots like that. And they sent Beadle and I down to Horton hospital at Epsom, and they said, "Don't come back 'till you've got them." [laughter] And it took us three weeks.

Sidney Cole: ... And years later...!

Kay Mander: Well, no actually it took us three weeks. And by this time we'd - you couldn't look in any books in wartime, there weren't any books about scientific photography, so we went away with a 400ft Debie. We had learned by devious means that if you wanted to shoot a great big close up, you took your 50mm lens and went "vroom" [makes noise in throat, clearly miming action as well] with it - with an extension tube, but of course we didn't have an extension tube so we had to construct our own. And we ended up with an extension tube, the 400ft Debie, a 50mm lens, holding an area that size on my hand. Which was quite good going.

Sidney Cole: Showing the Mosquito swelling up with the blood.

AL: About an inch square, yes.

Kay Mander: Yes. But in order to - we'd got the stage was a microscope stand which you could work forwards and backwards or sideways, so that having got your mosquito in position you could line it up. I don't think you're going to use any of this but I insist on telling you! I haven't really told you - they bred malaria mosquitoes at Horton hospital because the doctor in charge was a malaria expert, and they used malaria as a fever to treat people who were suffering from GPI - General Paralysis of the Insane.

Sidney Cole: Really? They injected them?

Kay Mander: Mmmm. No they had flasks with net over them full of mosquitoes and just plonked them on people - gave them malaria.

Sidney Cole: Did that ...

Kay Mander: Well the malaria fever burned out the spirochaetes - GPI being the last stages of syphilis.

Sidney Cole: Oh I see - and it worked?

Kay Mander: Yes - up to a point! So we were working in the room with all these muslin covered cages with malaria mosquitoes around [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Did you have any protective covering?

Kay Mander: No, no, no, no, nothing like that. We only got one loose once! Anyway, we started off trying to light this small area you see, and we started out with convex mirrors - concave mirrors, beg your pardon - with one 1k's directed into them, and we etherised - we doped the mosquitoes with ether - but the moment we put them under these two spots they froze solid, you see, when the ether dried out! So that didn't work. So we then got lab flasks with water and put our lights through the flasks, that was better. And we stunned our mosquitoes so we had controllable mosquitoes. And the mosquito, when its been unconscious, when it comes to life it immediately bites, so that one was easy because all we had to do was to get that there, put a mosquito on it and wait.

Sidney Cole: And then photograph it when...

Kay Mander: We were turning at two frames a second to get an exposure. Anyway we did it, we got the mosquito laying eggs, we did everything and by the end of that time, Beadle and I had learnt an awful lot about microrography or whatever you like to - photo-micrography, micrography, everything. And about lenses, I know I was terribly lucky.

Sidney Cole: Did you get congratulations from anybody?

Kay Mander: Oh no! No, it was wartime, I mean to hell with it! We just had fun [laughs] - didn't even get a credit!

Sidney Cole: Didn't even get a credit? In those days, who got a credit on such a film? Just the...

Kay Mander: Well, in that case, the man who'd done the greater part of the work - Percy Smith. He'd done magnificent things on it.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, sure. But you didn't get a credit, or the cameraman?

Kay Mander: Well, the main cameraman would have got a credit, but not Beadle and I, we just went out to do some dogs-bodying, which was to our advantage. Anyway I went on working at Shell. What else did I do at Shell for God's sake?

Sidney Cole: Oh, this is at Shell. Re-tracking a bit, how did you come to be with Shell?

Kay Mander: Because I'd met Arthur Elton, he offered me a job as an assistant to Geoffrey Bell.

Sidney Cole: Oh that was it, yes, at the Highlander, yes.

Kay Mander: And then I made - by this time Rod had come to Shell, too, because Arthur Elton had said at one time, "Do you know anybody who speaks Spanish?" And I said, "Yes, my boyfriend does." And so he said, "Well, let me meet him." So I took Rod into the Highlander, and he duly met Arthur Elton. [laughing] Arthur Elton said, "Do you know all about editing?" And Rod said, "Well yes, I've been in the cutting room." "Do you speak Spanish?" And Rod said, "Yes," and Arthur said, "Right, start on Monday!"

Sidney Cole: Why did he want people who spoke Spanish?

Kay Mander: Because shell were doing foreign versions for Latin America of all their films. Anyway, Rod was to start on Monday, so I took him into the cutting room on the Saturday morning, and showed him how a Movieola worked, and how everything else worked. [laughing]

Sidney Cole: You mean Rod hadn't - he didn't know anything about cutting?

Kay Mander: No! He was an assistant director, and a director! Oh, he knew about cutting, but he didn't know how the equipment worked! And he started on Monday, and he was given a film for Brazil, which of course is Portuguese and not Spanish! [laughter]

Sidney Cole: Near enough, near enough!

Kay Mander: [laughing] Not in the least the same! Absolutely not the same!

Sidney Cole: Well it is a bit?

Kay Mander: No it's not actually! Anyhow, he went on and became a great success, he mastered Portuguese as far as laying commentaries was concerned, and he mastered Spanish and then he went on to make all the anti-submarine warfare films for the Admiralty.

Sidney Cole: ASAC[?]

Kay Mander: ASAC[?] films, and some of the RADAR films as well.

JS: So, if you - you haven't said this but if I may just interpolate from...

Kay Mander: [laughing] It's all right, you can interpolate!

JS: At this time, Shell - the great international company - have said, "Our film unit is at the disposal of the British Government for the war effort." And this was very important, and Alex B[?] was very important in this. And so Shell had developed this film unit, and had suddenly said, "Turn it over to the war effort!"

Kay Mander: Absolutely. And did - and it was wonderful.

Sidney Cole: I must just, for the sake of the tape, say that was an interjection by John Sherman who worked for the Shell Film Unit.

JS: After the war! But I know the history of the place.

Kay Mander: Yes, I'm afraid I sailed through life just concentrating on making films. I mean - I can't say one didn't take the war seriously - but one took the war as it came.

Sidney Cole: Oh I think everybody did.

Kay Mander: And therefore I just got on with making film.

[all talk at once]

Sidney Cole: I have in front of me a list of films which you personally made, which starts in 1942 with a thing called 'Fruit Farming', how did you get to that?

Kay Mander: It wasn't called 'Fruit Farming', it was called...

Sidney Cole: 'Fruit Spraying'!

Kay Mander: 'Fruit Spraying', that's right. That came before the war films, that's right, that came before.

Sidney Cole: That was in 1942 according to this list.

Kay Mander: Oh I should have thought it was earlier. However. That's probably when it was released. The order of making was, 'How to File', 'Fruit Spraying', 'Fire Service' films, playing about with mosquitoes, 'Debris Tunnelling'. Have you got 'Debris Tunnelling'?

Sidney Cole: This is the list - seventeen films of yours which you directed.

Kay Mander: Well I directed over fifty, so let's have a look. May I look at the list, or not? Going to get me a little confused.

SC:... which are in the British Film Archive, and quite a lot of them, even, you can see because...

Kay Mander: Well I've got copies of some of them. I've got videos of them

Sidney Cole: Some are in copies which they don't allow you to see, because they're just single copies, and you know... So tell me, was 'Fruit Spraying' your first?

Kay Mander: No, the one I've told you - 'How to File', which was purely Shell internal.

Sidney Cole: I don't think that's on the list actually...

AL: Come back to 'How to File', when you say it's Shell internal, why should it be Shell internal.

Kay Mander: Well it was made for use at De Havilland's school. In other words it was just a little thing that they just pushed in...

AL: Oh, at Hatfield?

Kay Mander: At Hatfield, yes, that's where we filmed it. It was for use in the apprenticeship scheme - I don't know why or anything - In that day one just did what one was told to do.

Sidney Cole: Can you tell me, what was the first film you directed on your own?

Kay Mander: 'How to File'.

Sidney Cole: 'How to File'? Tell me about that?

Kay Mander: [nonplussed] Well, I have rather. It was about apprentices.

Sidney Cole: But how did it happen that you came to direct it, I mean, who said, "Kay..."

Kay Mander: Well, I was working for the Shell film unit, and they said, "All right, you go out with Beadle and a couple of electricians and go out to Hatfield and make a film about apprentices learning how to use files." And it was less than a one-reeler, I reckon.

Sidney Cole: So, how did you feel about that, did you feel...?

Kay Mander: I didn't feel! [laughs] I just enjoyed doing it, and um...

Sidney Cole: You didn't feel frightened, or anything about directing?

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: You just thought you could do it anyway??

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: What did you feel.

Kay Mander: Well, [laughs] as I said, I just went and did it!

AL: Isn't this what we were saying, that you know how it cuts, and so you know how to direct it.

Kay Mander: Well, you know what you want it to look like - it's what you were saying - you go and look at a screen and fill it with pictures.

Sidney Cole: So you didn't feel any great problems about doing it?

[pause]

Sidney Cole: Obviously not.

AL: If I may suggest, I reckon with Bead[le], you wouldn't be terribly frightened.

Kay Mander: Well, one didn't have time to be, there were so many things going on that one had to organise. It was a two-man crew. And one had no time to think about one's self.

Sidney Cole: Great. Well, so what about that list which I've just given you. Can you go through that, and say - you know - anything that's important about any of those films that are listed there.

Kay Mander: Well, they're my life, that's all.

Sidney Cole: Well, that's the point that we're talking about, Kay. So what's the next one on your list after 'Fruit Spraying'?

Kay Mander: Well, there were two fire service films, you've only got one here, the other one is at the Imperial War Museum.

Sidney Cole: They were based on what? Actual contact with what was happening in the Blitz?

AL: [laughing] Take the list back, so that we can talk about them. It's inhibiting really.

Kay Mander: [clearly not happy]It's not, it's shocking. AL: Yes, well, fair enough. Alright.

[SC starts talking]

Kay Mander: [over] Well, Sid, Sid, Sid! If one in those days - and I don't know what it's like now - but in those days in documentary, one was told that somebody wanted a film. In this case the National Fire Service wanted some training films, they wanted a film to explain - they had just become the National Fire Service. In other words it was the first time that they had an overall command with all the fire services in the country, and there was a system of command with the right way to give instructions, and the right way to do this that and the other - which was mobilising procedure - which they wanted to put on film, so that they could send it out to all the regions, and the regions would all be working on the same basis. And that was a sound film, because obviously, there were a lot of people talking on telephones and that sort of thing. So the routine was that one went to the National Fire Service, and they said, "Officer So and So is going to look after you." So Officer So and So took you around and you went to various fire stations

and you studied how they worked, and you decided how you could best put it on film, and you wrote a script and you did a budget and you organised your shooting, and you went and shot it. In this case we were shooting two films, we were shooting one called 'Mobilising Procedure' and the other called 'Water Relaying', which was getting water from point A to point B, which they could do by various means - there's different pumps and so forth. That was very complicated because it involved me understanding water pressures, and - what do you call it? - you lose pressure, and all sorts of things with different lengths. So I had a water expert who tried to teach me all these things - it took a very long time! [laughing] Because in order to script the film and to make it an intelligible whole, I had to understand the principles behind it. Does that answer your question about how one went about doing it? So that one then went out and made the film with back up from the Shell Film Unit - who gave you the money after all - and with certain help. Well they saw rushes and reported back on rushes, and you then came back and you cut your film together, and you took it right through to show-copy stage. Right the way through doing your own opticals and everything.

Sidney Cole: Was this connected with the Ministry of Information in any way, these films that you were doing?

Kay Mander: Yes, these were Ministry of Information, the Fire Service ones were.

AL: Coming back - can I interrupt? - How much - not veto - how much...

Kay Mander: Producer control?

AL:... did the Fire Service have?

Kay Mander: Oh, the Fire Service had to be happy that you were saying what they wanted said, yes. Oh absolutely. But they had the script and they were with you when you were filming.

JS: Who was producing, Arthur or Geoffrey?

Kay Mander: Not Geoffrey - Arthur or... I'm not sure. One wasn't very conscious of a producer. [laughs]

Sidney Cole: That's interesting, you weren't really conscious of a producer?

Kay Mander: No! Because the producer didn't know the ins and outs of the technicalities

JS: This was very the Shell tradition. When I worked there much later, I hardly knew who was the producer.

Kay Mander: Well, they didn't know the technicalities, so if you could satisfy the people who you were making the film for, they assumed that it was all alright.

Sidney Cole: Didn't you have any time from a personal point of view? You must have been involved in the fact that there were a lot of reserved occupations during the war, people making films, for instance were exempted from call-up. Did you have any problems about that?

Kay Mander: What? You mean guilty feelings about being exempt? No, none whatsoever. I'm completely amoral. I was only interested in myself.

Sidney Cole: Just for the record, there was an age limit before which people got called up for military service, and in terms of films of course, one could be exempted because you were doing a job which was important, which indeed yours was.

Kay Mander: Well, I don't know whether it ever arose in my case or not - that's why I went into the... I avoided call up in the first place by going working for the Petroleum Welfare... Petroleum thingy.

Sidney Cole: That was when [indecipherable]

Kay Mander: It never occurred. I never know whether there was any query about it or not. I know we started our company because the animators we wanted...[SC talks over indecipherable] Well I haven't got to that yet... We started it because the animator was in danger of getting called up, and the only way we could avoid losing her - she'd been at Shell - was to start a company so that she would continue doing valuable work.

Sidney Cole: This was 'Basic'?

Kay Mander: Yep.

Sidney Cole: Yes, so tell us about 'Basic'?

AL: Have we got to that? Do you want to lose Shell yet? No, we want to carry on with Shell, I think first.

Kay Mander: Oh, I think you ought to have the story of why I left Shell! [laughing]

AL: Fine, yes.

Sidney Cole: Why did you leave Shell, and then we'll go on to...

Kay Mander: While I was at Shell I married Rod - or Rod married me, I'm not sure which.

Sidney Cole: Well, you married each other, would that be fair enough?

Kay Mander: Yes, yes. Because married people were not allowed to work together at Shell.

Sidney Cole: Really! Why was that?

Kay Mander: Oh! It was just Shell, they wouldn't employ married people.

JS: There was no reason for it, it was just their policy. I had this when I worked there.

Sidney Cole: What an extraordinary thing!

Kay Mander: I'll tell you another one in a minute about the United Nations - I haven't got there yet!

Sidney Cole: But Shell - you don't understand why Shell had that policy?

Kay Mander: Well, it was a policy of the time - of the time.

JS: [over] It was a policy, there was no reason for it.

Sidney Cole: The must have had an...

Kay Mander: They felt as though a married couple would try and take Shell over, you see.

Sidney Cole: Ahh I see, alright. Was that why you left Shell?

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: Why did you leave Shell?

Kay Mander: I left Shell because I was making a film - I can't remember which one it was - but it was, we were under pressure because we had to get it out, they wanted it and they kept on about it. And I had got a booking in the theatre to run my tracks before I went down to Riverside to mix. And I was thrown out by Lord Beaverbrook, who'd suddenly decided he wanted to see a film! [laughing] And I had a blinding row with a man called Percy (What was his name?) who was the office manager at Shell, I had a blinding row with him and resigned on the spot.

Sidney Cole: Because you hadn't been allowed to see your film.

Kay Mander: I felt I was more important than Lord Beaverbrook at the time! [laughing]

Sidney Cole: Well, you probably were actually.

Kay Mander: Well, that's what I thought, anyway - nobody else did! So that's why I left Shell, and I went to Rotha.

Sidney Cole: You went to?

Kay Mander: Paul Rotha Productions.

Sidney Cole: Oh yes, what was Paul's company at the time called?

Kay Mander: It was called Paul Rotha Productions. And he was making these rather wonderful animation films that he made with the Isotype Institute - 'World of Plenty'... 'World of Plenty' was the great one, wasn't it? And Professor Joad was a frequenter of the office.

Sidney Cole: Joad the Obscure, as they called him.

Kay Mander: That's right, yes.

Sidney Cole: So what film did you make then?

Kay Mander: I made a film called 'Highland Doctor', which was the story of the Highlands and Islands medical service, which was the first nationalised medical service in this country.

Sidney Cole: Flying out to the Outer Hebrides, and...

Kay Mander: That's right, yes.

AL: You directed it?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, I was always the director there.

Sidney Cole: You went out to the islands?

JS: Did you write it?

Kay Mander: I did everything! JS: That's the Shell tradition, isn't it?

Kay Mander: Well, no it was the documentary tradition, we all did everything.

JS: In my life, of course, yes but... AL: No - you begin it.

Kay Mander: No, no. I mean that was the way documentary worked, because I mean nobody could do your research for you. I think this is awful when - I've been away and worked on films - I worked with a man called John McGrath, a Scotsman, on a film about Suez, and his research had been done by somebody else. And the whole of the time he was shooting that film he had to ask her what particularly he was shooting at that place, and why. I found this extraordinary, I mean, in documentary we did our own research, we wrote our own script so we knew why we were writing the script, the reasons behind everything... yes.

Sidney Cole: Well let's get back to that...

Kay Mander: So, 'Highland Doctor', you've got, yes.

Sidney Cole: 'Highland Doctor', was there a significant thing particularly about 'Highland Doctor' that you can recall? [KM laughs] It sounds like you did!

Kay Mander: Well it was an incredible experience, because the Outer Hebrides were number three defence area, I think, we couldn't go to Barra where we should have gone, and we couldn't go to a place called Applecross on the coastline, which was number one defence area. That's where they were putting all the Anthrax on the island in Gruinard Bay, God help them. So, anyway, we went to Lewis and Harris and North Uist, and this was a strange film, because it combined actors acting out the historical aspects of the medical service, with the real doctors actually working at that time. And they were great characters.

Sidney Cole: Did they go by boat to the outer islands?

Kay Mander: Well, no they lived on the outer islands, but there was one man who had to stand on a hillside and run up a flag if he wanted a boat to take him across to a small island. And there was another one who went across a very narrow strait by boat and had a motor-cycle on the island. And we went across and we couldn't get back because a strong wind had blown up! We had to wait about four hours for the tide to go down. And they were given a basic salary in order to practice there, you see. Because they wouldn't have got enough money from the local people. Anyway it was a fascinating film to make, and...

Sidney Cole: Who photographed it?

Kay Mander: A man called Teddy Catford.

JS: Oh Teddy! [general surprise]

Kay Mander: May I tell you about Teddy catching a fish? Teddy was an ardent fisherman, and every time we were anywhere near any small boats or anything, Teddy wanted to fish. And we went all the way from Rodel - in the south of Harris - across to North Uist in a small motor-boat. Teddy failed to catch anything. That was my fault! [laughs] I was the director, I was in charge, I hadn't organised any fish! And we then went back to the mainland, and we went up to Ullapool where we had a lot of shooting to do. And we went out again one day, and Teddy caught a fish, he caught a very large - I think it was a bream, it was sort of yellowish - and it came into the boat, and Teddy picked up a beer bottle and bashed it on the head. [laughing] You've never seen anything like it! Anyway we got it back to the hotel, and - this lovely fish - and Teddy took it in, and said to the hotel, would they cook it? And they made it into a fish pie, and that was my fault to! [laughing] Teddy wanted it to come out with an apple in it's mouth, or something! [laughing] Teddy was a lovely person!

Sidney Cole: So tell us - go on from there, what were the next films you did?

Kay Mander: Well, I just want to say one more thing about 'Highland Doctor', I gave Alex Mackenzie his first professional acting part - the man who was later in...

Sidney Cole: Otherwise he was a local, was he?

Kay Mander: No, he was a schoolteacher in Glasgow, who used to do monologues and things like that at ceilidhs. Sort of semi-amateur. And he went on from there to do 'Whiskey Galore!'

and 'The Puffer' and sundry other films like that. [NB Actually, 'Rockets Galore!' and 'The Maggie'] Should I go on? Go on? Well I just went on making films. Paul Rotha Productions.

Sidney Cole: All these films that you did...

Kay Mander: Well, let's finish Paul Rotha Productions, shall we? Well there was a sort of schism, where part of...

AL: We used to have one of those when we were kids! [laughter]

Kay Mander: It was the breakaway of what became Data...

Sidney Cole: Which you were associated with?

Kay Mander: No.

AL: Which was Donald?

Kay Mander: Which as Donald Alexander. No, they wanted me to join, but I didn't want to. I wanted to be on my own. What had I done by then, I'd made 'Highland Doctor' and 'New Builders', the two films I'd made with Rotha.

Sidney Cole: 'New Builders' isn't here, but...

Kay Mander: 'New Builders' was - they were all COI.

Sidney Cole: 'Debris Tunnel'?

Kay Mander: That was Shell.

Sidney Cole: And 'Penicillin'?

Kay Mander: That came after I'd left Rotha.

Sidney Cole: Ah, and then 'New Builders'... 'New Builders' must have been...

JS: [over SC] Did you make 'Penicillin'?

Kay Mander: [over SC] I didn't make it, no - [aside] I'll tell you what I did on it actually. [to SC] No. 'Highland Doctor' and 'New Builders' were with Rotha.

Sidney Cole: Ah. Wrong order.

Kay Mander: And then came the division.

Sidney Cole: And so where did you go? You went to where?

Kay Mander: Wait a minute, I didn't go anywhere. I'm just trying to think... 'New Builders' was photographed by Su [NB Wolfgang Suschitzky], and it was an enchanting film to work on - we built a couple of houses! [laughs] It was about training boys for the building trade. We shot it at Brixton school of building - or whatever it called itself - and the only actual building that was going on at the time was agricultural workers' cottages - these semi-detached basic ones - and Mulberry. And I remember going to a series of meetings, a lot of important gentlemen - who they were I don't know - sitting there around the table, saying, "Could we tell her about Mulberry?" And me saying, "Well what's Mulberry?" And they said, "Well, it's all concrete." And me saying, "Oh I'm not interested! I don't want that sort of thing!" [laughs] So I never discovered what Mulberry was, until later!

Sidney Cole: And Mulberry was the floating harbour I suppose?

Kay Mander: Yes! So I never discovered it until years later!

Sidney Cole: In terms of dates we're leaping a bit, because there were films called 'Debris Tunnelling', 'Penicillin', what happened with those?

Kay Mander: Yes, well 'Debris Tunnelling' was at Shell. 'Highland Doctor' and 'New Builders' were with Rotha. And I then was asked by somebody at Film Centre if Su and I would go and shoot what was left to shoot - the laboratory sequences - on Alex Shaw's film about Penicillin. Alex had done all of the live stuff and the French stuff - the battlefield stuff. And they wanted the whole of the Fleming discovery story and the laboratory stuff, which we did - that's what I did on 'Penicillin'. Which was very interesting, again, and used - oh all sorts of photomicrography, micrography and this that and the other, and we met all of the interesting people, Doctor Chain and goodness knows who, at Oxford. And thereafter, Rod and Sam Napier-Bell, who had also been working at Shell - first assisting Rod - Rod got him out of a factory. Sam Napier-Bell had been a cameraman at Gaumont-British when Rod was working there. No? Never met him? And Rod disentangled him from a factory. Rod disentangled Alan Gorley[?], too. He disentangled Alan Gorley as his editor, and he disentangled Sam to come and be his assistant-cum-cameraman on these Naval and RADAR films.

JS: One of these days I'll tell you about Tommy Duggen, but not now.

Kay Mander: Who's Tommy Duggen?

Sidney Cole: Tommy Duggen, I can tell you about Tommy Duggen, but anyhow, don't interrupt.

Kay Mander: This is - we're going on forever now, we must come to an end.

Sidney Cole: We're getting onto the forming of Basic are we?

Kay Mander: No, we're not - well, we are. So I didn't want to form a company. Rod wanted to...

Sidney Cole: Didn't you?

Kay Mander: No. I wanted to be - I just didn't want any burdens. Rod wanted to form a company, and so it was Rod and Sam and myself who formed the company.

Sidney Cole: This is Basic?

Kay Mander: This is Basic films, and...

Sidney Cole: What? Just about '44?

Kay Mander: 44, yes something like that.

AL: Late 44.

Kay Mander: 'Near Home' was '45, so it must have been, yes. We wanted to form it as - Data was going to be a co-operative, and Rod didn't want to form a co-operative, because he wanted to retain control, so we formed a co-partnership.

Sidney Cole: Which was you and Rod?

Kay Mander: No. Me, Rod and Sam, and two people elected from the staff - two board members elected from the staff. I.E. Three and two. And it was all very interesting, it worked very well.

Sidney Cole: Who were the two from the staff?

Kay Mander: Well, they varied. 'Tubby' Englander was one of them at one time...

Sidney Cole: 'Tubby' Englander? He was one of the first people I met in the industry.

Kay Mander: Ah! Well, he was our first cameraman, and then Michael Currer-Briggs came as the second cameraman, and Larry Pauser[?] came as Tubby's assistant, and Peter Brown[?] came also, and Bob Camplin.[?]

Sidney Cole: Wasn't Cynthia on it?

Kay Mander: Well, Cynthia was the reason for the company starting, because we wanted an animation bench. Cynthia Whitby. No, not Moody, Whitby.

Sidney Cole: Right so, you're set up with this new company, and you're going to make documentaries?

Kay Mander: And scientific and educational films. And we did!

Sidney Cole: For how long. Twenty years?

Kay Mander: Five years.

Sidney Cole: Five years? Surely longer?

Kay Mander: No, because the staff decided they wanted to make cinema commercials. John - you'd better tell this story, rather than me because... Oh no, you weren't there, were you? Because we'd formed a co-partnership, very democratic.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, but you had three to two votes anyway, so...

Kay Mander: Ah yes, but the third sided with the two.

Sidney Cole: Ah. And when was that? After you'd made a lot of films, surely?

Kay Mander: No, it would have been 1949 - late '49 I think. Oh, we'd made a lot of films, yes - a great many films.

Sidney Cole: The staff decided they wanted to go and...

KM:... and make cinema commercials.

Sidney Cole: There's a lot of money involved, presumably?

Kay Mander: I don't know that they thought about that, they just wanted to make cinema commercials, and Rod didn't. So Rod resigned, and I was sacked!

Sidney Cole: Rod resigned and the remaining people sacked you?

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Which was charming of them!

Kay Mander: One of my best friends, Leon Clore took over. He'd been brought in as my production manager on the last film I made there! [laughs]

[break in recording]

Sidney Cole: Now, Basic, Kay you were talking about, and you had problems finally. You did a lot of good films at Basic.

Kay Mander: Basic was a wonderful company, we had a wonderful crew, wonderful technicians...

Sidney Cole: Tell me some of the films you made.

Kay Mander: Well, the films that Basic made. They made a lovely film called 'The History of the Wool Trade' for COI which was a beautiful film, and John Sherman, who was with us for a

brief period, made 'The Story of Liver fluke!' [laughter] Liver fluke! - something that affects sheep. It was a beautiful, beautiful film. I made something called 'Near Home'.

AL: 'Can We Natter??' French language teaching films you made?

Sidney Cole: Oh I was going to ask you about that.

Kay Mander: Well, wait a minute, lets get to the nitty gritty - I had a lot of fun because I took on a contract with Mary Field - Children's Film Foundation. Mary and I always got on very well together, and we did a series of - I'd shot bits and pieces for her children's magazines and things - and I put up to her the idea that we should make something called, 'How, What and Why?' - which was three episodes in each one, about how things happened and why they happened and so on. One of the items which was, "Why does the outside horse on a roundabout go faster than the inside one?" Which was fascinating to demonstrate on film, with white tape and children running and things - it was lovely! And those were very difficult because we had a penalty clause, if I didn't deliver them by such and such a date they would deduct so much of the fee for every day thereafter. And that was very good training, we got them in on time. Each one had an animated subject - "How does the Elephant use it's trunk?" was one of them.

Sidney Cole: That's a Rudyard Kipling thing.

Kay Mander: Yeah, anyway, they were good fun and good training, and everybody shot some of them - you shot - did you shoot one of them, John.

JS: I shot one on railway signalling, and you hated it!

Kay Mander: You shot one on railway signalling! [laughs]

Sidney Cole: John Sherman talking there!

Kay Mander: And there was one on "How do the locks on a canal work?", 'Railway Signalling', 'How do the patterns get onto fabrics?'... They were very interesting anyway.

JS: They were great fun to do. I remember doing 'Railway signalling' and you sent me and Tubby Englander out to shoot this, and I knew all about railway signalling, I'd got it absolutely buttoned up, and I shot it in a day and a half, and it had been pissing with rain - there was no exposure whatsoever! And when we saw the rushes, I clearly remember you, Kay, sending for me and saying, "Well..."

Kay Mander: But we had a desk facing each other, why would I send for you? [laughing]

JS: Kay was the producer, and she sent for me, having seen my rushes on this signalling thing, and she said, "I can't think why we employ you, John!" [laughter] That was the beginning of our friendship!

Kay Mander: I can't quite believe that! Anyway you probably quite right. You must have done something fucking silly!

Sidney Cole: That will have to be an item in John's story, we're now interested in yours, Kay, so..

Kay Mander: So have we got to 'La Famille Martin',yet?

Sidney Cole: No, I'm going to ask you separately - I would like to ask you, obviously 'La Famille Martin' relates to the fact that in your girlhood, and indeed before that at school, you learnt a lot about French, and you spent a lot of time in Paris, so that meant that you were well qualified to do a series about the French language. But also the thing that interests me is that this must have been one of the - an actually pioneer film about language...

Kay Mander: It was. It was the first.

Sidney Cole: I must have actually the first. So tell me about it - how did it come about it, and how did you go about it and all that.

Kay Mander: Well, it was a Ministry of Education, and two absolutely brilliant professors at Cambridge, called Charvet[?]and somebody or other, who had written these - this story - they'd written one story about 'La Famille Martin' and the Ministry of Education gave it to us and said, "Can you do anything with this?" and we had the usual technical advisor from the Ministry of Education, and we all got together and we worked it out into a script. And the thing that was good about it was that we went to France and we cast real French actors as Monsieur and Madame Martin. The children, the girl was an aspiring actress - I think it was her first film part - and the two boys were just two ordinary people. And it was just one of those things that worked - that's all I can say. It was 194...

Sidney Cole: 1945?

Kay Mander: No, no, no. It was after the War.

Sidney Cole: Oh, 1946?

Kay Mander: Well, I won the BFI award in 1949, so it must have been 1948. And the first one - they liked the first one, so Jacques Brunius was commentateur[?]. And this is another piece of technical nonsense, you see. We decided we wanted to present 'La Famille Martin' as a family portrait - as a group - and they would come on the screen, and the commentator's voice says, "Monsieur Martin", and he comes on, "Madame Martin", etc, and you get the whole five of the family, and then the shadow stands up in front of the family group and says, "Et moi, je suis la commentateur[?]". Break - so how do you shoot it? Can I tell you how we shot it? There was a wonderful cinema called the Crown Theatre in Wardour Street, which was run by a lovely gentleman called Frost, who was always known as Frosty. And so we decided that we couldn't afford any elaborate back-projection, or anything like that, we'd got to do it ourselves. So we went to Frosty and we talked and we decided that we could project our family onto the screen

and line up our camera and our actor and then take the family off the scree, and have the open light from the projector on the screen, and our shadow just stood up in front of it. So all you had to was a straight slap together, and there we were!

JS: Who was [indecipherable] this, Tubby?

Kay Mander: Must have been, but that was Rod's idea, don't worry, Rod and me worked that one out. So the beginning of the film is beautiful.[Others all talk over - indecipherable] Oh! I don't think we bothered about stops! [laughs]

Sidney Cole: How many films did you make on that series?

Kay Mander: After the first one they liked it and they said, could we do two more, and we made another one called 'Depart de'Vacances' which was about them all going away on holiday and forgetting everything, and having a meal en route, which introduced everybody to food and so forth. And the third one was called 'Histoire de Poisson' when the cure was coming to lunch and they wanted a fish, and they all went out and caught a fish, and so they ended up with about six fishes - I can't remember - anyway they were all very funny. And they were made with French crews in Paris and in the Loire. No, Michael Currer-Briggs photographed two and three. Tubby photographed one.

JS: So he did!

Kay Mander: Michael Currer- Briggs photographed two and three, and Peter Brown was his assistant on that. Peter Brown was the father of two very very good camera people at the moment...

Sidney Cole: That - those films were very famous in their day, and they were pioneer films I think in teaching languages by television.

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: They were shown on television, weren't they?

Kay Mander: I don't - No I shouldn't think so, no they were strictly for schools. But I know that they were completely original because Donald... [forgets name] His family had horses at Chantilly. [laughing] He worked for Gaumont-British at one time! He went to Canada, and he wanted me to go to Canada and make some sort of similar films in Canada, but it never worked out. I think he made some, and when we - Rod and I - left Basic, we made one for Linguaphone on the same basis. Linguaphone liked them, and we made an English teaching one for Linguaphone, called 'Saturday Morning' with Russell Waters, and...

Sidney Cole: Oh Russell Waters, that reminds me, yes, quite a good actor.

Kay Mander: Good little actor. No, they were, they were very original because they were entertaining, and yet...

AL: Who wrote the scripts for those?

Kay Mander: Well, for the French ones, a combination of the two professors at Cambridge, and myself.

JS: And Jacques Brunius.

Kay Mander: He didn't write the script, no.

JS: Didn't he? I thought he worked on the scripts, I must have got it wrong.

Kay Mander: He was the commentator.

Sidney Cole: So we're now at about what? 1945 or 1946 or something. When did your connection with documentary end, and you did something else?

Kay Mander: Can I just go back to one thing? I made a film at Basic called 'Twenty Four Square Miles' on which the commentator was John Arlot.

Sidney Cole: What was that about? London?

Kay Mander: No, it was about Oxfordshire, between Banbury and Chipping Norton, and John Arlot was the commentator, and he was still a policeman! He'd done a bit of radio... and this was his first experience of doing commentary.

JS: [laughing] Cricket and Claret.

Kay Mander: [laughing] Cricket and Claret, yes. I've always wanted to write to him and say, "Do you remember doing 'Twenty Four Square Miles'?" I'm sure he wouldn't.

[all talk together] JS: But then there was, surely Kay - Let me interrupt please. There was a great time when we were all saying that there ought to be visual units which...

Kay Mander: But that was near home. That was near home.

JS: That was near home. And now, umpteen years later, everyone's saying, "Yes, of course we've got to have films for this and that.

Kay Mander: Ships, books, yes.

JS: We were talking about this....

Kay Mander: 'Near Home', yes that was Claude Jenkins.

JS: That was Claude Jenkins.

Kay Mander: Who taught me more about England than anybody I've ever known.

Sidney Cole: Kay, what were you about to say?

Kay Mander: Well I don't know.

JS: I'm sorry, I interrupted. I want to hear about 'A Plan to Work On'. May I just mention that?

Kay Mander: Oh God! The worst film I ever made! [laughing] Why do you want to mention that?

Sidney Cole: What was that, John? JS: A film called, 'A Plan to Work on'. What do you have to say about that, Kay? You seem to have a...

Kay Mander: I don't know, I don't know what John wants to say about it!

Sidney Cole: No, no. We're getting a bit disorganised.

Kay Mander: No, but why did you bring it up then?

JS: Because, when I joined Basic you were very much involved in this film about Dumfries...

Kay Mander: Dunfermline.

JS: Dunfermline, thank you. And it was going to be called 'A Plan to Work On'.

Kay Mander: It was called 'A Plan to Work On.'

JS:... And you were in a state about it, if I may say...

Kay Mander: It was one awful film, that's why! [laughing]

Sidney Cole: John, come on now! Kay...

Kay Mander: It was a terrible film...

JS: Well, ask Kay about it, it was...

Sidney Cole: No, no, no, no, we really are getting away from...

JS: [talking over] It was a very idealistic, socialist film - political film!

Sidney Cole: ...We're getting unstructured and disorganised, come on now please, because I am getting lost.

AL: Chronologically.

Kay Mander: We're being very boring, lets face it.

Sidney Cole: We're getting a bit mixed up.

AL: Chronological now, we've got to 'Twenty Four Square Miles', for Linguaphone.

Kay Mander: No. 'Twenty Four Square Miles' was at Basic. Linguaphone was after we'd left Basic, and it was called 'Saturday Morning'.

Sidney Cole: Yes, we'd got that far. But then John brought in something about a film in Dunfermline?

Kay Mander: Well, forget 'A Plan to Work On', it's superbly unimportant, that was at Basic. It was a very bad film, it's just one of the films we made at Basic, that was all.

Sidney Cole: Why did John have a recollect? Because there was something special about it?

Kay Mander: I don't know. I've no idea.

Sidney Cole: All right, lets go on from there.

Kay Mander: I've no idea![laughing]

AL: We can come back to it.

Kay Mander: Rod then got us signed - at least was then asked to go out to Indonesia by the United Nations to set up a documentary and educational film unit for the Indonesian Government.

Sidney Cole: This was around about what? '48 or something, '49?

Kay Mander: 1950-ish. The Linguaphone film was late... No - Oh God! I'd forgotton! After I left Basic, I got involved with something called 'The Changing Face of Europe', which Humphrey Jennings was producing, which was all about rebuilding things. I did the transport one.

Sidney Cole: Did you travel around at all?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, we went everywhere, to Ham and Cologne and everywhere - that was 1949 - 1950, it was nasty.

Sidney Cole: Is this Humphrey Jennings as a producer?

Kay Mander: Yes, he produced all six of them.

Sidney Cole: Because people don't think much about Humphrey Jennings as a producer, I mean they think of his very...

Kay Mander: They only think of 'Diary for Timothy' and that's all they ever think of.

AL: Tell us about him.

Sidney Cole: Come on, Alan.

Kay Mander: Well, I'd known Humphrey ever since I came into documentary. He was just a most interesting person. If there was a party or anything, Humphrey was always the person you wanted to talk to, because he was always interesting, and not always talking about films. He was very imaginative. I met him once when I was doing the recce for 'La Famille Martin', we happened to stay in the same hotel in Paris, and I remember walking through the streets of Paris with Humphrey and leaning over the bridge and looking at the river, and Humphrey going on about everything, I mean - Humphrey! Being Humphrey - poet, writer, everything. Wonderful person. And Dalrymple was the overall producer of this series. And Humphrey was sort of active producer - he was making one of the films, he was making the health one. Jacques Brunius was doing one as a director, I was doing one. I can't remember who the other people were, there were six of them altogether. And that was one where Jerry [forgets name] - lighting cameraman? Jerry?

Sidney Cole: Oh, well, doesn't matter.

Kay Mander: No, doesn't matter, does it? That came before when I was asked to go out to... Well I was on McCarthy's blacklist at that time, and I was told I couldn't do it.

Sidney Cole: Were you really? Why was that?

Kay Mander: Well, why do you think? [laughter] Silly question!

AL: Can I stop a bit? Going back you said Ian Dalrymple was the overall producer - what were your contacts with Ian Dalrymple like?

Kay Mander: Well, I'd known Ian since the Denham days when he was a scriptwriter and so forth. I didn't know him closely, and I didn't get the 'Changing Face of Europe' job through Ian at all, I got it through Stuart Shulberg and Lothar Woolf, who were the ECA Marshall Plan people here in London. Quite how I'd come to meet them, I don't know, or where that had arisen from, but it was they who asked me to do it. And they were going to employ me direct, and then they said they couldn't and told me why, and said but I should go and work and do it 'round the back door'.

Sidney Cole: What, with a different name or something?

Kay Mander: No, no, no, no, no. As long as they didn't employ me direct it was alright.

AL: What was your impression of Ian Dalrymple - you know, as a...

Kay Mander: I mean I never had that sort of contact with him. I always thought he was a very excellent scriptwriter, he was a very nice man, Rod always admired him. He was a very solid, nice person. Why, particularly?

AL: Well, you know, one hears a lot of stories about Ian Dalrymple, some people think, you know, he's wonderful, other people say... you know - the thing at the Bush, you know, they talk about the "Dalrymple boys". You know, this is the, you know, what the apprenticeship scheme - or the so-called apprenticeship scheme...

Kay Mander: I wouldn't know, because I didn't know him until Denham, you see. When he was writing isolated - different scripts. He had a lady called Budge Cooper who was - she was working as his assistant at the time, and he was writing, sort of, scripts in master scene and she was breaking them down and getting them into absolute script form. That's where I first met Budge Cooper.

Sidney Cole: Her father was quite a solid film director.

Kay Mander: That I didn't know, because I didn't meet up with her again...

AL: Budge's father? Budge Cooper's father? I didn't know that.

Kay Mander: Yes, I didn't know that. I didn't meet with Budge again until Data - Paul Rotha productions.

Sidney Cole: Anyhow, we're losing sight of...So, 'Changing Face of Europe' - after that, what?

Kay Mander: Rod went out to Indonesia...

Sidney Cole: And you followed?

Kay Mander: [laughs] Well somewhere in the middle of all this I - well first of all, when we were asked to go to Indonesia, we were asked to go to Jakarta and believe it or not, neither of us knew where Jakarta was [laughs] because it was Botavia, and when we discovered it was Botavia we got wildly excited! And Rod went out, I didn't go out for six months because I was trying to line up work that I could do out there while I was away. Mary Field said, "Yes," if I'd got any ideas she'd be interested. And Shell - I let them know that I was going to be out there - various things like that. And when I got out there - Oh I met, I went via Paris, and met one of the people in the department that was concerned with Rod, and we had dinner and talked about this, that and the other. And when I got to Jakarta, Rod got a vicious letter from the United Nations, saying, "Under no circumstances is your wife to do any work at all. She is there purely as your wife"!

AL: [in comic posh diplomat accent] Thank you Very much! So you made 'The New Boat'?

Kay Mander: [laughs] Well, I made a few other things! So Rod was training these technicians, and it's unbelievable that he gave them, sort of, six months training. He had Larry Friedman - Larry Friedman came out as his cameraman. There was an American group with Lothar Wolf once again - full cycle - in charge, who had got a sound man with them, and Rod was training the boys. And I - when they'd had a reasonable amount of training - was taking them out and shooting items for Mary Fields children's magazine. Black and White - F11 with a 'G' you can't go wrong - but it's different in Indonesia, and it did go wrong! [laughter] Badly under-exposed it was! And what did we do after that? Oh, then I made a film - I got a script together which Rod and I wrote, called 'Mardi and the Monkey', which Mary Field accepted. And we made 'Mardi and the Monkey', and that was very interesting, because Mary insisted it had to be processed in England, and I insisted that it couldn't be - because I had to see it before she saw it. So we processed in Indonesia, and I cut it together, and then it was sent back to England where Kitty Marshall put it together - well she didn't put it together - finished it. And she had all the Indonesian - Javanise - dialogue written out phonetically, and Maurice Denham did the commentary. And that was another lovely film, which is still in use, believe it or not!

Sidney Cole: How long were you in Indonesia?

Kay Mander: Four and a half years.

Sidney Cole: Really? And you made how many films?

Kay Mander: As many as I could which wasn't very many. I did some shooting...

Sidney Cole: Were the governmental problems difficult?

Kay Mander: Well, not for me, no. No problems at all, I mean Rod did a fantastic job. One of the people he trained subsequently became head of the television network, and some of the others became well-known directors, and it was all very satisfactory, and very interesting.

Sidney Cole: You haven't been back since then?

Kay Mander: We haven't been able to afford it. Because one thing that ACT has never had, until recently, is a pension scheme.

Sidney Cole: No, well that's quite right. So since then - would you say that concludes more or less your adventures in documentary?

Kay Mander: Oh Sid! They weren't adventures!

Sidney Cole: We'll go on to 1955, '57 'The Kid from Canada'.

Kay Mander: When I came back from Indonesia I had a very interesting experience, a friend of mine was working at London Weekend, and there was about to be a rebellion of the colonels or something in Indonesia, and I got sent back to cover what was going on there from the political

aspect. And I took my own tape-recorder with me, so that when I sent any footage back, I would be able to send back a recorded tape saying what I had been shooting. And...

AL: What were you shooting on?

Kay Mander: Shooting on 35mm I got - getting a crew from the government film unit, you see. No shooting on 35mm. And unfortunately the gentleman on London Weekend decided that I was recording sound and blacked the whole thing!

Sidney Cole: Oh God!

Kay Mander: Which was rather unfortunate because I went all through the film archives and I got the most wonderful material - Lavenders - of fantastic stuff of concentration - prison camps and everything, the Dutch and Australians, and all sorts of things, Japanese occupation of Indonesia, all of which has presumably been thrown away by now. Pity!

AL: What a terrible person at BFI to do that - wow!

Kay Mander: No, no, no. At London Weekend.

AL: Oh at London Weekend.

Kay Mander: Well, it was a terrible misconception, you see, he thought I was recording sound for use and I wasn't.

AL: Well, I don't know. They may...

Kay Mander: Oh, I think he was probably quite right, I don't know. They might have wanted to use it, but it wasn't recorded for use, it was just me.

Sidney Cole: When would that be, about '48?

Kay Mander: '57.

Sidney Cole: '57. Then I see, '58 - '58? '48 it says 'La Famille Martin', could that be right?

Kay Mander: Yes.

AL: You came back from...

Kay Mander: I came back from Indonesia and Mary Field asked me to make a feature for her, which I did.

Sidney Cole: And what was that called?

Kay Mander: It was called 'The Kid from Canada'.

Sidney Cole: Ah. It's not on the list.

Kay Mander: Yes it is, it's right down at the bottom.

Sidney Cole: Oh no, 'The Kid from Canada', yes. '57 it says.

Kay Mander: That's right.

Sidney Cole: Tell us about that.

AL: Who wrote it?

Sidney Cole: That was for the Children's Film Foundation...?

Kay Mander: Um. Alistair Dunnnett.

AL: Alistair Dunnnett wrote it! KM:... Who was the editor of the 'Scotsman'. And Alistair Dunnnett never spoke to me again, because I altered his script. [laughter] I'd met Alistair Dunnnett when I was making 'Highland Doctor' many, many years before. And 'The Kid from Canada' was all right, but it didn't work, and I re-wrote it with Mary Field's consent, needless to say. And he never forgave me for it. He got very nasty.

Sidney Cole: Writers never do, of course.

Kay Mander: It was a film about pony-trekking, it was a feature film. And Alex Mackenzie came back and played a part for me, which was lovely, and it starred Bernard Bredan and his son Christopher, who subsequently became a television producer in Canada or somewhere, and it was just a very nice little film.

AL: Where did you shoot it?

Kay Mander: Newtonmore, in the Spey valley. And then I went back to doing continuity.

Sidney Cole: Well now, you went back to continuity on what? Can you remember?

AL: What year was that, you went back?

Kay Mander: Well after 'Kid from Canada' was 1958 I suppose. How I got back I don't know, how I got the job I don't know, I went to do a film with Terence Young called 'Serious Charge', which was the film with Sarah Churchill and Anthony Quayle and so on and so forth and I did several films with Terence Young. And I've been doing it ever since. Insofar as it is permitted of me. [laughs]

JS: Tell me something...

Sidney Cole: [talks over, then to shut him up -] Now then, John! Before we...

Kay Mander: [over] I'm sorry I've said so little about ACTT.

Sidney Cole: The important thing I wanted to ask you is, down the years of your career in films, how have you felt about the situation of women in relation to doing the really important jobs in films?

Kay Mander: It never bothered me at all, I was a film technician and that was that. I mean I think that as far as a woman is concerned now, the situation is much worse than it ever was before feminism was invented.

Sidney Cole: Worse? In what way?

Kay Mander: Much worse.

Sidney Cole: Really? You surprise me. I thought women - more women produce and direct things.

Kay Mander: Oh possibly. But I'm talking of my point of view as a woman. That everybody expects me to be aggressive now, whereas in the past they - it's quite, quite different. I mean, I agree, they've got there, they're doing it, they're doing a wonderful job all of them. But...

Sidney Cole: I mean, you do surprise me, Kay, because I would have thought - I had an impression that you yourself, for instance, had a thing that you would have liked to have done feature pictures...

Kay Mander: Well of course I would, but I didn't because I didn't want to go around with a chip on my shoulder, hating everybody all the time. So I opted out, didn't I? And went back to enjoying myself.

Sidney Cole: I see... I don't understand, what you just said that things are worse for women now than they were.

Kay Mander: It's a weakness in my character, that I always wanted approval of what I was doing...

Sidney Cole: Well now, everybody does that. That's a weakness in everybody's character.

Kay Mander: No, no. A lot of people can work and do things without ever getting any approval, they can battle through against disapproval and everything. And so when it became difficult and nobody was offering me work, I decided I'd rather sort of opt out and just carry on being associated with work that I enjoyed without battling to go on directing. It's as simple as that.

Sidney Cole: Yes, but on the other hand, it's still the same what I said previous to that - you said you thought things were worse for women now than they were.

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Do you really mean that? I don't understand in what way, I'd have thought they were better.

Kay Mander: [laughs] No, they're not.

Sidney Cole: Tell me why.

Kay Mander: Because the men are much more on the defensive than they used to be. The men are much less disposed to accept you at first - I mean it may be a question of age, I mean that again - there's a difference between a cuddly twenty-five year old and an elderly seventy year old, that makes a big difference too, so that maybe one gets a false impression, but I just think that nowadays you're expected to be more aggressive, and therefore its very difficult if you don't want to be. You just get pushed to the background.

Sidney Cole: All the same, there are more women now in television.

Kay Mander: Oh, there are in television.

SC:... and in sort of marginal film-making. More women producing and directing and so on than there were.

Kay Mander: But Sid, what point are you trying to make?

Sidney Cole: I'm not trying to make any point I'm just interested to know whether the relaxed - what's supposed to be the relaxed situation - in terms of feminism, really works or not?

Kay Mander: I wouldn't have thought it was a relaxed situation, I would have thought the exact opposite.

Sidney Cole: That's interesting.

AL: I can see what you're meaning, because I can remember, you know, being a cameraman one day, and the next day you're not a cameraman, so you revert back. "So what," you know, "I've enjoyed this life, so I'll revert back."

Kay Mander: Sure, rather than go on battling. But I mean I've had this argument about women with so many of my more recent acquaintances and I just think that they went about it the wrong way.

Sidney Cole: Mmm, in what way? In what sense?

Kay Mander: Well they were over-assertive. I think that - I never had - we never had any trouble, it wasn't just me, it was Kitty, everybody, all of us who worked in films, we were just technicians and we took our share of things, and we were all working together. There was never any sense that one was a women and therefore one was different. And that is a more recent... Or

I'm old fashioned, I say this to all my friends - I'm not a feminist. Alright, I want to vote, and I want to do all those things, but...

Sidney Cole: Mmm, that's interesting.

AL: But, you know, taking that point that you've made - I take it but I think the thing is that perhaps in the film business, if you like, in a way we were lucky in as much as we were all boys and girls together, and we enjoyed our life in the industry, but then when the atmosphere outside the industry if you like - which is, if you like, the feminism aspect, has become more aggressive - it comes back... do you agree?

Kay Mander: Mmm.

AL: So in fact, it does come back into the industry. So if you like, some of the new people coming in through, whatever, you know, through television or... KM:... Are anti-female. AL: Well, now - well the men might be, but the women coming in are, if you like, anti-male.

Kay Mander: [sighs] Well it's all the other way, you see!

Sidney Cole: Are we still recording this?

AL: Yes, we're still recording, yes we are!

Kay Mander: [laughing] Well I do hope you'll suppress it, that's all I can say!

AL: No, not at all, because this is an interesting...

Kay Mander: I mean I wish I could resolve this, I can't explain it to myself, all I know is, that there is a different feeling around a film crew now from what there ever was. As I say, it may be because I'm that much older - I don't know what it is - but there's an antagonism, it seems to me. There's a sort of, "Get down, I'm going to get up" sort of thing going on all the time.

AL: In the crew?

Kay Mander: Oh yes.

Sidney Cole: But Kay, now bring us up to something beyond the documentaries you were making now many years ago, and your more recent reconnection with features, which happened, when? When did you?

Kay Mander: 1958. [laughing] That's thirty years ago!

Sidney Cole: It's been a while!

Kay Mander: I don't know about recent!

Sidney Cole: Well, everything is fifty years ago as far as I'm concerned, so don't bother!
[laughter] But in '58 what happened? You were no longer connected with documentaries, so you were again associated with feature films, right? Which was on what?

Kay Mander: This thing called, 'Serious Charge' with Terence Young.

Sidney Cole: With Nichol - was it - Williamson?

Kay Mander: No, no, no, [laughs] Cliff Richard's first film!

AL: What were you doing on it?

Kay Mander: Continuity! What else?

Sidney Cole: Continuity, of course she was.

JS: What's called 'script supervision' now

Kay Mander: No, no, that's because - that's only recently.

[SC shuts JS up]

Sidney Cole: So, and what did you feel about that, who was in it and...

AL: [laughing] Cliff Richard!

Sidney Cole: Cliff Richard - what about Cliff Richard?

Kay Mander: Well I fell in love with the grip! [all laugh] I'm sorry, I can't be serious, Sid!
Asking people what they feel thirty years ago - what did I feel?

Sidney Cole: Well, you've just said you fell in love with the grip!

Kay Mander: Yeah - I felt - I wore high-heeled shoes.. [general laughter, and all talk together]...
Look Sid, Sid! All I felt was that I had a living to earn, Rod and I had extravagant tastes, Rod wanted to go on working in documentary, he never wanted to go back to features, which meant that he didn't earn very much money by our standards.

Sidney Cole: So what time did he have - what, did Rod still have a company?

Kay Mander: No. We left Basic. When Rod came back from Indonesia, he went and worked for... Did he come straight to you? I can't remember.

JS: He came to me at Film Centre fairly quickly, and came out to Tehran.

Kay Mander: Oh yes, that's right, Rod went out to Tehran and Baghdad...

JS: To sort out the most God awful muddle that had ever happened. And Rod came out and just said, "Oh well, John, Come on!" And sorted me out of a great deal of trouble!

Kay Mander: So that basically, as far as I was concerned coming back to continuity was earning a living, and earning a living in an enjoyable way.

Sidney Cole: So what films did you do that on? If you remember? [pause] Where were they? At Denham?

Kay Mander: No, Denham didn't exist any more. MGM. I did several with Terence Young, and then I did several with Lee Thompson - oh all over the place. I just worked on a lot of features.

Sidney Cole: By that time did you feel that you'd missed something?

Kay Mander: Money!

Sidney Cole: In terms of - well not money, no - in terms of career in direction, and so on, did you feel you should have been going on to direct from documentaries to features or something?

Kay Mander: Yes, but that wasn't possible, was it, so...

Sidney Cole: Well, don't know, but what did you feel about it? Did you feel frustrated?

Kay Mander: No. That's just the way life was, wasn't it? So you do what comes and make the best of it and enjoy yourself. What's the good of feeling frustrated?

Sidney Cole: Well I thought maybe - I had an impression, Kay, a few years back one time I met you, I had a feeling that you felt - alright you'd directed in documentary very well, very successfully - but I had an impression you thought that you ought to have been able to get more in the way of directing features or directing...

Kay Mander: Well, I probably did.

SC:... directing television series, or...

Kay Mander: No, no [forcibly] God Forbid! I've been anti television since it was first invented! [laughs] I mean the point is, obviously if I had been twenty years later than I was, I should probably have been a very important, successful woman in television, I don't know. But I dislike the thing intensely.

Sidney Cole: Why? [long pause] No, why - I'd like to know why?

Kay Mander: Because it's introduced an entirely false thing into the whole business of film-making. It's very difficult to explain this, I am a romantic about feature film making. I am a romantic about relationships between artists and crews - right down to the sparks and the riggers and all these lovely people. And television has destroyed that completely.

[break in recording]

Sidney Cole: Kay, after all those wartime documentaries and so on you did. You went back to some extent into features, what were they?

Kay Mander: Well I started with Terence Young, on a picture called 'Serious Charge' which was Cliff Richard's first film - and for which they wrote the tune 'Living Doll' which was great fun to shoot. And I then made three more films with Terence Young as director, and those were all at MGM which was a very good studio to work in - a lot of the people I'd known at Denham before the war. And it just went on from there, because you never knew what was going to happen next, you just went from film to film, and in a sense I sort of drifted down the years, with some low spots and some high spots. I have worked with Vincente Minnelli on the European shooting of 'Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse'. I've worked with John Huston...

Sidney Cole: What was the John Huston?

Kay Mander: The John Huston was a strange film called 'The List of Adrian Messenger' which they shot over here with certain - and finished in the States, but people like Bob Mitchum came over and Tony Curtis...

Sidney Cole: They were in masks?

Kay Mander: No, they weren't masked - two things, they did them with masks and without, you see?

AL: Did you do the whole thing?

Kay Mander: No, only this side of the channel - channel? - the Atlantic. What else have I done? Well then I worked with Francois Truffaut, I did 'Fahrenheit 451' and that was great, that was wonderful. It's such a wonderful film, and it's never been properly shown.

Sidney Cole: What did you feel, what were your greatest sensations about that?

Kay Mander: [laughs]

Sidney Cole: No, you said it was a great film.

Kay Mander: Oh, it was just exciting to work on, because he was so original as a director, the film - the whole theme of the film was original, the burning of the books and the memorising of the books by the people who became the books themselves. And Nick Roeg was the - was doing his first job as lighting cameraman on it. No, I'm sorry, I'm wrong - Nick was operating. Alex Thompson was focus, and Kevin Cavanagh was clapper-loader. Who was lighting?

AL: Who was lighting?

Sidney Cole: I don't know.

JS: Was it at MGM?

Kay Mander: It was at Pinewood. At Pinewood. No, Nick must have been lighting! I'll look it up later [NB he was]

Sidney Cole: Anyhow, so what else - what other films?

Kay Mander: Well, there must have been some, because I've been doing it for thirty years, there must have been some others, let me think about them. [laughing] I worked on the prologue of 'The Exorcist' in Iraq, that was most interesting. I've worked on a lot of rubbish.

AL: [Laughs]

Kay Mander: Oh, I've worked on some lovely rubbish, actually. One of the nicest pieces of rubbish was with a wonderful director called Fisher.

Sidney Cole: What was the film?

Kay Mander: It was called 'The Silicates'. [N.B. 'Night of the Silicates' aka 'Island of Terror' directed by Terence Fisher] What was his name, lovely - Fisher.

AL: Not Gerry Fisher?

Kay Mander: Mmmm. Not Gerry Fisher. Gerry Fisher was a cameraman. Gerry Fisher was a cameraman, wasn't he.

Sidney Cole: A nice piece of nonsense you enjoyed, where was it shot?

Kay Mander: The silicates were enormous things like turtles, you see, which were manufactured by the special effects department at Pinewood, and they were planted - they invaded the island off the coast of Ireland, and we had all the Irish drunks on it - great, great, lovely! And the silicates were all planted all over Black Park, you see, and they were all remote-controlled! [laughs] We had letters going into the local papers about these extraordinary objects that had appeared in Black Park!! [laughs] That was a lovely piece of nonsense! And then there were a couple of funny films. I worked on Sid Furie's first film, called 'The Snake Woman', which was another piece of lovely rubbish, [laughing] all about a woman who turned into a snake.

Sidney Cole: [laughing] What kind of snake?

Kay Mander: Well, it was a Cobra, but the Cobra - the real snake - was much, much nicer. We loved the Cobra! And Ken Higgins was the cameraman on that.

Sidney Cole: Oh, Ken Higgins, dear Ken Higgins, yes.

Kay Mander: And I worked on some of the original 'Robin Hood's, if you remember. No you wouldn't - you don't remember the original 'Robin Hood's, do you?

Sidney Cole: When you say 'Robin Hood's, do you mean the serial?

Kay Mander: Hannah thing's [N. B. Weinstein] lot down at Middleton..

Sidney Cole: Yes, of course, I was associate producer!

Kay Mander: Were you on that, on the original one?

Sidney Cole: Yes, in 1955? Of course I was! Richard Greene...

Kay Mander: Oh, well I didn't work on them until 1958, or something like that.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, well you were in on it towards the end - yes, of course I was on all of it!

Kay Mander: I knew I worked with you on 'Man in a Suitcase' which I did some of.

Sidney Cole: That was later, yes.

Kay Mander: Much later, yes. I must have worked on some other nice films...

JS: What about 'Where Eagles Dare'? You used to tell me stories about that.

Kay Mander: Oh yes, and 'Heroes of Telemark'

AL: Ah! 'Heroes of Telemark', now 'Heroes of Telemark' interested me because there was an original film - oh God! No it was much earlier, 'Heroes of Telemark'...

Kay Mander: 'Heroes of Telemark' was about the lands in Norway, which was very interesting because it was Norway, and it was a new country, it was different. The only film I've been allowed to ski on - usually they won't let you.

AL: Really?

Kay Mander: No, because you might break a leg or something, the crew's not allowed to indulge in any...

AL: I'd forgotten you were on the last series of 'Robin Hood' in - it must have been about '58.

Kay Mander: Yes, well it was somewhere about there, yes. It couldn't have been before. But I was only for a very brief time, I took over from somebody and then I did my back in, and the doctor said, "Well, you'll have to give active work, won't you?"

Sidney Cole: How did you do your back in?

Kay Mander: I don't know, I just did it. I got off the train at Walton on Thames station one day and I couldn't walk. And I came into the studios, they sat me on a stool, and I couldn't get off it, so they sent me home. And that was the end of my association with the 'Robin Hood' series!
[laughing]

Sidney Cole: I'd forgotten that, Kay....

Kay Mander: Well, you probably never knew, I was only there for a few days.

Sidney Cole: I knew you in those days, I can't remember

Kay Mander: And then I did - oh, bits and pieces of 'Dangerman', and

Sidney Cole: You were on 'Dangerman' too?

Kay Mander: Oh, bits and pieces, yes. I used to help Doris Martin, whenever she wanted anybody to come in, I used to come in and do her second unit stuff.

Sidney Cole: Oh Doris, yeah, we interviewed her the other day.

Kay Mander: Well, I hope she's coming tonight. She's been asked, I hope. Phil Townsend cannot come...

Sidney Cole: Who?

Kay Mander: Phyllis Townsend. And then I worked on - I must have worked on other interesting things, I know I have but I can't think what they were. They all came, and they went. Oh, I did three pictures with J. Lee Thompson, I did one called 'Before Winter Comes' which was Topol's first film, which was shot in Austria, which was immediately after 'Where Eagles Dare', and...

AL: What was it called?

Kay Mander: 'Before Winter Comes'. And then I did his next one, which was called 'The Most Dangerous Man in the World' [N. B. 'The Chairman'], which was made at Pinewood.

Sidney Cole: That's never been shown here has it?

Kay Mander: It has, actually, it's been shown on television.

Sidney Cole: 'The Most Dangerous Man in the World'? I can't remember it.

Kay Mander: No, it was called something else, I can't remember what. No it was called something else when it was made, and then it was called 'The Most Dangerous Man in the World'. It's about Gregory Peck going to China with a transmitter implanted in his head.

Sidney Cole: Oh, I remember the story...

AL: It sounds like 'The Manchurian Candidate'.

Kay Mander: Only he was going to find out about a certain kind of corn that they succeeded in growing in China. And then the next one that Lee Thompson did, which was called 'Country Dance' which was shot in Ireland.

JS: That was a dead disaster, wasn't it?

Kay Mander: It was a beautiful film, beautiful story. James Kennaway.

Sidney Cole: Did you work in Ireland on that?

Kay Mander: Yes. Ted Moore was lighting cameraman on that...

Sidney Cole: Did you do any studio interiors, like at Bray Studios.

Kay Mander: Yes, we worked out of Bray, Bray and location.

Sidney Cole: Because Ireland is a marvellous country, isn't it? One ought to shoot more things there. Didn't you feel that?

JS: They keep shooting each other, that's the only problem!

Kay Mander: Not in Ireland, they don't.

Sidney Cole: They don't in Southern Ireland.

Kay Mander: Well, Ardmore studios used to be a wonderful place to work.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, terrific.

Kay Mander: And a lot of very good local technicians, too - who are still around.

Sidney Cole: The greatest plasterers in the world! [laughter] Well they are, in Ireland, because they do all that church work. The Roman Catholic church in Ireland are the only people who still employ plasterers.

Kay Mander: Really?

Sidney Cole: Yeah, and they do tremendous things there - fantastic things, yeah. Anyhow, Kay, so what other pictures?

Kay Mander: Well, the Preminger, 'The Human Factor'.

Sidney Cole: Oh, yes tell me about Preminger - Preminger has a reputation, justly or not, of being a very difficult and, sort of sadistic kind of character, but you were saying that your experience of Preminger was totally different, tell me about that.

Kay Mander: Well, I think he's one of the people - who one very frequently encounters in this industry - who don't suffer fools gladly. And if you know your job and get on with it then it's all right. But you must stand up to them, that's all.

Sidney Cole: What picture did you work on with him?

Kay Mander: It was called 'The Human Factor'.

Sidney Cole: That was at what - Pinewood, or Denham?

Kay Mander: All location, and Africa. And that was about the last really organised film that I worked on, I think. I've done a lot of commercials to keep things going - I never say no to anything.

AL: Can we talk about commercials a bit?

Kay Mander: [laughing] Yes.

AL: Yeah, do, because I think this is a very interesting little - what shall we say? - sideline, sideline, offshoot, whatever you like.

Kay Mander: I think commercials are - from my point of view, from a continuity point of view - the majority of them are deadly dull. Because there is no continuity as such, all you're doing is sitting there with a stop watch eternally saying, "It's taking too long, it's taking too long, it's taking too long." That's all you do most of the time. But from the point of view of the camera people, they must be quite fascinating, because you get the opportunity to experiment and try all sorts of new ideas, and - wonderful. I've worked on a lot of entertaining commercials, because of the good crews and we've been to amusing - not amusing, but interesting - places, but I really regard them merely as a means of earning money, I'm afraid.

AL: Can I just come in a moment? Have you seen a change in the shooting of commercials from when they first started - well did you work on cinema commercials, or only TV commercials?

Kay Mander: I've worked on a few cinema commercials, I can't remember what they were now.

AL: Were they early ones?

Kay Mander: Yes, I mean I started working on commercials - oh way, way back when Brighton film studios were still functioning - Derek Wynn, down at Brighton, which would have been early '60s, very early '60s, 1960, '61, '62.

AL: And they were kind of, very easy going things, were they?

Kay Mander: Well, we were doing all these awful things - Father Christmas comes round and knocks on your door, and if you come out with the right phrase, you get a packet of Omo, or something - all the Proctor and Gamble commercials, which were wonderful to work on.

AL: Oh yes. But was the tempo different to what is - you know - to the TV commercial. The tempo of shooting - I'm sorry - the tempo of shooting.

Kay Mander: No, I don't think that's changed very much. I've just worked on one with Jane Seymour, where we did - oh, about one day's work over five. [laughs] It was very, very slow, it was very difficult to do, it was a very special beautiful one, you see - everything had to be perfect. Um, no the early ones were - there was a sort of picnic atmosphere about the early ones which has disappeared entirely, particularly at Brighton, because at Brighton the agency and the client used to be taken down there and put up down there, you see. And there was a great sort of - you know - "We're all away for a happy weekend." Only it was the middle of the week! [laughs] And it was very much a, sort of, crew thing and they were usually the same agency that one got associated with, so that one had this sort of friendliness which doesn't always exist nowadays because they're always new people, strange people.

Sidney Cole: Not like the commercials now, fifty per cent of which it's very difficult to discover what the hell they're advertising.

Kay Mander: Oh I know! I haven't a clue what they're advertising, I know. They just go on, and you say, "What was that?" It ends with a car and they weren't advertising a film at all!

Sidney Cole: And the more interesting they are, the less you know what the hell they're all about. I really find that, you know! Kay, what I want to talk to you about - the position of women in the whole of your career, in terms of their ability to get somewhere in the business.

Kay Mander: You know Sid, I don't think I want to talk about that, I'm sorry. It seems to me entirely irrelevant.

Sidney Cole: Why?

Kay Mander: Well it doesn't matter whether you're a woman or not. You're just a person with a certain amount of technical ability, skill, knowledge, imagination which you can apply, and if you've got the right personality you can persuade people to work with you, and if you haven't got the right personality you can't. It doesn't matter whether you're male or female.

Sidney Cole: Ahh. That's very interesting because in view of the current climate - a great, you know, enormous thing about feminist attitudes and under-valuation of women - I would have thought you might possibly have not felt that way at all.

Kay Mander: Well I grew out of it thirty years ago, Sid.

AL: [laughs]

Sidney Cole: That's very interesting...

Kay Mander: I think if I'd been born when my mother was born, I should have been a Suffragette, but I came in the middle period, when women didn't have to fight for certain things, and therefore I never fought for certain things as a woman. And by the time women started fighting for certain things, I really wasn't interested any longer. Just like that.

Sidney Cole: You mean that you'd felt women had achieved enough?

Kay Mander: No, I don't think they've achieved anything at all. I think they've achieved less than they had before they started trying harder. But it doesn't - I can't get involved, I'm sorry.

Sidney Cole: You mean that women have got as far as they can? or...

Kay Mander: No, I mean that I have got too much to bother about in my own life to bother about being a woman.

Sidney Cole: You mean you feel... All right - you've operated during your professional life on the basis your equivalent to men, because you're...

Kay Mander: I've never bothered about it. I've never bothered about it.

Sidney Cole: You depended on your abilities as yourself, as human being, not as a woman...

Kay Mander: I can do a certain job, and I can do that job well, without anybody bolstering me up, or holding my hand or anything, and that's it.

Sidney Cole: And you didn't expect to be treated differently as a woman than as a man?

Kay Mander: No.

Sidney Cole: That's interesting. Mmm. Because would you feel then, in that case, that a lot of - with the current great thing about - the feminist thing, that women have been greatly undervalued and under-treated... What do you feel about that?

Kay Mander: I try not to bother about it, because it doesn't concern me.

Sidney Cole: You don't think it's justified?

Kay Mander: Oh yes, I think [long pause]

JS: Kay, when you were producing me, I hope that I didn't...

Sidney Cole: Oh! Don't shove in, John!

JS: This is John Sherman talking. When you were producing me, and you did on several of my films, I hope...

Kay Mander: You never thought that I was a woman and...

JS: I hope to God I didn't say, "Oh it's only a woman producing me!" I hope I took it at face value.

Sidney Cole: This is what Kay was talking about...

Kay Mander: Well that's what I... [sighs - clearly exasperated]

JS: And likewise, when I was producing you.

Kay Mander: Oh, you were a bastard! Rod was an unbearable bastard!

JS: I expected you to say, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir!"

Kay Mander: When did you produce me, anyway? I don't remember that.

JS: Oh, I did on one of the 'How, What and Why?' films.

Kay Mander: Oh, did you? All I know is that Rod was impossible. Rod wouldn't listen to a thing I said, when I was producing his films?

AL: [laughing] Was that because you were a woman, or because he just didn't agree with you?

Kay Mander: [laughing] Because he just didn't agree with me!

JS: [laughing] Or both!

Kay Mander: No, it's an impossible question to be asked, Sid, by a woman of my age. I mean, if I were thirty years younger, I would probably have an answer for you. But to me it's such a fuss about nothing, the whole thing.

JS: Absolutely right. AL: Yes.

Kay Mander: Do you agree?

Sidney Cole: No but Kay, I'm interested because I always thought that you had a slight chip on your shoulder...

Kay Mander: Well, I'm supposed to be terribly aggressive I know, and I don't know why.

Sidney Cole: Well, I always thought that you had a slight chip on your shoulder because you should have, in terms of direction...

Kay Mander: Well why did I give up, then, if I've got a chip on my shoulder? If I'd got a chip on my shoulder I should have gone on, shouldn't I?

Sidney Cole: Well, I must be wrong, because I thought you did feel that...

Kay Mander: Well, I did - I probably - no I was disappointed, bitterly disappointed, because the thing I like better than anything in this world is directing good actors, and the magical moment - which doesn't happen any more because it's now all story boards, and you get it all plotted out and the actors come in and you say, "Well, you do this, and you do that, and you do something else," - the film I've just worked on in Scotland was magical because we had two days of rehearsal, they were not really actors - there were a couple of actors amongst them - and we did read throughs and it all developed out of that, it was absolutely magic. And that's what you don't get, even in features now. That's the thing that used to excite me - putting the actors there and letting them work it out. Minnelli did it. And when you'd - they'd got it worked out, then you said, "Where are we going to put the camera to get this?" That's the way for me - I think, for films to be made.

Sidney Cole: Yeah, marvellous, yeah.

JS: And that's super, but where does the director come into this? Said he...

Kay Mander: The director and the continuity girl - this is why working with Minnelli was great, because Minnelli let the actors work it out for themselves, and if you - as the continuity girl - said, "It was better if he said that line when he was over there" Minnelli said, "Oh. Yes, let's try it that way." You see, so that you were working as a team, which is the essence of film-making.

JS: I know, Kay - I'm sorry to interrupt - but you of all people are my mentor on this - Professionalism, "not fucking about"! AL: ..."Professionalism", yes? He's gone.

Kay Mander: Because the thing that nobody appreciates at the moment is - it seems to me - is that actors have got any feeling for why they're doing anything.

Sidney Cole: Ah, well that's important, yes, but this...

Kay Mander: Nobody gives them - when they want to move, when they want to do this, that and the other.

Sidney Cole: The point is - no, Kay, you're quite right - the thing is that the creativity of the moment, for instance - that's very important - but however carefully you design a script for instance, I think you'd agree, that then as a director, the important thing that happens is that when you go on the floor and you're going to shoot it, and you start rehearsing it - perhaps (or not) something happens which makes that happen - the magic thing happens - is where it comes to life.

Kay Mander: Yes, yes.

Sidney Cole: Sometimes on a lot of the films one has worked on, it hasn't worked, it hasn't come. But other times it has come to life, you know, and erm...

[break in recording]

Sidney Cole: Are we still recording? So I think that's what you meant, Kay, wasn't it?

Kay Mander: Yeah, absolutely. That film acting is not just having a story-board and moving people about like puppets. Nor is film direction like just lighting it on a board and a putting the camera here and there and...

Sidney Cole: All right, at the lowest level it can happen that the thing works, that the story comes over. It's not particularly brilliant or anything, but it works. On the other hand, suddenly the thing can take light, as happens in the theatre, too, and it's suddenly magic.

Kay Mander: And when you're on a good crew everybody feels it too, that that moment has come - now we're ready to...

Sidney Cole: Have you had a moment on the floor - as I have about once I think - where at the end of a scene that was being shot, the crew applauded?

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Can you remember when that happened?

Kay Mander: No, not specifically. It's happened several times, it kept on happening in Scotland on this last one, but that was different. [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Why was it different?

Kay Mander: Well, because they weren't professionals - they were applauding each other because they were all different sort of people - they weren't actors, one was a - this that and the other - applauding each other's efforts, so it was different.

AL: Was it ... [forgets word] - was it um required - I mean had they really awarded themselves applause... [N.B. possibly means, 'Was it justified?']

Kay Mander: I don't know that it's going to be a great film, but it had that little bit of difference to it, little bit of magic now and again.

AL: It gave it a lift, yes.

Sidney Cole: What was the film?

Kay Mander: It's called, 'Play Me Something' and it's written by John Berger and a director called Tim Neat, and it's a BFI film, and it's - oh it's a strange - very sort of other world film

about people waiting for an aircraft to land on the beach at Barra and listening to a story about events in Italy. And the events in the story, which are seen on a television screen, prompts each one of them to tell a story of their own. And one of them sings a song, and there's a Gaelic song, and somebody sings 'Avante' the bandialerossa[?]. It's very interesting indeed. And as I say it's very different, and therefore it was exciting to work on. But from a continuity point of view, Sid, I come back to you. Continuity girl's nightmare - Shakespeare!

Sidney Cole: Why?

Kay Mander: Mustn't get a word wrong, must you? [general laughter] "Will" and "Shall" and, oh dear! I worked at MGM on a 'Macbeth' which was made by George Schaefer. Made for - oh dear, what are the card people? [N. B. Hallmark]

AL: Waddingtons?

Kay Mander: No, the American card people. In colour with Maurice...

AL: Diner's Club? [laughter]

Kay Mander: Judith... oh dear. I think I'm tired - or tireder. Judith Anderson, and Maurice whatever his name was, the English actor who went to the States years and years ago and does Shakespeare. [N. B. Maurice Evans]

Sidney Cole: And [indecipherable]?

Kay Mander: No, no, no, no. This was a coloured Macbeth.

Sidney Cole: Not with Jo Losey?

Kay Mander: I worked with Jo. Very interesting experience. Again, coming back to politics, there was a company called Danziger's who had a studio opposite the - yes. And they made a series called 'Mark Saber' - Ah! And this was where Nick Roeg was an operator, he was lighting on the Truffaut picture, because Nick was the operator on the Danziger's stuff, 'Mark Saber' and Jo Losey directed one of them when he first came from the States - so that would have been late '50s, wouldn't it? And Dick Lester directed one, and Kieron Moore directed one, and I can't remember who else. But that was interesting again because - I'd only come back to it, I'd been away for such a long time, and I didn't know anything about Jo Losey, but he was obviously a very, very good director, even on that sort of thing.

AL: Can we come back to ACT, now?

Sidney Cole: Well, Kay said she couldn't remember quite when she got involved in ACT. But you were rather important in the ACTT as far as I remember. First of all you were one of the earliest, if not the first, woman on the General Council, and you must have contributed quite a lot to the Union. What do you remember about that?

Kay Mander: By today's standards, I don't think I contributed very much. I was the first woman on the General Council, and I was on it for a number of years. And I was nominated again after I came back from Indonesia, but I didn't stand, because I felt that I was completely out of touch with everything. I think, once again, I was out of step, because I was frequently asked to start a women's section. [laughs] And we did start a women's section, and it was a disaster - I mean three or four of us used to meet in an uncomfortable room, and we didn't really know what we were meeting for, because there was no positive action for us to take. So, we were none of us married - well, I was married - but we weren't the sort of women who wanted crutches, or anything like that, and we used to have these rather vague meetings. May Dennington[?] was a stalwart and Eve Wilson[?] used to come to them, and I can't remember who else now. Only five or six people used to come, and it was a dead disaster, we had no urge to do anything. We didn't feel that we were different, we saw no bonus in having a women's section, you see?

Sidney Cole: It's interesting because - what's her name? Daphne...

AL: Ansell?

Sidney Cole: Daphne Ansell[?], and who's the other?

Kay Mander: But they're so many years later - Monica Toye [?] - I mean years later.

Sidney Cole: Monica Toye[?], they went - on one occasion they were the appointed delegates from the General Council to go to the Women's TUC, and we said, "What do you want to put up a motion about?" And they said they wanted to put up a motion to say there shouldn't be a Women's TUC...

Kay Mander: Good for them!

Sidney Cole: So we said, "OK." And they went off and they really got howled down at Bournemouth or at Blackpool, or wherever it was, because - but Daphne and Monica really felt that they'd contributed - as they had - a great deal to the union and they didn't see why there should be a separate women's union thing because they felt it meant that they were, as women, put in an inferior situation.

Kay Mander: Well, I never knew that, isn't that interesting.

Sidney Cole: And so they went along to this conference to say, "Let's stop this nonsense about having a separate women's conference," and really got howled down, you know. But I realise why, because they were treated - they were individuals on the General Council, you know - not as women, but as...

Kay Mander: In other words they share my attitude to it. Isn't that interesting?

Sidney Cole: Obviously that's the way you felt, too.

Kay Mander: Yes, well, it's somewhere in the last - what? - twenty years, fifteen, twenty years that the difference has come.

AL: Well, more in the last ten years.

Kay Mander: Ten years, is it?

Sidney Cole: Anyhow, from the point of view of the Union, Kay, you seemed at the time to play a very important part in the Union. Did you feel that yourself?

Kay Mander: No. No I just - I don't know. I never felt that I did anything very useful. [laughs] Oh yes! I did one useful thing - which I keep on forgetting about because everybody else has forgotten about it - and that was the apprenticeship and training scheme.

JS: Marvellous job?

Kay Mander: Have you forgotten about it? [laughs]

JS: I haven't!

Sidney Cole: [indecipherable]... But that was one of the important thing that you did, was it?

Kay Mander: Yes. It was a very important thing, and we did it very painstakingly, and we...

Sidney Cole: Was it with Brian Shimings?[?] Or was that - Brian was later?

Kay Mander: Much later, yes. We had a series of committees and I was chairman of the syllabus - the committee that got out the syllabi (or whatever you like to call them) for the different grades. And I think we did a magnificent job. John Davis was one of the members of the committee, believe it or not! [laughs] And we got out the syllabus - every department, so to speak, what the training should consist of, and how many years training, and when they came into the industry at what grade they should come in, and so on. And it was a superb piece of work. And a very satisfying piece of work. But it's gone into the mists of time. I don't know whether any of it still exists.

AL: It's coming to the, kind of, 'job-fit' thing now, and the...

Kay Mander: Yes, but it's all different, because - I mean, we said that in order to come into the sound department, for instance, you needed certain qualifications, and certain - at school - certain knowledge. And it was all divided into - the first six months you went round from job to job to job to job, and decided which one you wanted to stick in. And then you went on and - certainly sound department was five years. This was apprenticeship, you see. The employers would never listen to it, that's why it all fell through. But that was very interesting and we worked very hard on that, I must say.

Sidney Cole: It's my memory, Kay, that you were a very devoted and hard-working member of the General Council, whenever we asked you to do something.

Kay Mander: Thank you. [not clear if this is to Sid or to someone offering her something] And the only other thing that I did was the trip to Prague.

JS: The other thing you did Kay, you introduced me to Trades Unionism!

Sidney Cole: [talking over indecipherable]... you see the thing Kay says about going to Prague. Now that means that she was involved in the beginning of what the Union was very devoted to, which was the establishment of international relationships all over the world with trade technicians unions.

Kay Mander: Well we'd already heard that Kurt Goldberger[?] and Jerry Wiese[?] over here during the war, if you remember.

Sidney Cole: Jerry Wiese[?], the...

Kay Mander: And Kurt Goldberg[?]. And Kurt was the one who met us in Prague. I don't know where Jerry - Jerry stayed over here, or went to Germany or somewhere.

Sidney Cole: I know what happened to Jerry, he went to Prague, he went back to Czechoslovakia, and then he disappeared back into Italy, you know, but anyhow, [JS tries to interrupt] but the important thing is that what Kay is talking about - going to Prague - let to what is now called [?] Which is an international organisation of film and television trade unions which exists all over the world and has about thirty national members, you know, which is marvellous. And the great thing the Union has done, which Kay has shared in the origination of it, is that international organisation.

Kay Mander: No, that was a wonderful visit actually, a really wonderful visit.

AL: The thing we haven't really touched on, which I think we should, is - you know, you came onto the General Council, in the really early days, as a Council member - what other positions have you held within ACT?

Kay Mander: Well, when we had an Executive. There was one point when we divided off the Executive Committee, didn't we? Originally, and I was on the Executive Committee as well. That was all.

Sidney Cole: You must have been elected to that?

Kay Mander: Yes, from the General Council.

JS: Then again[?] you were on the training scheme which you were talking about...

Kay Mander: That was - I was not on the training scheme, I was...

JS: You were elected to that, but you were a shop steward - have you been a shop steward?

Kay Mander: Yes, but I can't think where. And I wasn't a very good shop steward, because I never knew what a shop steward really had to do! [laughter] I've been nearly shop steward once or twice. [SC, AL and JS all remonstrate together] No I'm not, you see, this is the whole thing, you've built it all up and I don't know why. I was a very - I enjoyed being on the General Council of ACT, I enjoyed all the people very much, I loved them all dearly - Alf and Sid Brensen, and May and, oh! everybody.

JS: Ivor.

Kay Mander: Ivor - well yes, Ivor wasn't on the General Council so much when I was around. He was around he was always there at meetings and everything. It's all part of my life, so to speak, but I never did anything positive, let's face it. Not like all these lovely ladies who've come along subsequently. [laughter] Well it's true!

Sidney Cole: I don't think that's true at all.

Kay Mander: It is absolutely true, I mean they've worked very hard at organising things, and organising that and organising the other. I've sort of drifted through, having a whale of a time. And feeling guilty about it - like now, you see? Because you've all flashed it up in my face, and it's made me very unhappy, very uncomfortable.

Sidney Cole: No, really...

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: Kay, you've presented a picture of yourself which is totally different from what I remember. [KM laughs] Really.

Kay Mander: Well, which is the real one, that's the question.

Sidney Cole: I don't know, well one always had to get confronted with the real you. I haven't finally succeeded in doing that personally, but ... No, you were very important. Maybe it might have been because at that particular time you were the only woman on the executive, which could be it...

Kay Mander: Yes.

Sidney Cole: ... which in itself is very important. I think you under rate what you were probably doing in the Union - I think you probably were. Because I think what you were doing as a woman member of the Executive was to encourage other - at least - other women to - that they should join the Union.

Kay Mander: Well, yes, I mean they came fast and furious, May and - somebody else from the Labs, I can't remember who it was now, but...

Sidney Cole: At least you must have done that. That's why you should have been an honorary executive, because...

Kay Mander: [over] I broke the...

JS: You broke the mould!

Kay Mander: [laughing] I stopped saying it! I didn't say it! No, Sid, I think the thing is that I was - [pause] I don't know why. I suddenly became an extrovert, which I'm not naturally. And it happened around that time, and so I got - because I think I always wanted to be in the middle of what was going on. And what was going on at the time was ACT - very much, you see, when I first went into London Films and everything. And I was asked to join ACT, and I was honoured because I was asked to join and it was fine. And I got mixed up in it, and it all happened - it was no credit to me. I came to meetings, yes, but I wasn't a campaigner or anything like that. I just came to meetings and said a few things, upset a few people! [laughs]

Sidney Cole: Yeah...

Kay Mander: I did! I did a little work. As I say, the apprenticeship and training committee was good. But I can't claim to have been a great pioneer for women's rights, or anything like at all. I don't think I would have wanted to be.

JS: Kay, am I right in saying that you didn't believe in women's rights, you thought that women...

Kay Mander: I didn't know what they were! [over other's mutterings] I did know what they were! I didn't know what women's rights were. I didn't know I had any rights, and I still don't know that I have any rights.

AL: You mean, any more rights than anybody else?

Kay Mander: Exactly.

AL: That's right, I see... I'm with you there.

Kay Mander: I have no rights as a woman.

AL: I would agree, if you like that...

Sidney Cole: You've no rights as a woman, as compared to men.

JS: And technicians. AL: I would agree, I think that women have a tough time in a man's world. But, you know, forget that! [laughs] Men won't! JS: I keep saying, "Kay's a technicians, John Sherman is a technician."... Gloria Saxa[?] Come on, but it's not because she's a woman. That's all!

Kay Mander: It's five to six, I think...

[All talk together. Recording ends]