

# Reg Sutton (newsreel sound recordist, sound supervisor) 24/9/16 - ?

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Biographical information to follow.

## BECTU History Project - Interview No. 17

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Interviewer: Roy Fowler  
Interviewee: Reg Sutton  
Sound recordist: Taffy Haines

Tape 1, Side 1

**Roy Fowler:** This recording is copyright the ACTT History Project. It's an interview with Reg Sutton that is taking place on 16 September 1987 at the Samuelson Group Headquarters. First of all Reg let me ask you when and where were you born?

**Reg Sutton:** I was born on 24th October 1916 at Stamford Brook in London during an air raid. I believe it was a Zeppelin raid. My father was not present because he was a Captain in the Royal Naval Air Service and he was in the Royal Flying Service and he was in the Royal Air Force and he has long since deceased which is another story altogether.

**Roy Fowler:** Just to touch on that was he an aviation pioneer?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes, he had several awards and he had half a sheet on the front of the Times on the day he was killed. He entered a race on the lake at Toronto, what's the name of the lake, at Toronto in Canada, in a seaplane with a co-pilot, no not a co-pilot, the sort of fellow who reads the map?

**Roy Fowler:** Navigator?

**Reg Sutton:** Navigator, and it was very bad weather and they were flying round, apparently they were near the water and tipped the wing and it caught in the water in this very thick fog and my father was killed and the navigator lived. My father, he knew most of the people who you read about, in the Royal Airforce who are retiring these days. He spent a lot of time in Basra and he

was also a tutor at the Cranwell Institute and he flew the first airmail from Baghdad to London and things like that. Quite well known in the airlines.

**Roy Fowler:** Astonishing ... in a way all that makes your own career somewhat interesting?

**Reg Sutton:** And my grandfather, his father, Charles Sutton, he married four times, and it's interesting the first wife had one son and four daughters and second wife had no issue, the third who was the sister of the second had no issue and the fourth wife who was my grandmother had one son and four daughters. So my grandfather altogether had two sons and eight daughters and out of those two sons and eight daughters there are two daughters still alive, one in Australia and one in South Africa who I keep in touch with. And his brother of course was Sutton the carrier who left his fortune, or most of it, a million and a quarter, to found Sutton's Dwellings. That was William Sutton who ran a carrying business from Golden Lane in the City. My grandfather was a distiller and brewer and they both had shares in each other's companies so that's the antecedents.

**Roy Fowler:** Your background then sounds fairly well heeled?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes I think it could have been. Not as far as I was concerned because I think my father spent all the money that was left to him. And of course although a lot of money was left by both my grandfather and my uncle it had to be shared among a lot of people and I think my father spent it.

**Roy Fowler:** Was he profligate, was he a playboy?

**Reg Sutton:** I would think so. In a manner of speaking.

**Roy Fowler:** Easy come, easy go?

**Reg Sutton:** In fact I mean my mother divorced him, in 19-, just before he was killed actually, in 1929 I think it was. And then my mother married again and then she went off to South America with her new husband who was the superintendent of some oil fields in Venezuela and they shunted me off to boarding school. But that's sort of going ahead a little bit.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, yes, well actually not that's probably the next question, your schooling.

**Reg Sutton:** So, I started school in an ordinary council school in Acton where I lived with my maternal grandparents and the school was at the back of us and we had a door in the garden that lead into the playground so I was fortunate in getting to school early mostly. And then I won a scholarship to Acton County School, secondary school. By this time my mother and stepfather went off to America so they sent me off to a public school. Kent College in Canterbury which is the public school, Methodist public school, where I spent several years and one of my friends there was Godfrey Evans who slept in the next bed to me, one of England's finest wicket keepers, I imagine, in his time. And when I left Kent College I went back to London and lived with my grandmother and I attended Regent Street Polytechnic and took courses in radio communications

because, I'd always been my ambition to get a job in the BBC. The reason being that next door but one to us in Acton lived a relation called Harold Kirk who was chief research engineer in the BBC. And he and Dr Alexander invented the ribbon microphone, the BBC ribbon microphone, and as a small boy I used to play in his loft with his daughters who were about my age and in the garden, next door but one, and go up in the attic where he had a workshop and he and Peter Eckersley used to experiment and that really got me interested in radio.

**Roy Fowler:** Dates are important then, you were how old?

**Reg Sutton:** That would be, oh I would be what eight or nine, something like that. Eight years old, nine years old.

**Roy Fowler:** And a very clear cut ambition at that age?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes ... and I built my first crystal set when I was about eight and I know my grandfather was so pleased he gave me the money to buy a proper one. I've got one in an oak cabinet at home, which was a commercial job, which I still have, which I must have bought when I was around eight or ten years old. So I always had it in the back of my mind I would like to join the BBC as an engineer. And of course when I left college and I was able to go to Regent Street Polytechnic, and I used to go at night because during the day I found a job, an uncle of mine who had connections with J Lyons the caterers, was a consultant engineer, he got me into their engineering workshops in Hammersmith. And for two or three years I had good training, going through the various workshops, electrical, engineering, lathe, capstans, silversmith, coppersmith and the refrigeration and so on. I got a bit of a grounding for about, I suppose, two or three years around about the early 1930s. Then my parents came back from abroad and they went down to live in Exeter and I went with them. My stepfather became in charge of a petrol distribution centre there for Cleveland and Discol and their associated companies. And whilst I was in Exeter I got a job and I still continued my training at Exeter Technical College.

**Roy Fowler:** This is after the Regent Poly?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes because I had to leave the Regent Poly to go to Exeter so I continued the same course in Exeter and eventually I got my City and Guilds by the time I was about 21, I suppose, which would be 1936. And I couldn't join the BBC until I was 21. So I applied to the BBC unknown to Harold Kirk who by then was not only chief of research but he was assistant chief engineer. Unfortunately he's dead now. But unknown to him I got an interview and got a job. Whether he found out or not, I don't know. Whether he helped me along the way I don't know, but I got in. I was the first of a new breed called the junior maintenance engineer and I was sent to Newcastle-on-Tyne to the studio centre and I went there in 1936 when Sir John Reith was still director general and Noel Astbridge was chief engineer. And I went into digs up there and had a very happy time up there I should go back a little. which developed into other programmes eventually In Exeter I met my wife while I worked in this garage service department part-time. I used to watch her go round the corner every day down to the banks of the river and one morning she fell off her bike. And I picked it up and that's where my problems really started. Because in no time at all we got engaged, and eventually we got married. So I wasn't married when I went to Newcastle. I went into digs and I used to be on shift in the control

room at the studio centre. We used to do days and evenings. Because in those days, broadcasting finished on the stroke of midnight. There was just the light programme and the regional programmes which developed into other programmes eventually.

**Roy Fowler:** Was it called the light programme, wasn't it the national programme?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes the National Programme and the regional programmes. It became the Light and Home Service during the war. So it was the National Programme. All the programmes of course routed came up to Newcastle from London, through Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, across to Glasgow, on a system of lines they had and I got very interested in outside broadcasts. And I thought to myself one gets around a bit with outside broadcasts, that's the thing to see the country. So I went on outside broadcasts as a second man. We covered an area from Whitby across to Blackpool roughly and up to the border. We covered all sorts of programmes in those days, pier concert parties, spa orchestras, theatre organs, Kern suppers when the farmers pulled in their wheat and so forth, all sorts of things in the North East of England. And in no time at all I was in charge of these outside broadcasts and I had an assistant, myself. And before the war this was and I remember we did a programme called Billy Welcome which used to tour round all the little country districts in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmoreland and it was a forerunner of Have A Go. It was Wilfred Pickles who was on the Manchester and Newcastle staff. We had Violet Carson on the piano who became famous in Coronation Street of course. And we used to tour all round doing this programme. And when war broke out things changed quite a lot because broadcasting continued then for twenty-four hours a day.

RE: Can I just ask a question about the pre war OBs [outside broadcasts]. Was that live on the air? Or were you using any recording techniques?

**Reg Sutton:** Mainly live, mainly live. We did have a recording van in the North which was stationed at Manchester and it was a massive six-wheeler van with a recording control room and a studio.

**Roy Fowler:** Recording on discs?

**Reg Sutton:** On disc. Quick cut discs. And I used to go out with a man called Sarney who was a famous recording engineer in the BBC, he used to come up from London. Another man was Overall, Freddy Overall, who came down from Glasgow, he was another recording engineer. I used to go out and assist them. So that was more experience on recording. When I was at Newcastle we used to do regular jobs. I used to go nearly every Wednesday to Durham Cathedral to do Evensong. We had trips regularly every couple of weeks to Whitby Spa, the spa orchestra, and then down to Scarborough, Bridlington for their spa orchestras. Never a dull moment. Shipyard launches. During the war the launch of George V on the Tyne. And another boat I remember well was the Dominion Monarch which was on the Australian Shaw Saville Shipping Line on the run to Australia and funnily enough eventually we had a station director called Connor who was married to one of the Savilles of the Shaw Shipping Line. And when he left, he left Newcastle, went down to London on the World Service which operated from Oxford Street, that big store on the corner of Regent St, it was the BBC then as well. We had a new station

director called Arthur Burroughs. Arthur Burroughs was the first announcer at Savoy Hill. Uncle Arthur of Children's Hour, lovely chap he was, he was getting on in years.

**Roy Fowler:** Do you remember what the BBC paid you?

**Reg Sutton:** When I started I got £3.5s a week, real money. It went on and on of course. I suppose £3.5s was quite a lot of money in 1936. I was able to live in my digs for twenty-five bob a week - all meals and laundry and still buy a car and run it. When I got married, I suppose in 1939, we got married, I suppose I could have been earning about £6 a week of which we were able to buy a bungalow and live and run a car because it still was a lot of money.

**Roy Fowler:** What was the £.

**Reg Sutton:** I'll tell you a funny story while I think of it. We were married on July 6th 1939 and my wife came up to Newcastle. We'd had a bit of a tiff and she came up to see me so I said well let's get married. So I got a special licence unknown to anyone and one of the lads in the BBC was my best man, he's retired now,. We nipped out at lunchtime and we got married. That was on a Friday. On a Saturday my holiday started so we went on a honeymoon to the Trossocks and my wife had an Austin 10 with a dickie seat in the back. And we came down to the Lake District specifically because on the last weekend of my holiday was the Keswick Convention which is a big convention held every year in Keswick, a religious convention where they erect vast marquees and people come from all over the country, all over the world and we always used to broadcast the services on the Sunday. And on the Saturday I was parked slightly on the pavement in Keswick outside the post office and my wife had gone in. A policeman came up and said excuse me you're parked on the pavement, you're causing an obstruction could I see your driving licence, I showed my driving licence, said my wife has that. He said I notice your tax disc is out of date as well. Oh dear I said you'll have to ask my wife because it's her car when she comes out. He said where's the tax disc, she said father's getting it for us. He's posting it from Exeter. Oh yes. He said where's the insurance. She gets it out. The car's only insured for you to drive madam not for your husband. I see Miss Hawkins, looking at her driving licence, Miss Hawkins, you're going to have a little bit of trouble, because I'm going to have you for causing an obstruction, Mr Sutton driving without insurance and you have no tax disc. So we thought my god this is going to be an unhappy ending to our honeymoon. So the scene changes to Sunday where I've set up all the apparatus in a little tent and in walks my engineer in charge from Newcastle with a man resplendent in uniform, with silver scrolls everywhere, and he says Sutton, this is the Chief Constable of Cumberland. And he's very interested in BBC equipment, I wonder if you'd tell him all about it. Well I'm sure by the time I'd finished the Chief Constable knew more about OB equipment than I did. He said Mr Sutton, I believe you've been on honeymoon, I hope you're having a happy time. I said yes until yesterday. He said oh why. I told him. He said well laddie, I wouldn't worry too much about that. I never heard a thing till this day and that was in 1939.

**Roy Fowler:** I think that's a typically English story. Or British story. Right. I was going to ask you to give us a brief indictaion, the flavour of working for the BBC in those days. I think I've got two areas to ask you, the Reithian BBC is said to have been very formal, rather stiff, that's one question. The other is the relation between the engineers and the programme people?

**Reg Sutton:** The relationship was very good. I mean, we had a man at Newcastle, a producer called Cecil McGibbon who eventually became head of television for a time until he died in bed, because he was a great smoker and he caught fire to himself. And Cecil McGibbon I used to do most of his programmes and he was well known during the war his programmes such as Pluto which was pipeline under the ocean, Bombers over Berlin, Spitfires over England, all these programmes emanated from Newcastle and I did all the sound and the OBs and the mixing on the mixing desk for his programmes.

**Roy Fowler:** That's very interesting. I remember those programmes from the war they were very highly regarded.

**Reg Sutton:** 'Then we had another girl at Newcastle called Littlewood who became more famous down in the East End, Joan Littlewood. And she was an assistant and she did programmes which I also did the sound and so forth, called Coal and Wool and Cotton. Joan Littlewood. She used to do a lot of work at Newcastle. Then we had another girl on our staff who was a programme assistant called Esther McCracken. And she became a well-known novelist eventually. She wrote A Quiet Wedding, Quiet Weekend and No Medals which people probably still remember.

**Roy Fowler:** Certainly Quiet Wedding. Any particular memories of those people, Cecil or...

**Reg Sutton:** We were all friends. We used to go to each other's houses. It was a very happy station, Newcastle Station was, very happy. We had a choir there, the Northumberland Singers of which Kathleen Perrier was one of the singers in those days. And we all knew each other and mixed together, very happy days I had at Newcastle.

**Roy Fowler:** Your announcers didn't have to wear dinner jackets in the evening as they did at BH? [Broadcasting House]

**Reg Sutton:** Oh no, the chief announcer there was a fellow called Bill Williams who was the son of the Dean of Rothbury or something like that and he was unmarried, he was quite a character. Quite a character. I remember doing a Kern Supper with him up in the Cheviots and he thought it would be a jolly good idea and we were up in the loft where, a Kern Supper is where they bring the harvest in and the farmer entertains all his workers, and it was in one of the grain lofts which was cleared and they had all the food set out and the drink and they had a little band and dancing. And Bill Williams thought it would be a good idea if he announced it from the pigsty with all the grunts in the background. He thought of this just at the last moment. I said I haven't got him to put signal lights out and cue you and give you headphones so you can listen to the last programme coming back which was normal. I said what we'll do we'll run a bit of rope down and when I tug it you start. And I tugged it so hard he fell over in the pig's mess and all you could hear was squelching and a few choice words from Bill Williams. But it went out alright, the programme. I'm trying to think of the name of the man whose band it was. It was a typical jig band. Jack Armstrong, who I knew very well. Jack Armstrong made and played Northumbrian pipes. He was official piper to the Duke of Northumberland. And I knew Jack Armstrong very well. They're played under the arm you know, bellows under the arm. He's long since dead now. But Jack Armstrong was the man who brought Northumbrian pipes back again because not only

did he play them, he made them. He lived at Seton Sluth. A place called Wide Open on the Northumbrian coast.

**Roy Fowler:** Being in Newcastle with the BBC, was that very satisfactory to you at that stage, did you see that as a stepping stone in your career? Or did you plan to remain there?

**Reg Sutton:** I joined as a junior maintenance engineer and after two or three years I became a maintenance engineer, and then I became a senior engineer in charge of a shift. If I wasn't on outside broadcast I'd be in the studio with a shift.

**Roy Fowler:** Tell me was promotion done in turn or was it on merit?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh, I mean you had to take certain exams. There was, I can't remember now, they were sort of called class E and class D, and those sort of, letters of the alphabet.

**Roy Fowler:** These were corporation's own exams?

**Reg Sutton:** And it was your practical work. If you were good you got on, if you weren't you didn't. And eventually I put in to be transferred to London outside broadcast.

**Roy Fowler:** This was pre-war?

**Reg Sutton:** No this was after the war. After the war. I was transferred to London Outside Broadcast, at the beginning of 1945, just after the war.

**Roy Fowler:** Until that time you were still in Newcastle?

**Reg Sutton:** And of course in London outside broadcast you'd cover a vast range of assignments, I mean, from Buckingham Palace one day, broadcast by somebody, and Downing Street and the theatres and the night-clubs, the late night dance music, oh, numerous numerous things.

**Roy Fowler:** Before we leave Newcastle for good you've mentioned ship launches and things like that, any other war time recollections worth preserving. Were there raids up there that figured in broadcasting?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes, in the early days of the war we had terrible raids, in Newcastle, before London.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you broadcast any of them?

**Reg Sutton:** I mean I was on duty one night when a bomb dropped on the pub next door and I was under the bench. And we had sort of, in our control room they sort of reinforced it with iron girders across ceilings and things like that. And this night when all this business was happening I got under the control desk which was metal and we heard this thud next door and we thought it was us. Shortly afterwards I got a phone call from the engineer-in-charge saying are you all right

Sutton? I said yes. Oh alright hen, I won't bother to come in. I don't think he would have come in either way. He was a grand chap our engineer in charge. He was one of the first engineers in charge of BBC regional stations and he started at Plymouth, a man called JKA Nicholson, a grand man, he certainly looked after me.

**Roy Fowler:** So then 45 you came back to London. Where did you live?

**Reg Sutton:** I came down to London outside broadcast.

**Roy Fowler:** Where did you live?

**Reg Sutton:** We moved down and I, and first of all I took a furnished house in Wimbledon. We were there a few months and then we found with great difficulty a flat in Southgate, we moved to Southgate.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, I think people have forgotten how difficult it was a to find a place immediately after the war.

**Reg Sutton:** It was very difficult and there was a man called Black in Wimbledon who was an estate agent, Black, he was also a councillor, the mayor of Wimbledon at one time, well known. We tried our hardest to find somewhere to get out of this furnished house which was costing a fortune then. And we went to see him at the Town Hall. I took the two young children with me, sort of, and we went in to see him and they started crying which was quite good really because he got a bit fed up with us and we were asking for you know, if he could find us a house to rent rather than a furnished house and he got so fed up with us in the end that he says I've got some flats in Southgate, you can have one of those, goodbye.

**Roy Fowler:** You were lucky, shows the advantage of tenacity. What were they paying you?

**Reg Sutton:** The BBC?

**Roy Fowler:** The BBC.

**Reg Sutton:** By then I suppose I was getting about ♦ 12 or ♦ 13 a week.

**Roy Fowler:** That was a fairly senior grade was it?

**Reg Sutton:** Of course, when we, I have to look back records but off the top of my head it wasn't a lot. Also we had a movement allowance and housing allowance and that sort of thing. But going on from there we were doing a broadcast, one day, of Lord Mayor's Banquet and I was setting up and of course the BBC on Royal and occasions such as that were the only people who were allowed to put out microphones. We had proper gilt microphones for occasions like this, Swan Neck too, everything was done in duplicate always at the BBC, just going off at a tangent. It was, you were asking me what I thought of the BBC. The finest organisation of its kind in the world. Marvellous technical training and I'm talking about sound radio and the quality was superb. So we were doing this thing from the Guild Hall for the new Lord Mayor and a man



came up to me called Derek Styles who was a sound engineer at Movietone. A big 6ft fellow and asked me for a feed because we used to have a trap valve amplifier and we used to give anyone who wanted a feed, a feed on these occasions. So I gave him one. And we had a drink afterwards and he says are you interested in newsreels. I said not really, I've been with the BBC some time now and I'm on the established staff, on the regional pension scheme. Only we're looking for a sound engineer at Movietone. He says, why don't you come and see Pat Sunderland who's the chief of sound. I said I might come down and have a drink with him. So I went down and met Pat Sunderland and we went down to the Pillars of Hercules and had a drink and Derek Styles was there and Pat told me about the job and he mentioned the salary which was about £16 a week so I left the BBC pretty quickly and joined Movietone. It was better money than I was getting.

**Roy Fowler:** That was the principle motivation?

**Reg Sutton:** I left because there was more money and this sounds interesting. Of course I had certain qualifications. I had my City and Guilds in Radio Communications and graduate institute. And no problem for me the sort of work I was going out of in to. In fact I probably knew a bit more than some of them already there. And

**Roy Fowler:** Had you been a moviegoer? A filmgoer?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes. Oh yeah.

**Roy Fowler:** A particular interest or a spare time relaxation? Going to the pictures?

**Reg Sutton:** Well it was really like anybody else entertainment, from a youngster when we use to pay four pence at the cinema in Acton and climb back under the seats to the sixpennies to get a better seat when nobody was looking in the days of Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix and Charlie Chaplin and Chester Conklin and all these people right up through the years.

**Roy Fowler:** You hadn't given much thought to sound recording techniques as they use them in motion pictures?

**Reg Sutton:** Not really, no. Sound recording techniques, we didn't use optical and there was only optical recording, we didn't use optical in the BBC. I did have a spell on a Marconi Stille recorder which was steel wire but otherwise we, our recordings consisted of quickcut discs.

**Roy Fowler:** They tested out the Blattnerphone did they not?

**Reg Sutton:** That was the Marconi Stille wire with these massive three foot diameter spools.

**Roy Fowler:** Any particular memories of that?

**Reg Sutton:** Not really. The birth of a new technology. It was a bit scary in a way because if the steel broke you could easily be beheaded so they said, it never did but I didn't have much of a time on that. It was quite good having the experience more than anything. All my work in the BBC was live mainly or it could be recorded down in Maida Vale and put out later but as far as I

was concerned it was live. I used to do regular, in Newcastle, Northern music halls every week, and we had a man there called Victor Smythe who in charge of the north region of music hall programmes. A great man, large must have weighed about eighteen stone, large cigars, I used to get on very well with him and if we were doing a northern Music Hall in our area which would be Newcastle, Carlisle, Middlesborough, Stockton, Bishop Auckland and various places where there was music halls. I used to do the broadcast. We used to go on a Monday morning and I'd set up and I used to listen to what was going on Monday night in the theatre through the box. We had a control room down below where my assistant would be, I would be in the box with the mixers, we'd put all the microphones on the stage. I'd watch it Monday night, Tuesday morning there would be a band call. Victor Smythe would arrive, and pick out acts he wanted to use, and he'd watch it Tuesday evening. Then Wednesday would be the broadcast. He was a great guy, Victor Smythe, he always arrived at the last moment, just as you were flashing the red light he'd appear in the box, pick up his microphone and carry on. I remember one occasion when it didn't happen, he was delayed on the road and I had to make the opening announcement for him. We were prepared for all these sort of things, I did very well really. I was congratulated on that, I didn't make a fool of myself. I used to meet all the old time stars.

**Roy Fowler:** And it was the heyday of music hall?

**Reg Sutton:** Of course it was, yes and I used to drink with them and eat with them, Jimmy James, Claude Dampier, the Chocolate Coloured Coon, all these old stars, Robey, and the scotsman ♦

**Roy Fowler:** ♦ Will Fyfe?

**Reg Sutton:** Will Fyfe, and Harry Lauder, they all used to come round our music halls and we used to meet them all so I've got a lot of memories of the old time stars. And we haven't even got onto films yet.

**Roy Fowler:** No, no no indeed. But it's all part of life's rich tapestry. In a sense we're onto film because you're now at Movietone. Where were Movietone based?

**Reg Sutton:** In Soho Square. 22, right opposite the ACT. And of course I had to join the ACT which in those days wasn't any problem because they wanted members. After a time, I, a couple of years I became Vice President of the union.

**Roy Fowler:** We mustn't get on to the ACT yet. We'll take that separately. At Movietone did you have a title?

**Reg Sutton:** Sound recordist.

**Roy Fowler:** Then what? Tell us about Movietone then and how they operated?

**Reg Sutton:** One would work with a sound cameraman. And you'd have a car, I started with a Sunbeam Talbot, the roof of which was specially reconstructed and strengthened and rubber lining put on the top and it had mounts each side, fore and aft, for a tripod and it had clips so you

could clip them, they were invented by Movietone these, and so it could either be set up on the front of the roof or the back of the roof. So on many occasions the cameraman could get height on the roof, or if you were doing travelling shots of course, he'd be up there. For instance if you were doing the St Leger from Doncaster where the road ran along the course you'd start with the horses here and you'd tear along and there's the poor old cameraman hanging on for grim life on top trying to take pictures of horses a few feet away all the way along and I was recording getting hoof beats and that and driving and trying to watch the horses so I didn't go past them or lag behind.

**Roy Fowler:** You were driving and mixing at the same time?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** There are so many questions now we need to go in to. Where shall we start? Shall we talk about the company first?

**Reg Sutton:** Movietone? Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, owned by Fox.

**Reg Sutton:** Owned, half owned by 20th Century Fox, the other half by the Daily Mail. Because it was called British, I think the Daily Mail had 51% of the shares but Fox appeared to be the governing body. Sir Gordon Craig was our managing director.

**Roy Fowler:** It's said he was sir because someone loused up the fact there was also a theatrical designer called Gordon Craig who was due for the knighthood.


**Reg Sutton:** That's right, that's the story. Yes, that's the story. I wouldn't be surprised.

**Roy Fowler:** But he was also very close to Tory Central Office. wasn't he?

**Reg Sutton:** No that was Gerald Sanger.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh I beg your pardon.

**Reg Sutton:** Now Gerald Sanger was editor, now he was Lord Rothermere's private secretary at the Daily Mail, also a director of the Daily Mail and a shareholder. And he was put into Movietone by the Daily Mail as editor.

**Roy Fowler:** Do you think editor  we're now saying the editor of content not the film editor.

**Reg Sutton:** Not film editor, no

**Roy Fowler:** Do you think the motivation was political?

**Reg Sutton:** I wouldn't know that. I mean Gerald Sanger was chairman of the Conservative and Unionist Film Association for whom we used to make many films.

**Roy Fowler:** And also did you not have several breaks from the Conservative Party. That they would announce things through the newsreels. I'm told it was considered an extension of, a spokes .. not spokesman, spokesmedium for the Conservatives?

**Reg Sutton:** I wouldn't say they put out in their reel any more Conservative in the newsreel, Conservative programme than they did Socialist, I wouldn't think so. Surely they had to be impartial?

**Roy Fowler:** I don't know that's the question? You thought they were?

**Reg Sutton:** I think they were. Because we used to do interviews with all the heads of our government and heads of overseas governments, we met the famous everywhere. We were always doing interviews with people like Atlee and Ernie Bevan and Churchill and ♦

**Roy Fowler:** So the newsreels then really fulfilled a great part of what television does nowadays, it was part of the access to the citizens of the country.

**Reg Sutton:** It was the only way that the people could see, could see, what was happening, they could hear it on the radio but this was the only way they could see it, and then they saw it three days late because the reel changed on Monday. It was made up on Friday for Monday.

**Roy Fowler:** Let's come onto that, let's finish with the company first so we have it all together. There was Sanger, anyone else of note who needs to be ♦

**Reg Sutton:** - you had the various editors and the sound editors. Raymond Perrin was one of the picture editors who eventually went to Visnews, Stan Wicken was the sound editor, he's long since dead. We had a number of cameramen of course. When I joined Movietone, I took the place of Martin Gray who was the soundman and he transferred to camera. We can't all be perfect, so I went in his place as soundman and the other soundman was Derrick Styles who is long since dead, dear old Derrick.

**Roy Fowler:** So how many soundmen were there?

**Reg Sutton:** Just the two of us then and the cameramen, I worked with Alec Tozer who was an old salt of Movietone and during the war he'd been in Burma and the Far East all the time. Alec Tozer, when he came back, about that time I worked with him as his recordist and used to do everything together. Later I went with Norman Fisher who was a silent cameraman. We used to call them sound or silent cameramen. A silent cameraman did the cut in shots with a Newman Sinclair, you know. I worked with Norman who became a sound cameraman and then I worked with Paul Wyand who was the chief cameraman.

**Roy Fowler:** Stop?

**Roy Fowler:** How many cameramen, was there a fixed number or did that fluctuate?

**Reg Sutton:** So let me try and remember. We had Paul Wyand, chief cameraman, Alec Tozer, Norman Fisher, Martin Gray who went from sound, Hamilton Craig, who came from studios, Pinewood. Hilton Craig we called him. We had Eddie Smayles who went to the BBC eventually, long since dead now. Ken Hanshaw, now retired. Those are the ones I can remember offhand. Alec Tozer, his uncle was Alec Tozer of Kodak, Pathe, Kodak. He set up his daughter, old uncle Alec Tozer, in a 16mm laboratory in Southampton Row underneath a barbers in a basement. She was a passive director, because Alec also was taken in. Alec ran the place and eventually it moved from Southampton Row to Wardour Street where they took over another firm. I can't remember its name, over a Chinese restaurant at the foot of Wardour Street. Alec died a few years ago, he had a brain tumour. But when he was setting up of course we were still working at Movietone he was and so was I naturally but he used to pop round and get things organised and buy the equipment and setting up. And I used to help him, we used to nip out, we had a marvellous sergeant on the door at Movietone who used to know where we were if anyone was looking for us and he used to give us a ring and say you better get back here quick. So I helped Alec set up this laboratory, he and I did it. Then he wanted some special exposure meters to read the density of the tracks he was taking on these 16mm developers and so forth, and I made some up for him with little meters I remember because they were rather expensive to buy, so I bought some units and meters and made them up for him in those days.

**Roy Fowler:** That was all extra curricular, it wasn't part of the Movietone news?

**Reg Sutton:** No. That's what you call moonlighting and who hasn't done it?

**Roy Fowler:** Don't tell Alan Sapper. Was there any American input ... Was there any feeling that it was an American company or partly an American company?

**Reg Sutton:** We knew that it was because the boss of 20th Century Fox across the corner of The Square. They didn't have a lot to do, I don't think, with the running of the firm, I think they became inveigled with the directors like Sir Gordon, but it wasn't obvious to us that they were dictating policy at all. It wasn't noticeable. I mean we used to join in with 20th Century Fox on social occasions when they had their Christmas party, all of Movietone would be invited. So we knew a lot of the people at 20th Century Fox, the technicians they had and so forth.

**Roy Fowler:** Presumably you got all the Fox Movietone stuff sent over, you saw the American reels and you would use material from the reels 

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes. And from Australia and we used to send ours.

**Roy Fowler:** OK sound recordists and cameraman together. The cameramen were they a hairy bunch? What is your recollection of the people they were and where they had started?

**Reg Sutton:** People like Paul had started in the early days and his brother worked for British Movietone, Pat Wyand, he was a sound engineer but he was inside on the dubbing suite. So Pat Sunderland was doing the mixing in those days and Pat Wyand he was on the optical recorder.

Leslie Wyand who was a famous old cameraman, who was Paul's uncle, he worked for Pathe if I remember, Leslie Wyand. The Wyand family, of course, were a bunch of nuts really and they did odd things like Paul's father built himself a wooden bicycle and he used to cycle to work, and Paul's father was, not de Havilland, at one of the aircraft companies down at Weybridge. He used to cycle to work from home on this wooden bicycle. They used to get up to all sorts of things. The Wyands were an odd family but lovable. I got on very well with Paul you know. I used to have a high regard for Paul, great cameraman he was. A great cameraman for things that happened fast like horseracing, motor car racing, aircraft and all that sort of thing. Marvellous on his quick pans and so forth he always did those sort of jobs. Whereas, Norman, who's still alive and I hope he doesn't listen to this was a bit of an old stick in the mud. And a good cameraman, a good lighting cameraman and he and I used to do the Conservative films for the Unionist Party and a man called Peter Whale who was one of the editors at Movietone he used to write them. Excellent. He'd go home one night and write a script and have a shooting script the following morning. We used to then go off and do it and we'd go and make it with people such as Churchill. And Churchill, Churchill - who else in those days? Not Heath, they were unknown.

**Roy Fowler:** In the forties or the fifties?

**Reg Sutton:** This is, the sort of, late forties, early fifties.

**Roy Fowler:** I wasn't in the country. I don't know. Churchill, Butler?

**Reg Sutton:** Butler, yes, Butler, R.A. Butler, yes great man R.A. Butler and we used to, go down to Churchill's place and make films with him, you know. Then we used to make some at Brighton Studios. Brighton Studios which I don't think are any longer in existence but they were quite near the station you used to go up a hill, right opposite the station, turn right at the top and there were these studios which were quite nice. We used to do everything with the old Wall camera, optical sound on film. We even made B-features in Brighton.

**Roy Fowler:** We better come onto that later, I think. We haven't really talked about the newsreel. Take us through the building in Soho Square. How many floors were there?

**Reg Sutton:** On the ground floor as you went in, there was the sergeant at arms, a commissioner, an ex-sergeant major in the army who lived at Aldershot, great man he was. The building, of course, was also shared with Kay's Laboratories because they used the basement and the top floor, all the printing and developing was done in the basement.

**Roy Fowler:** Was there a financial connection? Or were the two companies independent?

**Reg Sutton:** No, no when Movietone started up in this country they moved into that building with Kays to do their developing and printing because you needed somebody quick and on the job on the site. When you bear in mind that when we used to do the Derby, copies used to go out that night in the West End cinemas so somebody had to be there ready to work and do whatever was wanted. So on the ground floor just inside the door was the dispatch room and the cameraman's and soundman's room, a long room with lockers and so forth where we used to play cards when we weren't working. Canasta was the great card game in those days. And then further

down on that floor was Kay's engineering workshop. On the next floor was all Movietone. There was the post office, postal room, the cutting rooms, the recording rooms and the theatre and a dark room. Then on the next floor were

**Roy Fowler:** The dark room was used for what, for tests, for stills?

**Reg Sutton:** The sound recordists when they wanted to change their magazines, optical recording. The next floor up was the executives, Sir Gordon had his room there and his assistant, I wish I could think of his name but I can't, and his secretary and I think that was about all. And then on the next floor up, of course, was the production office with our production manager and the newsroom. The news editor was Ted Adams and our production manager was Jack Ramsden who prior to that was one of the cameramen at Movietone. In fact he was the North country cameraman because he came from Blackpool, and he was, he used to operate from there, Jack Ramsden. We also used to have a man in Liverpool called Jimmy Humphries, one of the real old timers who used to work for Pathe before he worked for Movietone. Jimmy Humphries he was the Liverpool Movietone cameraman.

**Roy Fowler:** He was staff? Not a stringer?

**Reg Sutton:** Staff. Yes. So that's where we got all our assignments from the fourth floor, the production office.

**Roy Fowler:** What sort of working schedule did you have, did you have fixed hours to report?

**Reg Sutton:** We worked when we worked, all hours any hours, no overtime in those days. If you worked in the evening you'd get seven shillings for dinner. So you could start in the morning at five o'clock, you'd get a phone call, get down to Southampton, there's a boat coming in with Charlie Chaplin on board. Get down quick. Off you'd go, you'd do your interviews, you'd ring up from Southampton, we're coming back, well don't come back, there's something happening at Brighton, put the stuff on the train and go to Brighton. You could be working to the middle of the night. Sometimes they even said have you got a toothbrush with you, well you're going over to Calais, so you'd go and have your toothbrush and razor in your locker and you'd probably be away several days expecting to get back the same night. So you worked all the hours that god sent, without any moaning. You didn't moan about overtime, that was part of our job.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you work and travel as a team? Always with the same cameraman?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yeah. Mainly. Norman Fisher I worked with for a long time. We had a Sunbeam Talbot then we went on the Humbers. I had a Humber Pullman eventually. Paul and Derick had a Humber Pullman and all the seats used to be taken out of the back and a straight-through floor fitted with drawers underneath, where you opened the side doors because it was raised up a bit to meet the back so that all your gear could put in there flat on the back and you had drawers to put cans of film and all that sort of thing. In the Humber Pullman they had tip up seats on the back of the driver, so we used to give the silent cameraman a lift who was going on the job unofficially because he would either have his own car or he'd have to go by rail and he would come with us and we'd split the rail fare.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, ok. Your equipment that was standard issue presumably?

**Reg Sutton:** First off, I had the old AEO-light system. And the AEO-light was invented by a man called Case at Movietone and it was a glow lamp which went into a socket at the back of the camera and the light was modulated by the output of the amplifier and it shone through a quartz slit onto the film next to the picture. That, I suppose, weighed three quarters of a hundred-weight, that amplifier, because the chassis was made of steel. And it was a heavy thing, the sort of thing which in one's young days one could put on one's shoulders and walk up three flight of stairs at the Albert Hall. It's now in Samuelson's Museum, and there was about half a ton of equipment which we were humping around. We were allowed helpers which we put in on our expenses and they were few and far between, the helpers.

**Roy Fowler:** Was this an occupational hazard, I mean, did people come down with hernias?

**Reg Sutton:** I don't know anyone who did but it was surprising they didn't. It was surprising they didn't. And then about 1948 they brought out a new system with light valves, you had a light valve on the back of the camera, a very compact little amplifier, two channel amplifier which didn't weigh a lot, probably twenty pounds. Marvellous, marvellous that was.

**Roy Fowler:** Custom built?

**Reg Sutton:** Made by Westrex. Made by Westrex.

**Roy Fowler:** Here or the States?

**Reg Sutton:** I say it was designed for the States and the ones we had here were probably built at Cricklewood.

**Roy Fowler:** So all this was the standard gear in the camera car?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes there'd be the camera and magazines and lens box and junk box and there'd be the sound amplifier, the batteries for the camera.

**Roy Fowler:** What sort of battery provision did you have?

**Reg Sutton:** In the old system we used to have 12 volt Nife batteries and we had 400 volts dry HT in a big aluminium case which was heavy as well, it was nearly as heavy as the amplifier. But when we went over to the new system with the Westrex and, the old system was Westrex by the way, the new Westrex system which was lightweight, it was all worked from one 12 volt battery box, the camera and the sound, because the output of the input power from the battery went into the amplifier and another cannon on the battery also went to the camera so it was feeding not only the source of power to the camera but it was feeding the sound lines to and from the camera.

**Roy Fowler:** With the original system that you spoke of, how long would the power your requirements?



**Reg Sutton:** Oh well, it would last a football match easy. The beautiful thing about that system was that at a football match we always found ourselves up a tower somewhere. So with that system we didn't need to get too near the camera because it was too heavy to carry up a ladder although sometimes we had to. So I used to stay down on the ground and switch it on and there was no noise reduction and it didn't overload or anything, so I used to shin up and sit next to the camera and watch the football match and leave that going. I could hear on the monitor phones up the top whether it was still working but with the new system one of course, one had to be very careful, one didn't want to muck up a string on a light valve.

**Roy Fowler:** How did you go about recharging the batteries once they were diminished?

**Reg Sutton:** We had spare batteries and we kept our cars and our workshop was in Conway Street off Fitzroy Square and we had charging facilities there so we had a spare batteries. We also had an extra dynamo fitted on the car so we could charge the 12 volt while we were going along and if we were going to a boxing match in Glasgow, you could easily charge a battery on the way up to Glasgow.

**Roy Fowler:** I don't know if Taffy has any questions. This is much more his area than mine.

**Taffy Haines:** It was a single system camera you were using? The Wall camera was a single system camera.

**Reg Sutton:** Yes, variable density.

**Roy Fowler:** Motor driven?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes, a Govern [??] motor. Yes and it had a turret on the front, with four full lenses you could swing the turret round and change the lenses like that so you could go in 25mm up to 12 inch or something.

**Taffy Haines:** What happened Reg when we, when you shot your stuff, you came back to Soho Square and then had a commentary to go on it. How did you do that?

**Reg Sutton:** You'd either come back with the film or you'd send it back, all depending where you were. When you got back it was developed. And it all depended ♦.

**Roy Fowler:** How was it sent back, dispatch rider? Or train? Reliable?

**Reg Sutton:** Railway. Railway. You know. One of these lovely tin cans done up with string and sealing wax with ♦useless if delayed♦ on it.

**Roy Fowler:** More used to get through in those days than now.

**Reg Sutton:** No problem, no problem, by air or an anything it all depends how urgent it was. Things could be urgent, things could not be urgent due to the factor of makeup days, I mean, the makeup day for Monday was Friday, and then the makeup day for Wednesday was Monday. So

if you shot something on Friday it wouldn't go in till the latter part of the following week's newsreel unless it was something very urgent which they held the reel up for and put it, slotted it in that night.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you get involved, was it standard that you would be involved in part of the completion? Or you shot it recorded it and shipped it to Soho Square?

**Reg Sutton:** Sometimes we didn't even see it. We might have been off somewhere else. Otherwise you'd go in next morning and see the rushes as the editing board watched them.

**Roy Fowler:** Is there more to be said about your end when you were actually shooting that stuff? Or would you like to move on to producing the reel?

**Taffy Haines:** The thing at Pathe was that the commentary was done live and it was mixed with your effects which you shot and then the two negatives were sent to the lab to make the print.

**Reg Sutton:** That's right. Well our commentator was Leslie Mitchell.

**Roy Fowler:** We're jumping way way ahead. Let's take it logically and in sequence. The material comes back? The exposed negative comes back to Soho Square?

**Reg Sutton:** Kays develop it, they make a slash print. Because you don't look at the negative.

**Roy Fowler:** They had a constant bath available?

**Reg Sutton:** If it was urgent they would look at the negative. And it's rather odd going in the theatre and looking at negative of what you shot.

**Roy Fowler:** Special projectors?

**Reg Sutton:** Well they were very carefully maintained and the gates were very special so you didn't get any scratching but if there was the time they'd make a slash print. So you'd see a slash print run.

**Roy Fowler:** Was there any kind of average shoot, the amount of footage you'd turn in for a job?

**Reg Sutton:** I think they used to reckon that they used, the ratio was about ten or twelve to one.

**Roy Fowler:** Both sound and picture?

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah. So that if you shot a 1000 ft on a story you'd probably get 100 ft on the reel which always looked a lot longer when you watched it, the finished product. You see the length of a newsreel was only 1000 ft which is roughly ten minutes and you'd be lucky if you got five stories in it or maybe something went a bit longer, something special, some occasion, a momentous occasion or royalty or governments or something it could run longer. It could take the whole reel up and then they'd scrap the others. Some stories didn't date you see.


**Roy Fowler:** In normal circumstances was there a pattern to each reel? Would there be a bit of politics? A bit of sport? A mixture?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes, humorous things, we used to do gag shots as well. We and Paramount were great ones for putting in gag shots. I remember one occasion we used to think these things up, it's probably still in the vaults, I remember one day we did a stunt - Paul and I, I thought it up, the idea we were covering a cross Britain cycle race and there was a pub in Hertfordshire called the Royal Standard and it's high up on a hill somewhere and it's a very well known pub and the cyclists were pulling up there, you see. So I said why don't we put Paul in who weighed twenty stone, in amongst them, then we'd let them go ahead and we had him going down a hill and at the bottom of the hill is a bend and we have a fence which he hits. In the next shot, there's a cut out, a big fat cut out of Paul through the fence, you see. We did this, you know, it was a laughable story, and there was I dressed as a yokel standing by the side of the road sharpening a scythe watching this chap go down the hill and you hear this terrific crash, you see, and the next shot of course was the big cut out of Paul. And we used to think up some of these humorous sort of stories as light relief against some of the politics and so forth. But a lot of stories would keep you see. I mean if you covered for instance, the marble championships down in Surrey, which happened every, it didn't matter if they went out this week, next week or the week after, it was still fairly topical news.


**Roy Fowler:** So it would be make-weight stuff? So really you had very little to do with following through once you'd shot the story?

**Reg Sutton:** No once we shot it that was our lot. Then there were editors and recordists inside that was their problem.

**Roy Fowler:** Is there anything you can tell us about that or is it something of which you have comparatively little knowledge?

**Reg Sutton:** Well I mean I worked inside on occasion. I did a little bit of mixing and a bit on the recorder and there was nothing unusual about it anymore than working outside on a 

**Roy Fowler:** Other than speed? Right?

**Reg Sutton:** You can only, you can only work as fast as things will go, so 

**Roy Fowler:** Well that's true but ...

**Taffy Haines:** But you, with a commentary ... if you explain that ... you had a commentator who was in his little booth, who did everything live to picture.

**Reg Sutton:** We had a man who wrote the commentaries, right, he would get, he would sit in the theatre on the editing bench with the editor, Gerald Sanger, and the chief cutter and the chief sound cutter and the man who wrote the scripts and the commentator wouldn't be there at the time they were looking at the rushes. And the scriptwriter would then get from the editor a list of the shots they were going to use and he will have seen them and remembered them. It would then

go away and be edited in the cutting room, they would then come back probably and look at the edited version or look at it on the Movieola and the scriptwriter would be looking at it and he'd make a few notes and he would go away and write the script. So then the next thing that happened by the time they'd got the track of the natural sound and the track of any effects and any music background, they wanted to be put in, because you always had music and so forth coming in and out. They would all be set up ready to mix the reel, and then the commentator would be there and he would have his script. And there'd be a nudger, one of the editors who would nudge him when to start talking. And he would rehearse it a couple of times and then they'd do a take.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. The point I wanted to make earlier was, you said you couldn't work the equipment faster than it could be worked but the deadlines in newsreels were quite different, obviously, from those in any other part of the industry so that must have effected the way the individual themselves went about their...

**Reg Sutton:** The inside staff would be there sometimes until late at night, if it was a rush job, until it was finished. It presented no problems, was part of their job, part of their work, one expected to do this.

**Roy Fowler:** Understood. Right. OK. That happened twice a week? So it was what 104 reels a year?

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah, yeah. And then of course, that was the first issue, and then some cinemas who couldn't afford the first issue, which I believe in the early days of ,the sort of, the early forties was about ♦12 a week for first run. Then if they couldn't afford that they'd get a second run, which might have been ♦9 but they'd be a week later or you might get a third run and you'd paid a fiver for it and that was about a week and a half old so people were looking at old stuff, you see.

**Roy Fowler:** Kay's did the bulk prints, do you know what the print order would have been for each issue?

**Reg Sutton:** I can't remember off hand. I've got a feeling it was probably about 200 because we showed at some of the Gaumont cinemas and Gaumont, we showed at half the Gaumont cinemas, Gaumont showed at the other half, And the reason being that the Gaumont Cinemas were owned by the Bradford Trust I understand who in turn 20th Century Fox were the principal shareholders. So wheels within wheels. Then we ♦.

**Roy Fowler:** So it was one giant cartel, wasn't it, it was the Bradford Metropolitan Trust?

**Reg Sutton:** Then we showed at independent cinemas round the country.

**Roy Fowler:** First run?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. Oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** How quickly would Kay's turn out those prints do you know?

**Reg Sutton:** Well they'd be turned out over night and ready for dispatch during Saturday cause they gotta go to all parts of the country. Their dispatch department would send them off.

RE: By rail?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. Mainly by rail. Mainly by rail. I mean, the London ones of course were delivered by van.

**Roy Fowler:** Then in the normal routine of producing a reel twice a week, is there anything else you feel is worth remembering, recording?

**Reg Sutton:** Not that I can think of off hand at this moment, afterwards I shall probably think of a lot of things.

**Roy Fowler:** Well we'll have an opportunity. We'll come on to the sort of anecdotes in a while. We'll just get through the technicalities of it. When did you switch over to magnetic recorders?

**Reg Sutton:** Well, in 1953, 20th Century Fox, in the form of their main producer, I wish I could think of his name offhand, the main producer ♦

**Taffy Haines:** Spyros Skouros, Reg?

**Reg Sutton:** Well Spyros Skouros was the head of 20th Century Fox, Darryl Zanuck was their main producer, Darryl Zanuck, and they heard about this man in France Henri Chr♦tien who had invented a wide angle lens which he called an anamorphic lens which was used in the French tanks during the war. And it was a little lens about two inches square, this box with an aperture at the back and a slight lens sticking out the front which covered a very wide angle view. So it would cover, 360, about 180 degrees which was a great help with French tanks because they could see what was happening at both sides and ahead. Spyro Skouras and Darryl Zanuck who was the chief producer heard about this anamorphic lens, invented by a man called Henri Chr♦tien, they went to France to see it. They realised it had possibilities, they bought it, took him back to America with them, Henri Chr♦tien and they got Bausch & Lomb to make an anamorphic taking lens which they did tests with and found it successful for what they wanted to do. Of course an anamorphic lens squeezes everything up and when you project it you're doing the opposite through an anamorphic lens and it's opening it out again. So Darryl Zanuck was sort of, half way through making a picture called The Robe in normal format. Spyro Skouras scrapped it and spent a million or whatever it is they spend on these pictures, scrapped it and reshot it in CinemaScope, that's what they called the system, the widescreen system. It was a great success. Spyro Skouras said the Queen of England is going on a Commonwealth tour, she'd just been crowned, 1953. And he said, I think Movietone News should follow them and take newsreel pictures in CinemaScope. So they decided they would do this. So Paul and Jack Ramsden who was the production manager went over to Hollywood, picked up the lens, found out a bit about it, did some tests with Marilyn Monroe, came back and I was chosen to accompany Paul on this Royal tour which started in November 1953 and finished in April 1954.

And we were going to record it in stereophonic sound so we bought a Leever's Rich recorder, tape recorder and we got Norman Leever's to adapt it for twin track. And instead of half-track with a half-track pulse, we had a twin track with a pulse in the centre so that we could at least do some form of stereophonic. And when they eventually got it back for editing they pan mixed it into four tracks. So Paul and I set off with all this equipment, the Leever's Rich recorder which we had had adapted and I fixed up a sync marker, probably one of the first sync markers to be used. And as we were using the Wall camera for whatever we did we took off the light valve at the back and put an aperture on and fed a lamp in through an optic. So when I pressed a button my end I could burp the tape and the light would shine through the optical onto the side of the film and make a mark on the film so we knew where we were.

**Roy Fowler:** Give us a little more detail about the Leever's Rich recorder. The gauge, the speed, the size of the reels ♦

**Reg Sutton:** Well it was a quarter inch. Fifteen inch. You could either use five-inch or seven inch. It ran at fifteen inches.

**Roy Fowler:** So had there been sprocket tapes before this? Or did that come later? I didn't realise that quarter inch came in so rapidly.

**Reg Sutton:** I think I think there was the Westrex sprocket recorders, 35mm, and 16mm at that time ♦

**Taffy Haines:** Seventeen and a half millimetre.

**Reg Sutton:** ♦ but I don't think that would have been considered rather unwieldy, a newsreel crew of two taking a 35mm sprocketed recorder ♦

**Roy Fowler:** They were in the studios were they?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. And all the sort of paraphernalia one needed to drive it because we might be in the middle of a field or something. Whereas the Leever's Rich which was comparatively new then, I mean it was manufactured and thought of by Norman Leever's, and I think they copied may be the Rangertone which was in America at the time, a similar system.

**Roy Fowler:** The one I remember from the States where I was then was Fairchild. Do you remember Fairchild?

**Reg Sutton:** I think the Rangertone was first in the States.

**Taffy Haines:** I wouldn't know

**Reg Sutton:** Something like that. Anyway, so this was, is in two boxes and quite weighty, I suppose, I suppose the recorder box would weigh probably the same as a 12 volt battery, about sixty pounds, the other one probably about forty pounds. Then there was a 12 volt car battery to drive it. Then there was the drums of cable and the microphones and the various accessories.

**Roy Fowler:** This was all valve technology?

**Reg Sutton:** This was all midget valves. Yeah. And we had this sync marker system. I also devised a system so that I could switch on the camera from the recorder and I could switch on the recorder from the camera, the reason being that there was only two of us, if we were on a big set up and we wanted a wide angle view Paul could set the camera up for the wide angle, he could then push off with the silent camera and do cut ins. So I could either stay by the camera and switch on and get the sound or stay at the recorder and switch the camera on from there while he was doing his cut in shots, you see. The ACT must have known about this I think. Any rate, we were a newsreel crew and of course we travelled, we travelled a lot. We started out by going on a boat, a P&O liner from Tilbury Dock which was going to Australia and the idea was so that we could get used to the equipment on the way out. We went more or less as VIPs and we were able to have a little shack on the boat deck where we could put our, some of our equipment and use it on the way out so we could get pictures and sound of the various countries we went to. We set out on November 5th from Tilbury on a dark, foggy rainy night and we got on board, we heaved a sigh of relief and we thought they can't get us, as soon as the anchor comes up, that's it. So Paul says we'll wait till the anchor comes up, then we'll buy a bottle of champagne and then we'll get tight because we'll be on our way and they can't call us back. So the anchor came up and we got the champagne and we went in the bar and we had a few drinks here and there and we rolled in to bed and we got up the next morning and looked out the porthole and we were still in the middle of the river at Tilbury because the fog was so great they couldn't get out the river. Anyway shortly afterwards, they did go and of course we went across the Bay of Biscay, through Gibraltar and down through the Med, and made one or two calls as we went.

**Roy Fowler:** Were you shooting anything as you went?

**Reg Sutton:** We shot scenes as we went by, Gibraltar and places like that.

**Roy Fowler:** It doesn't sound a very painful trip.

**Reg Sutton:** It was a trip of a lifetime really. When we went ashore at some of the ports we pulled up at, like Cairo and of course in those days boats were going through the Suez Canal so we did a lot of filming through the Suez Canal and then down to Karachi, Bombay, Colombo and across the ocean to Freemantle.

**Roy Fowler:** A question. You took all your consumables with you presumably?

**Reg Sutton:** Everything. Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Do you remember how much tape you had and how much stock Paul had?

**Reg Sutton:** Well I mean I, let's see now, a seven-inch reel runs for fifteen minutes, I think. Yes. Fifteen inches, seven inches at fifteen minutes.

**Taffy Haines:** Twenty minutes ♦.

**Reg Sutton:** And I took something like 100 rolls of seven inch tape and we had about 50,000 ft of Eastman Color film.


**Roy Fowler:** 1,000 ft rolls?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes which we had to keep cool to a certain extent. It didn't work out all the time but the film it didn't suffer as a result of some of the heat we suffered. So we took everything. We were self-supporting, everything we needed we took with us.

**Roy Fowler:** Just the two of you, no help at all?

**Reg Sutton:** Just the two of us. Just the two of us. Any help we got, loading and unloading, we got casual labourers when necessary. We arrived in Freemantle where we disembarked because we weren't going to go all round Australia on a boat to Sydney. We unloaded everything at Freemantle and we stayed the night there I think and then we went off by aircraft to Sydney. And when we arrived in Sydney we went to Fox Movietone, Sydney. They had places at Campbelltown where we took all our equipment so we could check it to see if everything was alright. When we got off the boat at Freemantle, there was a dock strike on, the inevitable Australian dock strike. We got somebody to sling our stuff off for us but in doing so the recorder slipped out of the net and landed on the concrete deck. So we thought well that's it I suppose. So we didn't even look at it till we got to Sydney. And then we found that all the motors, all the studs had sheared off the motors, and the sprung points of the chassis which was self sprung had sheared off so we set to, overnight, to do it and we repaired it and got it all going back to normal.

**Roy Fowler:** That's phenomenal. You hadn't worried about backups before this?

**Reg Sutton:** No. No. No. That's all we had. So we got it going. And then we, we left Sydney after spending a few days at Fox Movietone there and we went by air to Auckland and we had a look round Auckland and found our positions like we did in Sydney. We went round all the positions we were going to use, made our contacts. Whatever we were going to do in Sydney. Then we went to Auckland and did the same. Then we went to Fiji and did the same. Then we flew across to Tonga and did the same. Then we flew up to the .

**Taffy Haines:** Side three then.

**Roy Fowler:** Right side three now yes. You mentioned Reg that you were flying around the South Seas you were in Tonga. And where else Reg?

**Reg Sutton:** Then we ... the Queen by then had come through the Cocos Islands and was on her way to New Zealand. And we went back to Auckland and picked up the Queen there and covered the various sort of functions, the mayor speaking, and she visited schools, we got native dancing and all those sort of things. And we spent Christmas there, we went to Government House on Christmas morning and recorded the Queen's speech as she was speaking to the Empire as well. And then she came out onto the grass and listened to some local girls singing Christmas carols and that was really the end of our work on Christmas Day. But it wasn't really because our boss in London, Gerry Sanger, had asked that we get people eating their Christmas dinner on the



beaches. Well of course at Christmas it's beautiful sunshine and hot and apparently people eat their Christmas dinner and wear paper hats and have turkey and Christmas pudding on the beach. So we went down to the beach. But unfortunately it was misty and pouring with rain and there was nobody on the beach. So we couldn't cover what they wanted so we went back to the hotel and enjoyed ourselves. Now the weather changes rapidly and the following day was beautiful, Boxing Day was beautiful, so we quickly got together a lot of people and brought turkey and ham and whatever from the hotel and the hats and Christmas pudding and we took this family down on the beach and we filmed them having Christmas dinner on the beach and sent it back to London and they were very happy with us getting it on Christmas day. New Zealand of course, we went all round New Zealand. We went down to the thermal region, Rotorua and we covered the various dances which the Maoris do. The poi dances and you see all these Maoris arrive in the morning in their luscious limousines, in their beautiful suits and they get out and put on their grass skirts and get the biro out and do all the markings on their face and body and then they're ready for doing the Maori stuff. And the Queen was lead round the thermal region by a famous guide, Maori guide called Guide Rangi and she went to see one of the biggest geysers which set off regularly at certain times called Pohutu. And we set up near Pohutu, this fabulous geyser and the Queen came down and hung around for half an hour and the geyser didn't want to operate, it did not want to operate, so we packed all our stuff up, took it along to our van. We had a van supplied by the bus company in New Zealand and with their driver, so we had a big van with plenty of room in it. And they'd had a special roof put on for us to erect the tripod on top if we wanted to. So we put the tripod on top ready for following her round wherever she went to next and we just got the tripod on top which was some way away from the geyser and slightly out of sight when it suddenly went off this geyser and the Queen started walking back to the geyser and she looked up at us as she passed and she said well, we caught you this time didn't we. We quickly dismantled, hurried round with all this stuff, carrying it, you know, with the driver helping us, fixed up in seconds flat and we covered her watching Pohutu geyser. You see we could work quick in newsreels, it's not like a feature film unit where you've got dozens of people all falling over each other. We knew exactly what we were doing and how long it took to do it. We could get on a job and fix up in five minutes and be ready to shoot. You can't do that with a feature film unit.

**Taffy Haines:** You can't with a director, see if you got a director that's one of the pitfalls.

**Reg Sutton:** But we were on our own, entirely on our own.

**Roy Fowler:** Tell me about the finances. Did you have any kind of budget or was it carte blanche?

**Reg Sutton:** We had a subsistence allowance, I don't think we got an increase in salary, we had a subsistence allowance.

**Roy Fowler:** Production expenses?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes, which was fairly good and we had a float for certain expenses.

**Roy Fowler:** Who handled the float?

**Reg Sutton:** Well, I'll tell you between Tilbury and Australia we'd both spent a month's allowance, but we soon made up on it. Of course, on board, you know, we used to have terrific parties and drinking sessions so we spent a lot of money. Any rate ...

**Roy Fowler:** In general the company was mean about expense accounts was it? One had to make it up in other ways?

**Reg Sutton:** They were always mean if they could be. They were always mean if they could be. They were always mean if they could be. You'd go away in England and buy a paper and put it on your expenses, the Daily Mail tuppence or whatever it was, you see. Sir Gordon's assistant who used to vet all these, would cross it out. And we'd say you can't work in those conditions, at home we have the Daily Mail, why shouldn't we have it when we're away on location. He said no you're not having it. So what did we do, next time we went on a job instead of putting ten bob in for unloading we put a pound in. So we made ten bob extra for the sake of them cutting tuppence, you see So they didn't win in the end.

**Roy Fowler:** It's always foolish to be shortsighted in that fashion, I agree.

**Reg Sutton:** So any rate. Where did we get to? The geyser that's right. Fascinating place with the boiling mud pools in which we bathed in at night with some of the press party. And then from there we went down across the Canterbury Plains to Napier and way down to the Southern Island, we crossed to the Southern Island to Christchurch. [editor's note: the Canterbury Plains are in the South Island and Napier is in the North Island so he would not have crossed the Canterbury Plains from Rotorua to get to Napier ♦ more likely to have crossed a mountain range!]

**Roy Fowler:** This was all the Royal tour? This is not you independently?

**Reg Sutton:** We followed all round. There was a book provided with all the dates where we were going, photographs and maps, beautiful book. We went all round New Zealand, and all round the Southern Island way down to Dunedin in the extreme south, which is like Edinburgh. Well, Dunedin is the name for Edinburgh and it's all built of granite and it's cold and there was snow and there's Mount Cook with skiing and all that sort of thing and there's old tram cars going up and down steep hills. Then we went back to Auckland, making our way back leisurely because in the meantime the Queen was having some rest days. So on a rest day we were able to have our haircut, because our hair was growing long and everywhere we went was a public holiday. So if we were there only overnight, we could never, there was never a shop open or anybody open to have a hair cut. So by then, our hair was down to our collars. But we did a job on the way back with some sheep shearers and one of the sheep shearers cut our hair with his shears and we got a very good hair cut. And we went back to Auckland, then we flew to Tonga, the Friendly Isles, and they had one hotel there which was taken over for the Queen and we were farmed out into various houses; sort of Government Ministers and so on. And Paul went with what they would call the Home Secretary and I went with the Minister of Health in his own house. A beautiful house and he had lots of daughters, and there was no bathroom, there was a shower outside in a, like a privy, a sort of cast iron hut and on top was a ten gallon oil drum with sort of some gadget you pulled a bit of string and water came out. And I remember going in that

one day and getting soaked all over and pulling the string and nothing came out. There was no water in. So there was I covered in soap with a lot of girls outside tittering around and laughing and I had to come out with a towel round me and there were great roars of laughter from all these girls and then they got an old fashioned bath and put in the room for me and filled it with warm water and I got in that. The snag was in this house that none of the doors would close, they only closed about half way and then they stuck on the floor so that everybody was, sort of, walking in and out of everywhere, whether you were in bed or up or what have you, always on the move. But they were very generous people the Tongans, and when we left I remember they said to me, they said to Paul the same, you can take whatever you like in our house as a keepsake. Take whatever you like. I think I took a tablecloth made of tapa, it's wood taken from trees and beaten until it's thin like a tablecloth. Then it's all coloured with various dyes, the patterns, beautiful things. While we were there, course we went to the palace and we did an interview with Queen Salote who was a lovely woman and we saw the big turtle in her grounds which was reputed to be a hundred years old and sat on it and it was so hot she gave us some fans made out of reeds beautifully made fans, I've still got mine at home. Paul had one. We met her son who is the present King of Tonga and his wife, a beautiful woman, and if you remember she was at the Coronation of the Queen and she rode down round the processional route in an open carriage in the pouring rain and people said how marvellous letting us see her and all that, well it wasn't that really at all because it hardly ever rains in Tonga and when it does they all go out in the rain and get wet, so she liked getting wet. That's the reason she rode round in an open carriage. So from Tonga, we went, we didn't fly, we went by boat from Auckland to Sydney, and it must have been the roughest weather they've had for a long time. The boat nearly stood on end. And we were fairly seasoned travellers and we felt a bit queasy but we were the only people that went in the dining room to eat. At the same time we were writing our expenses, so we had a bit of incentive, writing our expenses and eating. So there was only the two of us, each day, and it takes about three days, I think, from Auckland to Sydney. My god it was rough. We arrived in Sydney and we were met by Fox Movietone boys, and we had transport, one of their cars, and we drove around in that, took our gear everywhere and we went down to Government House, in a, down near the Blue Mountains, Katoomba, and the Queen stood on Echo Point looking out over the beautiful scenery, which is Echo Point and you shout and a voice comes back a few minutes later and we recorded all this and we went up to the Newcastle and some of the old names like one meets in England and we went into the bush. We went to the koala reserve where the koala bears were and the, all the various animals. Then we went up to Brisbane where it's very hot and we went further up to Cairns where the boats have glass bottoms so you can go out and look at the coral, then we came back from way up in the north, Cairns down that side down to Sydney and we got a train from Sydney with all our gear to Melbourne which was the next stop she was going to. And halfway between Melbourne, Sydney and Melbourne the tracks changed their width, different width of track, different engines, different carriages. I can't think of the name of the place offhand, but as a side line to this in that place lived unknown to me one of my father's sisters, who had fourteen children, most of them married. So I not only had an aunt and uncle there and fourteen cousins, but I didn't know it till we spent the night there. After that I found out I had an aunt and uncle there and I met her since, she came over to England. So then we went on to Melbourne where we covered various things, aquatic events and so forth, then we went on to Adelaide, and we toured the vineyards. Then we went out of Seppeltsfield where they make the wine, where she met Don Bradman of course who lives there. And we then went to a place called Whyalla, where they were having some native dancing by people who used to be headhunters,

these natives, ♦ abos ♦ who were headhunters in their time and they were at this place Whyalla which was around the other side of an inlet-creek. By plane from Adelaide to Whyalla took about half an hour but we couldn't get on the plane so we had to drive six hundred miles to get there and we had to go up and find a bridge to get there and get back. We covered this native dancing, fantastic stuff. We finished at Adelaide, we went inland to Alice Springs and Woomera, the rocket range and covered various events there, and we came back from there and we hired a Ford custom lined car which had, took eight people and luggage and with two members of Australian Movietone we drove across the desert from Sydney to Freemantle. And all you see is a straight road and a railway line and now and then a tin shack where you can get petrol. That took us two days and two nights, it's a long way, thousands of miles. And I should mention that when we were at Government House outside Sydney we were set up on a rostrum and I didn't like the look of this rostrum. Paul went up with the famous Australian cameraman from Movietone Australia called Sid Woods, they both set their tripod on. I stayed on the ground, and just before the Queen arrived the whole stand collapsed. Everything went down on the ground. And Paul broke his arm; we had to rush him off to hospital. And I had to pick up all the bits, the Queen hadn't arrived and Menzies, the Prime Minister helped me pick up the tripods and the camera, he was quite adjacent, I found there wasn't a lot of damage done and was able to take pictures of the Queen unveiling this memorial to the Australian Air Force as well as doing the sound. In the meantime Paul was in hospital, of course he was all plastered up here and which was a bit difficult to say the least. The Queen heard about it and phoned up our hotel and asked how he was and we pinched one of Australian Movietone's lads called Mark MacDonald to come with us and give us a hand. So there were three of us then and he was able to help a lot and we took him all the way to Freemantle. Sydney, down to Adelaide, Melbourne and across to Freemantle with us, Mark MacDonald. Eventually he came to this country, Mark and he married Paul's niece, and he lives here now, Mark MacDonald, an Australian. So in Freemantle we covered a lot of events and happenings which the Queen normally does. And I think what happened, there was something, some health problem on board the boat and only the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were allowed to get off at Freemantle. Now what was it? Something catching ... they had to keep them all on board. I can't remember what it was now. We covered the school children singing, and natives and abos, and speeches, and schools and plays and all sorts of things. And then we flew up to Darwin. And to fly to Darwin we went in a plane of the MacRobertson Airlines and it was one of these old wartime planes, which was made into a passenger plane. Now what it's called? The same as a place in America ♦

RF and

**Taffy Haines:** ♦ Dakota

**Reg Sutton:** Dakota. It's got a bump in the middle, you can't walk down the middle very easily can you? And much to our amazement this thing kept landing in fields, all the way to Darwin, up through all these pearling villages. A farmer would want to get off and they'd land in his field and they'd let him off. Then there'd be a barrel of petrol, and they'd fill it up. The girl'll get out with the pilot, only the pilot and the girl, in again, and then we'd go on a bit and drop down again, all the way to Darwin. And it was very hot in Darwin, because it's tropical in Darwin, and we arrived and we covered several things, and I'll never forget, we went in the swimming pool and it was beautiful to get into the swimming pool and I heard a very recognisable voice talking

and it was Wynford Vaughan Thomas. I hadn't seen him for quite a while. I knew him in my BBC days, he was one of the commentators, that was the last time saw Wynford Vaughan Thomas he's since died. Marvellous man he was, That was in Darwin. From Darwin we flew, where did we go from Darwin? We went across to New Guinea, to Borneo, and Singapore and then up to Ceylon. We went to these places, the Queen didn't go to Borneo and Singapore, she went to Ceylon, but we went there to cover some other stories which we'd heard about en route. And we got to Ceylon and we stayed at the Galle Face Hotel on the coast just outside of Colombo, I suppose we should call it Sri Lanka now, I suppose but it's Ceylon to me. And we covered a marvellous event in ... where's the tooth now? Where's the tooth?

FR: Kandy.

**Reg Sutton:** Kandy at Parahara with elephants and all the, the Sinhalese people dressed up in their beautiful robes and turbans, knives and so forth and the Queen went to look at the Tooth and we got a photograph of it and we were able to go as well. The thing that tickled me there, of course, was that all the elephants were lit up. They had little lights all the way round them, this was, sort of, at dusk. Underneath swinging on a bit of rope was a 12 volt car battery, swinging as it walked along, this 12 volt car battery. From there we went up to Neralia [?] which is way up in the hills, in the northern part of the island, and going up these hills you could see all these lights, all the little fireflies dotting about. We got up to Neralia [?] it was cold just like England and there were log fires in the hotel, but fantastic views, but cold. There we had more speeches and native events and so forth. From Ceylon we flew to Entebbe and we spent time going round Kenya and Uganda. We had recently, previously been to Kenya, Norman Fisher and I, I think it was Norman, because we went there when the Mau Mau troubles were on, photographing and doing interviews, so that was some years previous. We went round Kenya and amongst the many things we did the Queen opening the Owen Dam Falls and a fantastic venture that was. The Sinhalese, the Kenyan Radio gave me a feed which they got from the BBC to record what was happening, the speeches and so forth, and it all sounded a bit odd to me but it wasn't till afterwards I found out that they were actually giving me the programme coming back from London on another line, because they always feed back, the BBC, what you're doing. It comes back to you on another line for monitoring, and that's where I was getting my feed from. It turned out alright, it didn't sound too bad, it was a bit crackly, you know, sort of. Then from there, where did we go? We went to Uganda, while we were in Uganda we went across to the Tonga [editor's note; possibly Congo rather than Tonga] and then we went up to Tunisia, Algeria and Gibraltar where the obvious thing was the Barbary apes and so forth in Gibraltar, and then we went home. We were home in time to film her arrival back in this country. So we were away six months altogether and we went 26,757 miles in eighteen flights on eleven different airlines, 11,624 miles by sea, 6,000 miles by road and 16,019 miles by rail. Paul shot 40,000 ft of Eastman colour and I recorded ten miles of quarter inch magnetic tape. And the material was not used for a newsreel at all. They decided it was so good they made it into a full-length feature film called The Flight of the White Heron which had world-wide distribution and it ran for twelve weeks at the Carlton Cinema, Haymarket. So that was an assignment of a lifetime.

**Taffy Haines:** And it was dubbed in RCA. And the first 

**Reg Sutton:** That's right, York Scarlet.

**Taffy Haines:** Yes, and it was the first CinemaScope set up, stereo in England

**Reg Sutton:** That's right, we sort of made history in a way, I suppose. Not only doing the first British CinemaScope picture but it could have been about the only feature which was shot on location by two people.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes indeed. Did you get many foreign trips as a newsreel crew?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. I went on a tour of France with De Gaulle and Eisenhower. We went on a trip round Spain with Franco and Eisenhower. We went to the West Indies on a royal visit with Princess Margaret. I went with MacMillan's party to Moscow, when he visited Moscow. That was rather unique because I took the Auricon, the small 600ft Auricon and sound equipment which is magnetic, a magnetic attachment, so that's a magnetic track on the side of the film. I was going to work, we were mixed up with United Press at Movietone half the time and I was going to work with the United Press still cameraman who was going to operate the Auricon and I arrived there and this Russian cameraman, couldn't speak a word of English. I couldn't speak a word of Russian but we did get on very well together but he wasn't interested in taking movie pictures, cause he was a bit of a jack of all trades, he was taking still pictures, he was doing copy and sending it in, and he didn't have time to come round with me. So it finished up that I took all the pictures and the sound on this equipment and we were servicing United Press and the BBC at the time. So all the stuff I shot and recorded under great difficulties was being circulated. A very interesting time in Russia really, we went to Leningrad, Stalingrad. We went to the Hermitage, the famous museum in Leningrad, a fantastic place where all the jewels of the Czars are still intact. And although the Russians are anti- most things they still like to keep these sort of things in their museums. We went round the Czar's apartments in the Kremlin and saw all the beautiful pictures painted by all the famous Italian artists on the walls and hanging large pictures. We went through the underground system where the stations are like museums with beautiful paintings on the walls, floodlit, no smoking, you could eat your breakfast off the floors, fantastic, tiled, beautiful underground stations

**Roy Fowler:** What was happening to the newsreel at this time, was it going along as it always had or were there any changes in process?

**Reg Sutton:** It was still going along, it was still happening.

**Roy Fowler:** And that continued until when?

**Reg Sutton:** I left the newsreels in 1960 and it was still going then but not for long I don't think. By then they'd moved out to Denham. Their library was and still is quite popular, but it's packed up entirely now. Movietone were the last newsreel, as such, prior to that they'd all packed up, Gaumont, Pathe, Universal, Paramount, all packed up. Movietone were the last one to put out a newsreel, I think, very few copies to independents.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you stay as a recordist throughout that time until 1960?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes. Yeah. You know. By then I was called Chief Recordist.

**Roy Fowler:** But you were always in the field?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes. Oh yeah.

**Roy Fowler:** Is this the point to talk about the great newsreel wars which apparently took place, the rivalry between the various reels?

**Reg Sutton:** There was always rivalry between the newsreels from their inception but when you were shooting. Outside of covering an assignment you were the best of friends, you stayed at the same hotels and got drunk together and did everything together. As soon as you were on the job, antagonism. In those days, and I remember, sound blokes certainly carried a pair of side cutters in their pockets, so if they got an opportunity to cut the other bloke's cables they did, and I've had my cables cut and I've cut other people's cables. Going back, some of the stories that happened are legend and you probably read about them in Paul Wyand's book called Useless if Delayed. Have you read it?

**Roy Fowler:** No I haven't.

**Reg Sutton:** There's a chapter about our travels but it tells you a bit about the Wyand family and the things they used to do.

**Roy Fowler:** Where you ever part of any wrecking activity other than cutting cables? Any specific stories?

**Reg Sutton:** Well I mean, we, sometimes newsreels got the rights to cover something, like we went up to St Andrews for the, it was the Open Golf which was held there once, we used to go up regularly. But one year we went up and we were turned off because we found out that Paramount had the rights. So we had to send for a long lens from London, we got a 50" lens or something, kept on the road at the side as much as we could and covered as much as we could on the holes and the bits near the road, but they had us turned off. From there we went to Blackpool to the Conservative Conference, where we were shooting not only for Movietone but for the Conservative and Unionist Films Association. We had the pride of place on the balcony set up you see, and then this guy from Paramount arrives, from St Andrews, so we had him thrown out, you see. We said it was our exclusive so he didn't win.

**Roy Fowler:** Right.

**Reg Sutton:** You see, they used to get up to all sorts of pranks and some of the old cameramen will tell you this, there's not many about now to tell you but I know the stories where they'd cover cricket at the Oval, and it would be tied up - Movietone perhaps got the rights of covering the test matches, you see, so the other guys would get, the stuff they used for building ...

**Taffy Haines:** Scaffolding ♦

**Reg Sutton:** ... scaffolding and have it erected outside the ground, up the wall, you see and they'd climb up, shoot over the top, get the cricket match you see. Well then Movietone would

get a lot of balloons filled with hydrogen, hundreds of them, and get people to hold them up in front of them so they couldn't see what was happening, you see. And then they'd shoot them down. Then they used to get water pistols and shoot at them, and all that sort of thing, anything to stop them getting the pictures. And then on the Cup Finals, I remember old Jack Cotter who used to be an old cameraman at Movietone, he, somebody had the rights to the Cup Final which was unusual and he went in with a small camera in a top hat, he wore this top hat and he had a little bit of string which he used to pull to open a flap and another bit to pull which switched the camera on and he sat there filming the Cup Final and going like that as they moved around, you know. And they used to get up to all sorts of gags.

**Roy Fowler:** In addition to that was there a lot of faking, you mentioned the jokes, but were there deliberate fakes, misrepresentations?

**Reg Sutton:** No. You never faked stories, no. No. It was all above board.

**Roy Fowler:** You're saying that hand on heart?

**Reg Sutton:** It's as true as I'm riding this bike.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. OK. For the record ♦. [laughs]

**Taffy Haines:** It has been known, because in the very early days they did fake a bit in the States didn't they?

**Roy Fowler:** Well, yes I think, indeed, from the very beginning the extent to which it continued I don't know but ♦

**Reg Sutton:** But you see, you have to be careful because if you're talking about political things there's the laws of libel and all that and if you're going to shoot stuff out of context or cut it out of context, you know, you've got to be very careful. I mean we, you do stories sometimes and prompt people to do things which you think would look good and which they should do, but I don't think you'd, I don't think you'd do anything naughty at all, no, there's a certain artistic licence I suppose.

**Roy Fowler:** I see. Poetic licence? Well then, you worked through the sixties in newsreels?

**Reg Sutton:** No I left in 1960.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh sorry, through the fifties is what I meant to say ... through the fifties.

**Reg Sutton:** Between 1954 and 1960 we still continued doing CinemaScope sort of, I suppose you'd call them documentaries to a great extent. We didn't do anymore big stuff but we did ♦

**Roy Fowler:** The regular reel was always academy was it?



**Reg Sutton:** Yes we also did CinemaScope reels like the Eisteddfod at Langollen, we covered that in CinemaScope which was rather nice.

**Roy Fowler:** And colour?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yes. Yeah. And then we did one on sports and pastimes covering all sorts of sports and hobbies and things. I think there were about two we did. In amongst this we were doing the run of the mill and all this sort of things we used to do like setting up at Downing St and waiting for somebody to come out of Number 10 which was the most boring job in the world and then they wouldn't speak. But you had to be, to try and get one ahead of the opposition. I remember on one occasion when we were at London Airport when Atlee was coming back from some momentous meeting he'd held and we were all shepherded into an area surrounded by iron railings and the plane when it pulled up, I suppose, pulled to within about thirty or forty feet of us where the steps came down, you see. And we all set our microphones up round the perimeter of this fence, hoping he would come over and talk to us, you see. I also threaded a microphone, a long microphone back behind me and out of the fence and round the corner a bit and left a bit hunk of cable with a microphone on the end. And we had a contact man, Hilton Craig, who was one of our sound men, he was acting as contact. And I said well when the plane lands and Atlee comes down, nip round quick, pick up the mike, go over to him and interview him, see what happens. Of course he did this, as soon as he came down the steps we were there interviewing him, bang bang bang, you see. We stole the march on everybody else. All they could pick up was distance stuff on these mikes and he never came over to their microphones. So you've got to think ahead, you know, and try to work a quick one.

**Taffy Haines:** Yeah. Name of the game.

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah. We weren't very popular at the time but we were alright in the pub afterwards, cause it's all forgotten then.

**Roy Fowler:** Were they a hard drinking bunch?

**Reg Sutton:** Some of the old timers were. Yeah. Yeah. I remember. We used to go to the Grand National, everybody went to the Grand National. We went up several days before, all the five newsreels would send their chaps up and we'd all more or less meet each other on the road up to Liverpool and there was one tunnel on the A5, a long tunnel you go through and the other side of it is a pub. And it was always a thing, any newsreel crews went through, they kept their hands on their horns, all the way through this tunnel till they got out the other side, you see. We went in that pub one day and we said to the chap is it very noisy in this pub next to this tunnel, he didn't know who we were. He said on occasions bloody fools go through here sounding their horns, he says it's always around Grand National time. Of course the other gag would be to chop up newspaper into confetti and as you're going along and you're passing one of the opposition you throw a whole lot out at him. And it would go down the front of his car [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Happy days.

**Reg Sutton:** We used to stay at a hotel at Seacombe Ferry. Which is, you'd go through the tunnel or over on the Ferry, on the other side is, on the New Brighton side is the Seacombe Ferry Hotel and we were all eventually thrown out of this hotel and we had to find somewhere else, so we went to New Brighton. But the reason we were thrown out of this hotel is that we always used to get up to these gags. Now there was a man at Paramount called Jimmy Gemmell. His brother Jock Gemmell worked at Pathe. Jimmy was a great gagster and always up to pranks and we used to have a lot of drinks. And one night we had with us Terry Cotter who was an old sound man who had been in the business for many years, long since dead now, very well known in his time, Terry Cotter and he was one of the biggest practical jokers in the business, Terry, and I remember once he and I when Jimmy was in the bar we moved all the furniture out of his room into the next room. He went to bed that night, opened the door and went in and sat on the bed which wasn't there, complained like mad to the manager. Went down, while he was down we put all the furniture back, so the manager comes up and there's nothing wrong, you see. Things like this used to happen. You'd go round the hotel and change the ladies and gents' signs over, swap them over, down on the floor where the bars and lounges were and everywhere, great fun. Terry Cotter, he was a terror. You remember Terry Cotter?

**Taffy Haines:** Very well, yes.

**Reg Sutton:** He started up with John Hales, he and John were partners in location sound. Terry married Lord Greenwood's daughter. He's long since dead, Terry. He was a great fellow, he used to work at Movietone, a good chap to keep away from. I remember one day when we where at Movietone, Sir Gordon, in those days you could drive into Soho Square and park anywhere, no problem. Today, terrible, you can't park, can you? Sir Gordon had a Wolsley and he used to park right outside the door. They kept a little space for him. And one day Terry and I went out early and next door was the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who had a canteen and every night they used to put all their pigswill out in big bins on the edge of the pavement. And we went out one night and we got long hank of rope, terrific long bit, it was about twenty, thirty yards long and we tied it round all the handles of all the pigswill bins, thread it along the gutter and put plenty of leaves on and tied it on the back axle of Sir Gordon's car. So when he went home, ♦ Good night everybody ♦, Sir Gordon, off he went round the square, he gets just round the corner and he starts pulling these pigswill bins behind him. Of course all hell was let loose but he never found out who did it.

**Roy Fowler:** That would have been your jobs I imagine?

**Reg Sutton:** But that's the sort of thing ... we used to work hard and play hard.

**Taffy Haines:** Can I stop you there?

**Roy Fowler:** Alright, well then ... we'll

**Reg Sutton:** ♦ and Rediffusion Limited

**Roy Fowler:** Yes

**Taffy Haines:** This is side ...

**Roy Fowler:** Four ...

**Taffy Haines:** Four ...

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**Taffy Haines:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Right so, we've gone through the fifties.

**Reg Sutton:** Around about 54, I think, commercial television started.

**Roy Fowler:** '55, I think it was.

**Reg Sutton:** 54, 55. A lot of the operators from the old cinema newsreels went there, soundmen, cameramen, went to ITN, that was a bit later. At the start, Rediffusion who were the London station had no cameramen or sound men on film. So Paul and I were seconded whenever necessary to do their film inserts, drama inserts anything they wanted on film, for Rediffusion. I knew the man setting up the unit was a man called Ted Lloyd and we used to do all their film inserts until they had their own unit at Rediffusion.

**Roy Fowler:** Where were they shot? The studio stuff?

**Reg Sutton:** Well they had a television studio in Kingsway, the old Adastral House. We used to, I remember one of the old directors, Bob Dunbar, he was a director at Rediffusion in those days, Bob Dunbar. Who you probably know.

**Roy Fowler:** He's part of the history project, yes.

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah, well I know Bob. Years ago. So we used to do that until, till they were set up. So that's really at the moment all I can think of about newsreels. But there's probably as much again if I gave a bit of thought to it.

**Roy Fowler:** Well if you do that ...

**Reg Sutton:** But in 1960, in 1960 I already knew David Samuelson who was a silent cameraman at Movietone and had been there from about the same time I was I should think, 46, maybe even for a bit longer. David, very good cameraman, the best of his class, he could practically edit a film in the camera. Very good, David. And I knew his brothers Sydney and Tony and Michael.

And Sydney used to phone me and say if you're having a day off, can you do a little job with me? So I used to have a day off from Movietone and go and do a little job with Sydney who then was a cameraman at Rayant Studios and they made B-pictures I think, so he was doing a bit of moonlighting as well so we used to do it together and so we used to go and shoot something for

somebody. And this went on and off on days off. One day David said to me, you know, Sydney's going to set up on his own. Sydney then had a Newman Sinclair camera which he bought with the money they were going to put as a down deposit [sic] on a house. His wife agreed, well they'd buy a camera instead so they still lived in the flat. Then he got a few hires with this camera and he's a good chap to interview, Sydney Samuelson and David Samuelson.

**Taffy Haines:** Can I interrupt you there? When you were mention Rayant films, was Rayant then at Wembley? Or at Bushey?

**Reg Sutton:** Bushey.

**Taffy Haines:** Because they were originally at Wembley

**Reg Sutton:** And Frank Flynn was the soundman, dear old Frank Flynn, who was about seventy odd then, Frank Flynn. And I'd used to go up there and do stuff if they were short of a sound man at Rayant Studios, Bushey with David. David said to me one day that Sydney is going to set up on his own and he's buying an Arriflex blimp which is a new gadget and he was working from home. He'd bought a house by then in Crespigny Road, Hendon. And I remember us sitting on the floor of his garage, sort of, figuring how the thing wored. A very odd thing, the earth was red, the leads for earth were red in the old Arriflex, One would expect that to be the positive lead. We couldn't fathom this out until we could get hold of the diagram. They eventually changed it to a universal standard but having red for an earth was very odd. And Sydney said what happens in the field, this is a mains, well we need a rotary converter. He says, I'll have to get one. So he finds out that a rotary converter would cost about £150 or something which was far too expensive, a fortune. He said what are we going to do. I said we'll make one. So I went down Lyle Street and bought surplus ex-forces, generator, 12 volt in, 240 out and I bought some rotary resisters and a voltmeter and a frequency meter and I had a wooden box made, I had it blimped. I put it all in and we used that for several years. In fact I made another one after that, and it cost about fifteen quid to make at the time. That got us off the feet. Then he took this little shop in The Burroughs at Hendon and he said to me, you don't fancy coming up here and doing the sound do you? By then, of course, I'd left the BBC where I was on an established staff pension, when I left there they gave me my pension plus their share plus interest. I went to Movietone where they had no pension scheme and after I'd been there six months they started one, so I was on a pension scheme at Movietone. So I said to Sydney it will be a bit of a chance. He says I know, what do you think? I spoke to my wife and by the kids were sort of at the end of their schooling. So, you know you have to think about these things. I said I'll think I'll take a chance and go with Sydney. I left Movietone and went up to Jack Ramsden who was production manager, loveable fellow and said well I'm leaving Movietone and said I'm going in with Sydney. If he'd offered me a pound a week more I'd have stayed but he didn't so I left. And of course it was a good day when I left really because things got better and better. And I went up to Sydney and started in this little shop. We had just one little shop then, one side which you know, one side of the archway. And we needed recording equipment. We were using, we bought a Leavers Rich and Sydney and I used to go out on location during the day and shoot, him cameraman, me sound, we'd come back at night and prepare the very few items he had for rental, which gradually increased as the time went on, ready for somebody to hire out. When I first went up there he said well we got to have transfer equipment. So we ordered from Westrex and dear

old Jack Todd who used to be at Westrex came to see us and Ozzie, the chief engineer and we told them what we wanted, and my sound room was a passage on the way to the gent's toilet and there was only room to have one bay and you couldn't move it. So I got an old friend of mine to make a big roundabout on which it would go on and turn it round on its one position to adjust the bass and all the things one had to adjust. But that took some time to make and I said we want 35mm and 16mm and they said that's two racks. I said can't you put them both on one bay for me? They designed a rack, Gulley designed it, Gulliver who was one of their top engineers, with 35mm at the top and 16mm underneath. So not only could we transfer from quarter inch tape to 35 mag and 16 mag, but we could go from 35 mag to 16 or 16 to 35, so we had the best of both worlds. That was the first rack with two movements on one rack. And it took some time for that to come. So in the meantime he got a contract to cover the President of Liberia's visit to ... to Uganda and I went out there with Terry Gould, who was a well known figure in the business. Terry Gould, cameraman, contact man, production manager, he does anything. And we spent about six weeks there and a lot of bottles of gin travelling around Uganda and then we went up to Liberia and did an interview with President Tubman who was the man doing the visit. When I got back to Hendon we just about had delivery of this rack and we set it up and we used to transfer, still going out during the day, come back transfer during the night. Other people were getting to hear of us, transfer theirs, up early in the morning, out on location, back about 7 o'clock at night, home for a quick meal, back to the office, transferring till about 2 or 3 in the morning, home for a bit of a sleep, out again the next morning. This went on for 18 months before we could get other staff and that was, sort of, the roots of Samuelsons.

**Roy Fowler:** Just the two of you?

**Reg Sutton:** By then we'd had a driver and we'd got a secretary.

**Roy Fowler:** But at that beginning period, there was just the two of you?

**Reg Sutton:** We had a chap called Marshall Martin, he just come in today, he's retired and he's had terrible trouble with cancer recently in the face and head, and he was, he came to us from being caretaker in a school. He was a jack of all trades and master of most and in no time at all he knew all about cameras and electronics and he's been a source of inspiration to this company all the time he was here. There was Marshall, myself, Sydney, and a secretary and driver. And then we got another driver and then we got a boom swinger. Dave Drinkwater we took on as boom swinger. He went to New Zealand. He started to get deaf so he went over to camera while he was still with us. He went to New Zealand, emigrated and became the chief of part of the New Zealand government film unit. Retired recently, good old Dave. Then I took a chap to prepare equipment and I taught him how to transfer so that by then and in no time at all we had about six recordists and six boom swingers on our staff. And then we got so large up there we took the little shop next door, we took the yard at the back, and in the meantime they found this old shack here, old garage which was owned by a garage up in Edgware. They got the money, had it knocked down and built this building we're in, this building which is 303 Cricklewood Broadway. When it was finished the sound department and my offices were where I am now. I've moved twice since then but I'm back to square one where I started and I was the first person in this building with the sound equipment all ready to move into from The Burroughs and I moved overnight because we were still transferring so I had to be first in. We had to have

everything ready, to move those bays to start transferring the next morning which we did, and then everybody else moved in gradually. And in this middle where this main office is, was walled in. It was built as a sound proof studio, and these places were around the outer perimeter, there were cutting rooms and the gov'nor's offices, and this theatre which we built with our own labour. Next door we built a 16mm dubbing theatre with our own labour, and we had the first 'rock 'n' roll' 16mm in the country and we had Bernard Childes as our mixer, and in no time at all. Oh, I must go back a bit, when we were at The Burroughs, things which helped us along was that we got the contract for Candid Camera. We did all Candid Cameras up to the last series, which Granada started to do themselves. Then we did World in Action and we had a contract with Nord Deutscher Rundfunk to do their London Diary and a German came over when we were still at The Burroughs called Dietrich Koch, and his wife, and they were looking for someone to provide equipment and they were looking for office space. So we immediately rented the place next door to us at The Burroughs, fixed it out as offices and a cutting room and offered it to them and they took it. So we had them by the shorts, they were there on site so they had to use us till they packed up and withdrew all their foreign teams through some internal problem. We did London Diary and dear old Terry Gould who I was talking about just now he was on it as well. And when we were going to move to here, we built the studio in the centre of where our main offices are now, specifically for Nord Deutscher Rundfunk so they could do live programmes direct back to Hamburg and outside there was a coaxial cable going up the road which could have been fed into this building. That's the point when we finished it all when they withdrew all their foreign teams. So, a bit of a blow at the time but when one door shuts, another opens and in no time at all we needed that space, for other things and we had it knocked down and made into offices and other things, you know. So the place grew and grew and grew like Alice in Wonderland, you know. It was fantastic. Sydney, I don't think he ever realised when we were in The Burroughs it was going to grow to what it is today. I mean it's fantastic today. Because I was Chief of Sound from the day we came in till the day I retired but then about 1970 I was made General Manager of the group as well. So I was Chief of Sound and General Manager.

**Roy Fowler:** You were a shareholder too?

**Reg Sutton:** I had shares. I don't think anybody ever realised it would get to these proportions. And as it gets bigger so it changes. As Joan Littlewood would say things ain't what they used to be'. Things change.

**Roy Fowler:** And as someone else said ♦they never were♦ ...

**Reg Sutton:** People come in. I don't think today you get the same sort of loyalty we had. All our people were hand picked when we started. We had Bill Vickers the engineer who came from Rank, we had Phil Woodhouse, the lens expert, who came from Newman Sinclair, who's still with us, retiring next year. We had all these, sort of, hand picked people. But today you're on the common market, people are only interested in what they get in their hand on Friday basically. But we still carry on and we still increase. We've got set ups in France and Paris, Samuelson Alga and in Australia, bought another set up in Australia. We've gone into closed circuit television in a big way and public address, for such things as Wembley and Birmingham Centre, and we can do these multiscreen shows with 35mm where it's all worked from a computer and

you've got the sound and you've got say twenty four pictures telling a story from a stills projector and all changing by computers. Oh it's getting past me. I'm retiring now and I couldn't start to think about it today. Technology has increased so rapidly and so quickly in the last few years.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes. Exponentially I think, it's exploded, hasn't it?

**Reg Sutton:** But I've had a very happy time since I've been with the Samuelsons. We've got on very well. I was the instigator of many of our systems here as Sydney will tell you. I'm a great one for records and that sort of thing.

**Roy Fowler:** You've also kept equipment, I gather. You've also kept equipment, preserved equipment? Equipment that is obsolete?

**Reg Sutton:** We have a museum downstairs which David Samuelson started. David has left us now. He retired from the company and is doing his own thing with computers. But he started the museum and we have a lot of very old equipment in the museum going back to the very early box, wooden box motion picture cameras.

**Roy Fowler:** Including one of the few surviving three strip Technicolor cameras with blimp?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. And we have one of the original Movietone Wall sound-on-film cameras and the amplifier which I used to use and Paul Wyand used to use the camera. We've got projectors, sprocket making machines and all sorts of old equipment.

**Roy Fowler:** Well it seems to have been a career which was very satisfying to you. I suppose one question one always asks - what would you have done differently if anything?

**Reg Sutton:** I don't think I would have done anything differently because my job's always been my hobby. And for relaxation I had my own public address company. So we used to cover, apart from this, cover fetes and galas and anything people wanted to make a buck, public address equipment. Many a time I've been out on a Saturday and covered a local fete and done the announcing for them and all that sort of thing. It's always intrigued me this sort of thing. My job has been my hobby. My son followed in my footsteps, I suppose, cause he's a sound recordist, an Oscar winner, still working, made a lot of well know feature films. He did most of the Pink Panthers and the Muppet films, and Star Wars, a couple of Star Wars he's done, he got an Oscar for Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, and commercials. He does a bit of everything. He got on very well. I taught him all I know and now he knows nothing.

**Taffy Haines:** No wonder he's had a row with you ...

**Roy Fowler:** An area I'd like to touch on, at one stage he mentioned you were a vice president of ACT or was it ACTT by then?

**Reg Sutton:** ACT. Vice President Labs. Features, Documentaries, Newsreels.

**Roy Fowler:** Let's then take it from your first association with ACT, how you were recruited?

**Reg Sutton:** Well when I got a job at Movietone I had to become a member. And in no time at all, after a year or so, nobody want to be Vice President at all. So me being a good Conservative was talked into it by the newsreels, you be it Reg, so I said OK I was it.

**Roy Fowler:** This was your first venture into trades unionism.

**Reg Sutton:** Yes. So I was a good Conservative member of the ACT. I didn't always agree, seldom with the things they said and of course when all these odd things came up for voting, to donate this to the friends of Poland and that and that, they always had one vote against it. Very odd set up. Anyway I did my job properly. We had meetings, and we had our own sound committee and camera committee. Things went very well. I suppose I was involved in that, I can't remember the exact dates, but obviously I was involved in that till I left Movietone in some way or other. I remember a funny story I must tell you if George Elvin's not going to hear it, for instance.

**Roy Fowler:** George Elvin has left us. he may be listening but he's left us ...

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah I know, poor old George, good chap he was.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**Reg Sutton:** We were making a film down at Brighton Studios, Peter Whale was the director, Norman Fisher and I, we were making it on single system and we had a Mole boom and I used to sit on the platform with the Mole boom recording and operating the boom. We didn't have a boom swinger, couldn't afford one. So we heard one day that, what was her name, Bessie Bond was coming down for a card check, and we heard what time train she was coming on. Now in the newsreels ...

**Roy Fowler:** Can you let me interrupt? Was it conventional practice that you had a warning or you had a "mole" ... you had a mole at number 2?

**Reg Sutton:** Somebody tipped us off. You see in the newsreels you were a bit of sissy if you were up to date with your union dues, nobody was more than a year up to date at any time. So all of us down at Brighton were behind and we probably hadn't got the money to pay up. So what we did, what Peter Whale said, I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll pack up working and we'll go down and meet Bessie at the station. That'll be nice won't it? So we all go down, the whole crew, down to Brighton Station, meet Bessie Bond and we said have a drink Bessie. She never refused a drink did Bessie Bond. We took her across the road to the pub and had a drink and another and another and another and another and another and we got her paralytic and we poured her back on the train to London. And we all went back to the studio and began work again.

**Roy Fowler:** When you were vice president was Puffin Asquith President?

**Reg Sutton:** Yes, yeah, yeah.

**Roy Fowler:** Any memories of him?



**Reg Sutton:** Well, no, he was a nice fellow, only he was a nice gentleman. I liked him. No I haven't got a lot of memories of ACT. Oh we did have, we wanted more money at one time so we instituted an overtime ban which didn't go down at all well in the newsreels because we said right we're working from 9 till 6 only. So it's difficult carrying on a newsreel with all your members only working 9 till 6.

**Roy Fowler:** What was the contract which you worked under? The agreement?

**Reg Sutton:** The newsreel agreement.

**Roy Fowler:** There was a separate newsreel agreement?

**Reg Sutton:** Yeah. I've got the original one in my drawer. If they haven't got any left at ACT.

**Roy Fowler:** Well I don't suppose there is such a thing now? Is there?

**Reg Sutton:** There's no newsreel agreement now but I've got a copy of the original one.

**Taffy Haines:** We don't know how much of this stuff has been lost, you see, Roy?

**Roy Fowler:** A lot of it ...

**Reg Sutton:** They threw a lot out. They were a bit slapdash in the old days it seems.

**Roy Fowler:** It was shortage of space more than anything and thoughtlessness.

**Reg Sutton:** What was I saying ...

**Taffy Haines:** You got a copy in the drawer of the agreement ...

**Roy Fowler:** The overtime ban ...

**Reg Sutton:** The overtime ban. It was difficult and they had to bend to our needs in time and have discussions and we went back to normal working. But it was a problem for them but it only lasted about a week.

**Roy Fowler:** Would you say that then that the union materially affected working conditions in the newsreels? In a positive fashion?

**Reg Sutton:** Oh yeah. Prior to, prior to, I think it was 1946, there wasn't a newsreel agreement with the Newsreel Association which was the bosses' association. I don't think there was an agreement so it was a question of what you could get. So obviously the union would have helped. The unions are for the bad bosses.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes. And since there are bad bosses as well as bad workers they're essential. You then ... the newsreels were organised by the time you joined them. Do you have any stories of the union organising the newsreel boys? It must have been quite difficult, I would have thought?

**Reg Sutton:** Not really. Ken Gordon of Pathe News was a great one at the beginning who forged the foundations I think. Ken Gordon who lots of people in the business know, Ken. In fact I understand when the ACT was in dire straits financially, dear old Ken mortgaged his house and lent the ACT the money to continue. I understand that. And I wouldn't be surprised because Ken, although he was a real martinet, he was very soft as well. Wasn't he?

**Taffy Haines:** Yes, nice person.

**Reg Sutton:** He was a great humanist and a great martinet, you know, especially at union meetings, you know and I mean, God, he was a real Ken Livingstone.

**Roy Fowler:** George Elvin? You've mentioned George?

**Reg Sutton:** Nice man. I remember when we were negotiating a new agreement, we were sitting round a table and there was Sir Gordon and Jimmy Wright from Paramount, and who was the chap at Pathe? Became Lord Somebody. Any rate we were sitting round the table with the shop stewards and me and George Elvin. And I remember Sir Gordon saying that we wanted more money, we can't afford it, we're all in a terrible state you know. And George says well according to these records which I've got from Bush House you made so much profit last year, Paramount made that profit, Pathe made that profit, Universal made that profit, how do you answer this one?

**Roy Fowler:** How did he?

**Reg Sutton:** Eventually we got more money. George was a marvellous negotiator. And he had all the facts at his fingertips always, didn't he? I mean he might have been a pretty stiff socialist but he was a nice man. Yeah, he married Ernie Bevan's daughter, didn't he? Yes. Yeah. yeah, yeah.

**Roy Fowler:** I don't know, I don't know. She's still alive I know, she's a person we want to interview at some stage.

**Reg Sutton:** I'm sure it was Ernie Bevan's daughter he married. You'll find out anyway.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, well his father was part of the TUC, I believe, which was how George came into it. Right what else then Reg?

**Reg Sutton:** So what else? What else? I've got two children, Jennifer born in 1945, married with two children. She lives just outside Dublin, we often visit her. My son lives not far from me. He's got two children, a daughter and a son. My daughter has two daughters. What else - hobbies?

**Roy Fowler:** Your son is second generation film industry. His children are what? Sorry, their age, I'm confused.

**Reg Sutton:** Peter. He's got a son and a daughter. They're young ♦ eight and ten.

**Roy Fowler:** Time will tell then if they will follow this dark murky nefarious path?

**Reg Sutton:** So hobbies. I've got lots of hobbies. If you want to know what hobbies. Gardening, photography, radio, anything electronic. Now that I'm getting old I make doll's houses and reproduction dolls house furniture at home.

**Roy Fowler:** You seem always to have been very faithful to sound? Have you ... ?

**Reg Sutton:** First love and last love.

**Roy Fowler:** How about television? Have you ever done any work in that particular electronic area?

**Reg Sutton:** I was a little while at Ally Pally when I first started with the BBC. I spent a couple of weeks at Ally Pally when they were on the Baird system.

**Roy Fowler:** Really?

**Reg Sutton:** In fact in my younger days I made a Baird television.

**Roy Fowler:** What are your memories of the Baird system?

**Reg Sutton:** Pretty awful, wasn't it?

**Roy Fowler:** Well I don't mean that but I mean that experimental period when you were on the air?

**Reg Sutton:** The engineer in charge was Bertinshaw, this was 1936 just before I went up to Newcastle. I went there for a week or two?

**Roy Fowler:** Do you remember Alan Lawson who was the cameraman on the Baird system?

**Reg Sutton:** Did he go to Ealing eventually, that Alan Lawson? In charge of the film unit?

**Roy Fowler:** I think he'd come from Ealing.

**Reg Sutton:** There was a man at Ally Pally who left Newcastle called "Hookey" Walker, ♦Hookey Walker♦ was senior engineer at Newcastle and got transferred. But I was only there a week or so. As a matter of interest. I'm a member of Rotary Club which I have a great interest in. I was founder president of Rotary Club of Cockfosters and Hadley Wood. And the Rotary as some people know and some people don't, was started by a man named Paul Harris in Chicago in 1905 and he got together with some friends. He was a stranger in town and he used to meet these friends in his office and he said why don't we circulate round your offices each week and talk and have a snack and so they used to rotate and that's how Rotary came into being. And now, of

course, it's world-wide, everywhere and I was founder President, and we're now on our seventeenth President and I was made a Paul Harris Fellow two or three years ago which is the highest award you can get in Rotary for services. This was a little badge which you get, a medal and a laminated address and all that which comes from New York. And I've had very many happy times with Rotary. What else can I tell you? I was a member of the British Kinematograph Society, prior to that I was a member of the British Sound Recording Association which amalgamated with the BKS. In the BKS I've been secretary of the sound section. I've been on the standards committee. I've been on the new entrants committee and now they've forgotten all about me so I've resigned in my retirement from them and I just get the magazine now.

**Roy Fowler:** Well that's a very comprehensive account, I think, of a full life and times, indeed.

**Reg Sutton:** I started work when/ I started work here in 1960 so it's close on twenty eight years and it seems like yesterday and you know what a bloody awful day yesterday was.

**Roy Fowler:** But the consolation is tomorrow is not going to be much better.

**Reg Sutton:** Today is the first day of the rest of my life. And at the end of the month I shall retire and ...

**Roy Fowler:** Shake the dust off Cricklewood Broadway?

**Reg Sutton:** Eh?

**Roy Fowler:** Shake the dust off Cricklewood Broadway?

**Reg Sutton:** ... carry on with my various hobbies. Funny, I used to have a motor cruise on the canal and a caravan and I packed them up. But I just recently bought a dinghy with an outboard engine. I like petrol engines. I like the smell of them, especially outboards. So I've bought this one down in Devon which I'm going to fetch tomorrow and do it up. It hasn't been used for six years. It's got a nice Evinrude outboard. I might take that to Ireland because my little granddaughter over there said we went to Skerries last weekend and I've seen the ideal place where you can launch your dinghy so I think I'm honour bound to take it to Ireland.

**Roy Fowler:** I think we're toward the end of that side, aren't we? I keep a rough eye on the clock. Reg, I'd like to thank you ...

**Reg Sutton:** But I must just tell you about Newcastle, during the war I was a member of the Home Guard, a lieutenant and I used to be on an ack ack sight at Whitley Bay in my spare time and I was a street fire watcher and I was a voluntary billeting officer when people were being bombed and we used to be on shift during the war either from 9 till 5 days or 5 till 9 nights, alternate weeks. We didn't get any more money but I think we got rations, bacon, all that provided and I never forgot the war broke out and we had emergency supplies fixed up and the very day war broke out all the sirens went off. I was on duty, I was the senior man on the shift. I said right it's an emergency, get the rations out, and we got the chocolate out and all that out. The boss came in and said what are you doing. I said the sirens went off, they must be invading us.

**Roy Fowler:** Good thinking.

**Reg Sutton:** So another thing, the day war broke out, God that reminds me of Rob Wilton who I knew very well. The day war broke out, the engineer in charge came to me and said Mrs Sutton's on the way to see you and I haven't met your mother yet. I thought that's funny, why is mother coming? And they were living in Blackpool at the time and then I realised it was my wife who'd gone back in July and come up and gone back and was in Exeter at the time and she was coming up because war had broken out and we were going to get a little bungalow so it was my wife not my mother who was coming.

**Roy Fowler:** Well, Reg, thank you very kindly for your co-operation. We'll leave this now to speak for future generations.

**Reg Sutton:** So if you want another session sometime ...

**Roy Fowler:** Thank you well yes. We'll think about that.

**Roy Fowler:** When you hear the tapes ... OK Taffy? When you hear the tapes back ...