

IMPORTANT

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NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

ARTISTS' LIVES

JOE STUDHOLME

interviewed by Cathy Courtney and Tessa Sidey

F6488 Side A

Recording with Joe Studholme, October the 16th 1996, at the offices of Editions Alecto in Piccadilly.

[break in recording]

Right, could you just tell me where and when you were born. Hold on.

[break in recording]

Where and when you were born, and today's date and your name.

I was born at 12 Oxford Square, Paddington, on the 14th of January 1936, and my name is Joe Studholme.

And today's date?

And today's date is the 15th of October 1996.

And, where are we?

We are at the offices of Editions Alecto, on the mezzanine floor at Sackville House, 40 Piccadilly, London W1.

[break in recording]

Could you do that again, because this is the real beginning. To begin again properly, could you just tell me where and when you were born?

Yes, I was born at 12 Oxford Square, in Paddington, on the 14th of January 1936.

And how did you come to be born in Paddington?

My parents lived there, my father was a member of the L.C.C., and he had lived in that house for ages, I can't remember when they first moved there. It's very worrying, Cathy, because after the war the terrace was pulled down and blocks of flats were built, and where 12 Oxford Square was is now a gap between the two buildings, so I'm extremely worried about my blue plaque.

It'll have to go into the pavement. And, you obviously have memories of your parents, because they were around in your childhood. Do you remember their parents?

Yes I do, I remember my father's parents. My grandmother died some time after the war, my grandfather Studholme died in the war, he was a cantankerous fellow who lived in Devonshire and everyone was very scared of him. And my maternal grandmother died in 1924, but I had a lot to do with my maternal grandfather, who was a wonderful man called Harry Whitbread, and in fact we lived in his house all through the war in Wiltshire and he was really a sort of surrogate father because my father, although he didn't go overseas, was in the Army and in London and we didn't see a great deal of him.

Right. And do you know anything about the family history prior to that generation, is there a Studholme family story that goes back a long way?

Well quite a lot, yes. My elder brother, Paul, was a great genealogist and he successfully proved that the Studholme families go right back to Adam and Eve practically; I mean there's a real sort of Clapham Junction in genealogy, as you

probably know, if you get back to Eleanor of Aquitaine, there's no stopping you, you can go right back to El Cid and people. But seriously, he traced our family back to a very long time, to Henry II, to the 11th century, in Cumberland where my family came from, and they spent, you know, hundreds of years there, in a pretty nasty place called Studholme, which is really a sort of bog to the left of Carlisle, doing I imagine very little indeed except rustle a few cattle over the Borders perhaps, and lived a very sort of quiet sort of vaguely minor-squirearchical life, and in the graveyard of Studholme and Abbey Holme[ph] there are there are masses of Studholme graves. And the Studholme family actually collapsed, their fortunes collapsed in the middle of the 19th century when one of my forebears, who must have been more adventurous and scientific than most, got into mining, was one of the first people to follow a seam of coal under the sea, which was immensely profitable, until the sea came in and the whole thing collapsed. And the eldest brother went off to Ireland and bought an enormous Georgian house in the middle of the Bog of Allen[ph] in what is now County Offaly, and the other three brothers went to New Zealand with the Canterbury Settlement, so a lot of my relations now are in New Zealand, and I am only back here in England because my grandfather Studholme had some sort of illness at the end of the 19th century and came back to England about 1901 I think with my father, and remained here ever since. But my father was actually born in New Zealand.

And is New Zealand part of your life now, are you in touch with those relatives?

Not tremendously. We correspond, and we're a very unimaginative family, a lot of my family are called Joe Studholme, so we're always meeting on the doorstep saying, 'Hello Joe Studholme'. And they do all the things we've meant to do for years and years and years, and never do, like going to the Derby and you know, rushing around seeing things. And I've once been with Rachel, my wife, to New Zealand on business, and being immensely busy in fact, rushing around, and staying with different relations all the way down North Island and South Island, who all asked exactly the same questions, so it was very exhausting, but they're very nice people.

And did they bear an resemblance to you, is there a family resemblance?

I don't know, I'm told I take after my mother's family, but there certainly was a Studholme family resemblance, yes, it's very close.

And so, with the branch of the family that's in this country, is that presumably now spread out as well, as the different generations have more and more children; is there quite a network of Studholmes now, or not?

Very few in fact. My father had one brother who was in the navy and died about twenty years ago, and he had three children, and a sister who had three children, two of whom are still alive, but there's not a big family at all.

Right. And does Studholme have a meaning?

I should think it means something to do with horses, home of the horses I think. It's, I guess, originally Scandinavian, and I have no idea whether this is true, but my brother always swore that we must be descended from Vikings who came creeping down the west coast of Scotland and landed up on this very unattractive bit of Cumberland, but that's supposition.

And thought, we'll stay here. Yes, right.

[break in recording]

And, what do you remember of the Studholme grandfather then?

Well I remember him giving me bits of chocolate before I went to bed, so I mean it was real cupboard love, he was a very gruff, bad-tempered chap, and he had some sort of a breakdown and his doctor said he was never thereafter to be cross, so he did exactly what he wanted and led my poor grandmother a pretty miserable life. He was very nice to me, but I just, my only real memory of him is waiting to say goodnight to him and looking at his bureau, because he used to open it up and give one a bar of chocolate, or a piece of chocolate, because in the war and it was a real delicacy.

And, was he quite a formal person as far as you were concerned then?

Very, very formal, very distant. A large man with a moustache, and always walked around with an enormous stick with a spud on it to pick up litter and cut down weeds and things, he was a great forester.

So he wouldn't have given you any hugs?

No hugs at all, no, I don't remember that at all. My Studholme family relations are very distant, they never enthused; 'quite nice' was their sort of thing. When my father became a Member of Parliament his mother said something incredibly dismissive, I mean not 'Well done Henry, what a terrific thing,' you know, 'Well, very well then,' or something like that.

And what do you remember that grandfather wearing?

I remember him wearing a straw hat, a panama hat, and I guess it's because I've seen photographs of him, sort of very long tweed coats, and I suppose corduroy trousers and boots.

Smart boots, or...?

No, just walking boots, brown lace-up boots.

Right. And what had his profession been?

He was a solicitor.

Do you know with what firm?

I've no idea. He practised in Exeter, and I guess he had a certain amount of private money because they came back from New Zealand and looked for a place to buy, and looked and looked and looked and looked, and apparently fell on the place they eventually bought, which is called Perridge House, in Ide, outside Exeter, in really sort of exasperation. But it was about a thousand acres, which my nephew, my

brother's eldest son, still lives in. Very steep, very bad farming country, I think he bought it because it was rather good shooting country, and lots of trees, and both he and particularly my father were tremendous foresters, and my elder brother, and it's really an estate where they grow trees.

And what is the house like?

The house is, the sort of main block is a very pretty Regency house with a veranda at the front and pillars, and my grandfather, in the way that people did in sort of, before the First World War, built on an enormous wing, which is a frightful nuisance, and my father, when his mother died, and he by that time had a house where I was brought up in part of my childhood, further west near Plymouth, never thought that any of the family would live there, and converted the wing into flats, which is a very good idea, and so therefore reduced the main house to very manageable proportions. But in fact my elder brother, Paul, shortly after he married, left the Army, and moved there when he was about 29 or 30, and spent the rest of his life there, he's now dead, he died of cancer when he was 60.

Right. And what do you remember being on the walls of that house in your grandfather's time?

Enormously-framed oil paintings, with very very thick frames, I mean they were four inches, six inches thick, and very deep, very Edwardian, and two particular pictures I remember very clearly which were sort of mock-Turners. In fact you know, when I first became interested in looking at pictures I thought they were Turners, and discovered – and so did my parents apparently – and they got the Mr Agnew of the day to come and have a look, who I should think from about forty paces said they weren't Turners at all, but of the school of.

So they were of sky and light, or what were they?

They were sort of atmospheric Italian, that's the way I can describe it, with very wispy trees and, fairly Turner-esque actually, and people and landscape, and a lot of light, yes, there was a lot of light, which was very unusual, because the rest of the

pictures I remember were our extremely ugly ancestors, in fact they were always known as the Ugly Ones, going back to the 17th century, John Studholme of Studholme, you know, painted by journeymen artists, and my brother's still got them.

And were they all together in a gallery area, or where were they?

They were in the dining-room, I think, and in the sitting-room; my grandparents had a wonderfully light, big sitting-room looking out at the garden.

And do you remember how it was furnished, what it was actually like?

I do actually, I remember it very clearly, that room, because it was a huge room, and I should think about fifty feet long probably with the windows all down one side, and there was an enormous sort of block of furniture in the middle with a sofa and sofa table behind it, and at the far end, by the fireplace, were the two chairs where my grandparents sat, and against the window was the famous bureau where I got my chocolate, and that I remember very clearly. And it was all rather dark in the evening, they didn't go in for lights very much, I remember it being very gloomy in the evening, but in the daytime it looked south and it was a wonderfully light and airy place with lots of rugs, a nice place to play when one was a child.

And would it have been kept immaculately tidy?

I should think so. There were quite a lot of maids about, there was one maid who was a great friend of mine called Ena, I've never found anyone else called Ena, except the Queen of Spain. And, yes, it all smelt, there was a particular smell about it, which you sometimes occasionally get, I haven't had it for twenty years, but in sort of old-fashioned hotels in Eastbourne, you get the same sort of furniture polish smell, and a particular sort of stair carpet I remember, very patterned, I think they're called Turkey carpets.

And you would go and stay there sometimes, or what would it be?

We would go and stay there, I guess two or three times a year probably, in the holidays. My mother hated it, never liked it, it's one of the reasons why my father never moved in when my grandmother died, she didn't like it at all for some reason; she didn't get on very well with my aunt, Betty, my father's sister, there was a certain *frisson*. And after my grandfather died my grandmother was very stricken with arthritis and became very bedridden, and had a rather splendid but extremely bossy nurse called Miss Cartwright, who dominated everyone's life, including my mother's, and she never liked the place.

Right. So you wouldn't have gone there just by yourself with your brother, you would have gone en famille?

We went *en famille*, I've got one sister and we used to go *en famille*, and went with Nanny, and my cousins, when, I remember it always, there were always other cousins there when we were there, my Brown[ph] cousins who were the children of Aunt Betty Brown[ph].

And what would have been the pattern of life in the household as far as you witnessed it?

Pretty formal actually. I remember it, one had to be rather on one's best behaviour, and you know, on time for breakfast. And the great excitement as a child was that the kitchen was in the basement, so everything came up on a hand lift, just outside of the dining-room door, which was terribly exciting. And if one was very very wicked one got inside and went down in the lift. I think I did it once, because I wasn't a very brave child, it was frightfully daring, I remember being absolutely terrified actually, and frightfully proud when it was over.

It sounds extremely terrifying.

And not getting very chastised because everyone I think thought, you know, this wet little boy, [inaudible].

And, what happened when you got down there, what were the kitchens like?

Well they were stone floors I remember, and I can't remember the name of the cook but she was a wonderful sort of Devon figure; I don't think I'm making it up, I think she was very sort of roundabout and friendly, and she, the thing that always intrigued me enormously was that she used to make Devonshire cream, and I remember the great bowls of cream waiting to set, I suppose that's what they were doing, on sort of, I imagine they were slate slabs, and again it was terribly tempting to go and put your finger in the Devonshire cream, which was again quite a wicked thing to do.

But you were condoned?

I think so, probably, yes. I was the youngest, I got away with an awful lot.

And do you remember the kitchen equipment, I mean, were there Agas and things, how was it all, do you remember any of that?

I simply can't remember. I remember it all being rather, rather a black cooker, but that may be memories of later on.

And as a child would you have been down there quite a lot, or was it very occasional?

Oh I should think quite a lot, yes, I think very much, usually the sort of back regions, sent out of the way.

Right. So you would have to be in time for breakfast, and breakfast would be what, do you remember?

What, to eat or the time?

Both actually.

Both. I think breakfast was at nine o'clock, pretty leisurely really, and you know, bacon and eggs and things like that, cooked breakfasts.

Whether you wanted it or not, or were you given an option?

Oh yes, whether one...but one always did want it, as I remember. I mean you just thought at that time, that's what you had for breakfast, and the idea of now having muesli or Raisin Bran, one wouldn't have thought one had started the day right.

And the breakfast would have been served by a maid, or what?

I can't remember actually, I think it was all sort of set out on a side table with, you know, covered dishes, and you went and helped yourself.

And after breakfast, what would have happened?

I simply can't remember really what happened. I think one was sent out to play, and there was a wonderful garden, very romantic garden, very steep with a lot of terraces, and you know, very nice gardeners, again I can't remember the names of the gardeners but they were very nice to me, and I used to play with them a lot. There was a wonderful old man called Stone, Bill Stone, who went on working for my brother, and died eventually, I think in his nineties, or eighties certainly, but he worked for the estate for seventy-five years, and my brother got him a medal, I forget what the medal was, he was the longest-serving person there. In his, he never retired, in old age, he used to do wonderful drystone walling, I mean incredibly slowly but absolutely beautifully.

[break in recording]

So, we were just talking about drystone walling with the gardener. I mean did you learn any of those sort of skills, as a child, were they passed on to you at all?

No, I'm very undextrous, I didn't learn any skills like that.

And were you taught to hunt and fish and shoot and...?

Yes, to ride, you know, and, yes when I was a little boy in Devonshire, when my grandfather Whitbread died in 1948, my parents bought a house outside Plymouth in Devonshire, because my father was then Member of Parliament for the Tavistock Division, and, yes, I used to ride a lot, and I used to go hunting with the Dartmoor Hunt, which was terribly exciting because it was in this huge area, very very wild, nothing much to jump luckily except a few stone walls, but very hazardous because there are a lot of bogs, and the mist used to come down. It was very exciting, we always used to meet, I think on Boxing Day or certainly, you know, in the winter holidays, at Princetown Prison, Princetown Prison, it was terribly exciting, and it was usually very foggy and horrible. And coming back at the end of the day, incredibly wet and very cold, and it's very easy to get lost, you used to have to stick together and go downhill, and avoid the very boggy bits. You could always tell on the moor, what looked like a beautiful green lawn was actually terrible bogs, and the excitement, it didn't always happen but really quite often, I remember it on several occasions, somebody made a mistake and got bogged and then it was tremendous upheaval, everyone had to get off, and ropes had to be put by the horse's bottom and it had to be pulled out. Very exciting.

But no major disasters?

No major disasters. The major triumph of my hunting career, which was very brief, was, we had a great local hero called Lord Mildmay, who was a great sort of gentleman rider, and almost won the Grand National, but broke his rein and ran out at the last moment, and he came out cub-hunting once I remember, and he fell off, and I caught his horse, and it was the most exciting thing in my childhood really, because he said thank you.

So were you brought up with a great deal of respect for the Establishment?

Oh very much, yes, absolutely, and I was terribly respectful and very well behaved in that sort of way.

Right. And, just going back to the Studholme grandparents' household, I mean did you know much about your grandfather's life, were you told stories about him even if you didn't witness any of it?

Not at all, he was a very remote figure, you know, 'Quiet, don't upset Grandfather, hurry away'. I do remember one frightful incident when there was going to be a family photograph with everybody, which still exists, but I'm not in it because I threw a tantrum, and I was a very un-tantrummy child, I don't know why I did, but I do remember it. I suppose I must have been four or five, and I for some reason took a gin and went away, you know, howling and yelling and had to be brought back and still wouldn't go, and I felt bitterly ashamed at the time, and actually now very disappointed because I'm not in this rather splendid family group, and shortly afterwards my grandfather died.

And was that the first death that you came across?

Yes, it was absolutely the first death, and I remember very clearly hearing my mother talking on the telephone to somebody and saying, Henry, my father, is very upset because his father is dying, and it was the first time I was aware in any way of death. Although death was going on all around in the war, and by that time we were living comfortably in Wiltshire, and I had a wonderful war, I thoroughly enjoyed it, and you know, loved the aeroplanes and ack-ack station and the soldiers in Warminster and so on.

And when your grandfather died, what were you actually told? How old were you?

I think I was six. I don't remember being told anything.

And were you a religious household, would you have gone to church?

Yes, in a very sort of straight-up-and-down C. of E. way. My mother was a church warden I know, and we used to go to church every Sunday, and in fact I used to, from a very early age I took over from my sister, who had a rather nice voice and sang in the choir, pumping the organ, hand pump at the back, which was very exciting,

because you know, one was right out of sight of everybody and it had a little peephole so that one could look through at the congregation. And you had to start pumping before the parson finished his sermon, so you got a little signal from the organist, and it made a frightful squeaking noise. And the only trouble was that it was so exciting that one always wanted to go to the loo at the critical moment, but couldn't get out; it was the first time I was aware of physical discomfort of that sort.

And, when you did become a bit more aware of death, you were encouraged to think that it all took place within the Christian structure, or... Would you have thought about it much as you were growing up?

I don't think I did think about it very much when I was growing up, I had such a very happy, secure childhood. I remember being, the first death I really remember was the death of my Whitbread grandfather when I was twelve, being summoned in when I was at prep school by the headmaster and told he had died, and, I can't remember what I felt. I mean, I don't know whether I cried even, I was just, I knew he was very old, and it was very sad, but it didn't linger with me really, I just had happy memories of him.

And did you attend his funeral?

No.

And is death something you think about much now?

No, I don't think I do. I'm cursed with a very optimistic nature, and I don't think about death really very much.

And what do you think death is?

Well I think it...I think I think that there's an afterlife, but I am ambivalent about it. I certainly think that one's spirit and soul perhaps does live on in some way, and I certainly feel that there are some ways where one is in contact, perhaps that's too strong a word, but in touch sometimes with people who have died, and whether it's

just the memory which comes back which feels very real at a particular time, or a particular smell, a particular place, I don't know, but I certainly feel when I go to church, which I still do, and pray for the departed, I certainly think about all my loved ones and friends and so on who have died.

And is this still Church of England?

Yes.

And was there ever a time in your life when you didn't go to church, has that been consistent?

I always have gone to church, but you know, to be honest it was very much a matter of habit one went, and I don't think I really, I don't think I really questioned it very much until I grew up, and then not very much either, and it's only latterly, in the last, the last ten years I suppose, I've really thought about it more seriously, partly because we have a very marvellous parson in Wiltshire where we now live.

And do you have any views on the role of the church in contemporary society and how it's doing?

Well I do, I mean I think it's very sad that in fact it is totally sidelined, and I think that the Church of England is I fear in decline. And I feel very strongly that all sorts of things are wrong. I feel that it's a great mistake that we have the established church, it embarrasses me hugely as I, you know, describe myself as a fairly feeble Christian, one has all these endless denominations and all this frightful argument and can't get together. I mean I'm a sort of rather wishy-washy ecumenical and would love the whole thing to go together, and for instance it seems to me absolutely crazy that so much of the time and effort and money of the Church of England is devoted to keeping up our wonderful cathedrals and churches, most of which pre-date the Restoration, the Reformation anyway, and really should go back to the Catholic Church, or bring everybody in. At the weekend I was in Durham, that wonderful cathedral, and then all around you suddenly see these, you know, Methodist churches and Baptist churches, and, what is the point, aren't we all Christians together?

Couldn't we all fit in this huge and wonderful mediaeval edifice and worship God together?

But you don't do anything more active about that than, you just attend church? I mean you're not actively trying to bring it about?

I'm afraid I'm not.

And just going back to the Studholme household, I feel I've got a little picture of what your grandfather might have been like, but nothing of your grandmother so far. What did you collect about her?

She was very gentle, and she must have been very pretty. She had, you know, I think I remember, or maybe was told, I mean wonderful dark, rather hooded eyes, and slightly sort of aquiline nose, very small, and very, very very undemonstrative I remember as being. And I do just remember her when she was not bedridden, but most of the time she was sitting in her chair and she was very arthritic, and I remember her most, going up to her bedroom and talking to her in bed, but it was certainly no hugs and kisses, it was a very arm's length relationship.

It must have been quite hard for a small boy to go into her bedroom, I mean it must have been a pretty uncomfortable environment really.

I remember sort of particular smells, not particularly nasty smells but I do remember a particular sort of granny smell, and I can visualise my height in comparison to the bed, it was a very high bed. And I don't think I ever went there alone, or I probably went with my brother and sister, you know, we were taken in to say good morning to Granny and then hustled out again.

Do you remember what she would wear? Would she wear anything on her head in bed?

I can't remember. I remember her being very small and sort of always have a shawl, I think, with lots of layers of things. Not very bright clothing.

So her interest in you seemed fairly superficial?

Yes, I don't think she showed any real interest in us, I can't remember any sort of demonstration of interest or affection.

And what did your father tell you about his growing up? Did you glean that he...he had grown up in the house you've been describing presumably?

Yes he had. He was the second of the family, he had an elder brother, Paul, who was exactly a year older than him, who, and they were tremendous friends, and they had a very conventional upbringing, as I did. They were sent away to boarding school as small boys to prep school and then went on to Eton.

What as their prep school?

I can't remember what it was. I think I do know but I've forgotten. But he was, my father was born in 1899, and so my uncle Paul was born a year earlier, so they were just in the First War, and Paul joined the Devonshire Regiment and went out to France at the age of eighteen and was killed I think within six weeks, and exactly a year later my father went out in the Scots Guards, which he joined because all his friends were joining it, he was not remotely Scots, and they just wanted to be killed together, you know, go into the battle together, and he was very quickly wounded, actually he was gassed, and was blinded for quite a few months. And it very much affected his health as a young man, and actually had a very significant effect on his career because he went up to Oxford after the First War, and he was a very good linguist, and he was always destined to go into the Foreign Office, and he took the Foreign Office exam and passed, but at a time when there were many too many candidates, because a lot of people who hadn't been in the war and people who were in the war, and he was sort of sidelined, and went away to learn languages for three years I think, or two years, and spoke wonderful French and German, Spanish, none of which I'm afraid has passed on to his children, and then came back to take the Foreign Office exam again, and it just coincided with a relapse of his gassing, and he failed and didn't get in. So it was a great disappointment.

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.....pick up, because the death of his brother must have had a devastating effect on the family, I mean, do you think that might have been partly why his father was this very uptight, remote figure, or do you think...I mean did you pick up on that crisis from him?

Not till I was much older. But undoubtedly, I know it had a tremendous effect on my father. I mean he, for instance, could never bear to talk about the First War, and I remember when 'Oh What a Lovely War' was on, and you know, we all whistling tunes and loving it, he simply couldn't bear to go there. And when Corrally Barnett's[ph] book came out called 'The Donkeys'[ph], do you remember, about the First World War generals, he made actually rather a sad but... I'll tell you about it because it just sort of puts him in a particular bracket. He said, 'I can't bear to read all these things about the First War generals, they were gentlemen and they were doing their best.' Which, you know, I mean it's a point of view.

And, if he said something like that, would you feel very distant from him?

Yes, I thought he was very remote. But on the other hand I rather respected him for saying it, because he...and I had been brought up in a very traditional, very sort of...I don't think it was actually particularly hidebound, but it was a very conventional upbringing, and I don't think I particularly sort of kicked against it, I rather enjoyed it, I've had a very happy, nice life, and I very much respected my father. He was also rather a remote figure. I mean a lot of my childhood was spent, you know, being told to put the gramophone off and not make a noise because Father was writing a speech, which he was awfully bad at, and he was always scratching his head; I now sympathise enormously, I have exactly the same problems writing things.

So he didn't give you hugs either?

He gave us a few hugs, but he was pretty remote.

Were you actually frightened of him?

I greatly respected him, and if he corrected me or, you know, was angry with me, I was quite frightened of him; I was certainly very respectful, I went out of my way not to cross him.

And what sort of things would make him angry?

All sorts of silly things really. I mean bad manners, he was a tremendous glutton for bad manners, and, I mean things like, you know, sitting up at the table, very minor things. 'Don't slouch,' you know. And tremendously keen on correct pronunciation, you know, if one said, 'Yeah,' which one does all the time, 'Yes!' he would say, and we used to tease him, you know, because he had this wonderful pronunciation, and say, you know, 'Father, have you got the [inaudible] in the cupboard?' we used to say, you know, and we used to laugh at him a bit.

So he would laugh a bit?

Oh yes, we did laugh. And I mean I was devoted to him more and more in his old age, when he became rather gloomy and going to see him at home one's great aim was to make him laugh, which one could do, he had a very good sense of humour really. But he hadn't got much of a sense of the ridiculous; my mother on the other hand has a tremendous sense of the ridiculous, a rather sort of scatological humour too, she is very, still alive, just going to be 98, but she had a rather dirty mind really and was very jolly but didn't share that with my father at all.

And so, as you were growing up you were vaguely aware of the First World War but, or really not till later in life?

Oh I don't think I was aware of the First World War at all, because it was the Second World War was going.

Yes, right. And, when your father had read languages and failed to get into the Foreign Office, what did he do instead?

Well he actually, I think he read history, but then went out to learn languages. He had a very odd business career, I mean very unsatisfactory, I think partly because he wasn't at all well all through the Twenties, and because he was a linguist he was taken on by an advertising firm, which was totally out of character, the sort of thing my father absolutely loathed, is advertising, and he worked for somebody who he didn't like very much, and didn't have at all a glittering, didn't really do anything very sort of significant at all until he was probably in his late thirties or forties. And he married my mother in 1929 when they were both over thirty, and I think shortly after that went into local politics; I don't know whether he was doing a job as well, but very much, was very much involved in the L.C.C., and I mean rose to the dizzy heights of being Deputy Mayor of Paddington before the war. I know he told me once as we were driving round the park that those were the trees which he had arranged to have pollarded and how good they looked now, and what a good thing it was he had done them. And then, he re-joined the Scots Guards in 1940 and did staff duties in London, and then in 1942 he became an M.P. at a by-election in Devon, and again he had absolutely, he was totally a unambitious man, and in many ways unsuited to be an M.P. because he was a very very bad speaker, but he was a really straight man, and was I think a wonderful constituency M.P. for twenty-five years and much loved.

And Conservative presumably?

Conservative. And he became an M.P. I think, in fact I know, really because somebody said he ought to do it. I mean he had a friend called Charles Ponsonby who said, 'This seat's coming up in a by-election, you are a Devon man Henry, I think you ought to stand.' And I imagine my father said, 'Oh should I?' and did, you know, and got in unopposed, as was the custom in by-elections in the war.

So as you were growing up, were you aware of his political life?

My father never talked about it, it was actually very boring, and he was tremendously loyal. It was the old days when Conservative politicians were immensely loyal, and as a matter of fact later in one's teens it was very very boring because it really was a question, the Conservative Party, right or right, and he never talked about it at home, and so we never really knew what was going on. And people used to come

occasionally and say, 'What does your father think about this and that?' and after a bit we began making it up, you know, saying, because we had no idea what he thought, people would say, 'Really? Does Henry believe that?' 'Oh absolutely,' we said. Probably did him untold harm.

And he never talked about it towards the end of his life?

No. Well he did a bit. He was a Whip for many years, which was a very good thing, because it meant he didn't have to speak in the House, and he was a real back-room boy, and I think did all sorts of good things and, you know, chaired committees, and he liked the feeling I know of being in the centre of things, and he was, you know, the same generation of Anthony Eden and Selwyn-Lloyd, and Harold Macmillan, a bit older, but he knew all those all those people and he loved the feeling of being in the middle of it, and I should think was jolly useful as a sort of really steady, reliable, responsible, quite intelligent, back-bench Member of Parliament.

And were you proud of him?

Yes I think I was. I mean I respected him enormously, I loved him, I mean he was a lovely man. I don't think...I don't think I was proud of him particularly. I mean we were brought up not to be sort of proud of things, that was rather, you know, pride comes before a fall, I don't think that was something which came into the Studholme family life.

And were you brought up, say over lunches, to debate issues? It doesn't sound as though you did have any political discussions really.

No, not much really, not much. And...no, we didn't debate nearly enough I don't think. It was only when I was much older that one debated things.

What newspapers would he have taken, what were the newspapers in the house?

'The Times' certainly, and probably 'The Telegraph', and I think 'The Daily Express', and 'The Western Morning News'. I mean lots of papers, because they were all very cheap.

What about 'The News Chronicle', was that ever in your life?

I don't think it ever came in our lives, no. And it wasn't until much later that, you know, the excitement of 'The News of the World' came in, one surreptitiously bought it.

And do you know how your parents met?

I don't absolutely know how they met, but they knew each other for a long time, and my father wanted to marry my mother for ages, but my grandmother died in 1924 and on her deathbed said, 'Look after your father,' and my mother very much in the tradition of that generation of women thought that this was her lot in life, and she was very devoted to my grandfather who was a lovely man, and really devoted to keeping house for him and looking after him, and refused to marry my father several times. And it was her very extraordinary brother, who became a great brewing tycoon, he was Colonel Bill Whitbread, very sort of brash and didn't get on at all well, who said, you know, 'For heaven's sake, this man Henry Studholme's a very nice chap and he loves you, go and get married.' And they did, but not for quite a long time, I mean my mother was, April the 10th 1929, so she was 31, and my father was 30, not quite 29.

And, how much do you know of her family background, how far can you go back with that side of the family?

Quite a long way. They come from a brewing family, the Whitbread brewing family, and Sam Whitbread, Sam One he was always known in the family, started the brewery in 1742, but they had been living in Bedfordshire for many years before as, I don't know, yeoman farmers or very minor squirearchy. And then he and his son, Sam Two, did very well with the brewery, you know, went up in the world socially a good deal, and, I can't remember whether it was Sam Two or his son, married into the

Pelham family, and you know, they made a lot of money actually too, I mean, and at the end of the 18th century they bought a wonderful house which is still in the family called South Hill Park, and totally re-did it; it was built by Kent, and who designed all the furniture for it as well, which is still there as well. So they lived in a pretty, pretty high on the hog really.

And that house was part of your childhood?

Not really, no. I can't remember whether I ever went there as a child. My grandfather married his nurse at the end of the, in 1896 I think, somewhere about that, when he was quite old, I mean he was 35 or 36, and he got ill, I don't know why he got ill, anyway he fell in love with his nurse, my grandmother, who had the great misfortune to be illegitimate. And it caused tremendous *frisson* in the family, and he just simply, she wasn't accepted, and in fact he had to, he went away to live in Scotland, live in Nairn in Scotland, outside Inverness, and my mother and her brother spent their childhood in this very remote bit of Scotland, and were pretty badly seen by the rest of the family, it's most odd now, although my grandfather was working in the brewery, but there was really quite a sort of cut-off from the main stream, because of this great blot of marrying somebody who was illegitimate.

And by your generation there was still a little bit of that left?

No, I don't think so. I mean we, you know, we all enjoyed the story, you know. My great-grandfather, who had the wonderful title, he was called Lord Frankbert[ph] de Montmorency, and he was an Irish peer, I can't remember, I think his forebears had been lawyers, and made a lot of money as Recorder of Dublin, I've still got a picture of William Morris, which was their name, as the Recorder of Dublin, looking a very fierce fellow. And my great-grandfather did something frightful, I should know exactly what he did, but he went to prison for either slander or fraud, it would be better if it was slander but it might have been fraud; I think it was slander. And while he was in prison he got religion in the biggest possible way, and when he came out he abandoned his perfectly good wife and took up with somebody else and had another family, but as he couldn't marry her, because he was already married, and so he had these three daughters, one of whom was my grandmother, who were all illegitimate.

And her two sisters never married, and lived in a house in Ealing, and were always known as the auntie-aunts, and I do remember going, taken down there by my mother who used to make sort of duty calls to this big house in Ealing, and I remember it as being tremendously Victorian and masses of furniture and very dark, and these rather terrifying old women who hated each other and lived there in sort of a state of animosity. I know when they finally died my mother, Nanny, you know, packed up the house, and one of the things they discovered was, masses of little, everywhere in the house, little caches of money, which had been put by each of them to hide it from the other. Rather tragic really.

And was it the classic story that they died very close to one another?

They died very close to one another, yes.

And so, what was your...no wonder your mother had a sense of humour. I mean what was her view on the whole thing?

The whole thing, what?

Of her treatment by the Whitbreads.

Well, I think, I mean I think it didn't descend to her generation in fact, she got on quite well with her cousins, and in fact she used to go to South Hill, but I think, but my grandfather didn't, and, I don't think it descended another generation.

And have you any link with your, the offspring of your grandfather's first wife, great-grandfather's first wife?

No, absolutely none. But one of them, one of their descendants wrote 'No Orchids for Miss Blandage'.

It's a wonderful story. And, what were the stories told to you about your Whitbread grandmother?

Very little indeed, nothing, I knew nothing about it until I was really grown up, they were never mentioned, except that Granny died in 1924.

Right.

And they came down from Scotland, and rented the house where I spent a lot of my childhood till I was twelve all through the war, it was a very nice house called Norton Bavant Manor, outside Warminster in Wiltshire. But my father, my grandfather was never, never owned it, he rented it, which was very much the custom in that time. It's a new idea that one has to be the property owning democracy. He took the house from an old man called Colonel Bennett-Stamford[ph] who owned a large estate nearby and who actually died the same week as my grandfather, which is why we moved very shortly after, because his heirs and successors wanted the house back.

And, what did your mother ever tell you about her growing up, what did you learn about that?

Well she has told me subsequently a lot about her growing up, because she had an extremely Victorian upbringing, I mean really Victorian upbringing. Her mother, I can't remember exactly where and I must ask her about it, had some German relations and was very Victorian and Germanic, and you know, absolutely kept my mother on an incredibly short leash, really until the time she died. And she had one brother, this absolutely adored Bill, who was the apple of both his parents' eyes. I don't think my grandparents got on very well, reading between the lines, and Bill was the sort of shuttlecock between them, and he was absolutely given everything, you know, ponies and guns and later on aeroplanes and polo teams and so on, and my mother was very much kept in her place, and one story she told me once was that, you know, Bill used to come in from shooting and throw his gun down and put his feet on the fender or whatever it was, and my grandfather said, 'Clean your gun, Bill,' and Granny would say, 'Don't bother the boy,' and my mother cleaned the gun, you know. And she had this very strange childhood and adolescence, and she was never allowed out on her own, and when she was growing up, when she was seventeen or eighteen, she joined the Girl Guides, as a Guider, entirely to get away from home, only to be allowed to go out away and have a life outside the house. And she was very artistic, and loved the

opera, and ballet particularly, and she used to go in her Guide uniform and stand at the back in the Opera House to watch the ballet and opera. And she told me that until she was twenty-six she never went out alone with a man.

And was she wanting to, or was it a world of terror?

I think she was probably wanting to really, because she has a very lively mind, and I think was extremely aware how very narrow her horizons were.

Was she educated at home? What was her education?

Yes, she never went to school. She's extremely well educated, she's one of the best-read people I know.

And where was Bill educated?

Bill was educated at prep school and at Eton.

And, in adult life did she like him, or not?

I came to rather like him, but he was a real ogre actually. He was one of the classic cases of somebody who had been given his own way all his life, and in a way made a tremendous success of it. I mean he led a sort of playboy existence until the war, he was a tremendous amateur rider, and very plucky, I mean he rode twice in the Grand National in times when you frankly wore a flat hat, and the jumps were absolutely sort of upright, none of this sloping nonsense. And he fell off both times and remounted and finished, and once he finished sixth, and one... I used to go and stay with him as a little boy, I sort of idolised him as a little boy, and you know, he taught me to shoot and taught me to ride really, and I used to watch these very grainy films of his races and I always had great dreams that I was going to be a great jockey when I grew up. And he rather encouraged me to that. I got very well with him. But he made life absolutely miserable for his family; he had two families, he married his first cousin and had three children, and then she died just after I was born in 1937 or something like that, and then he married again in 1940 and had another three children, and made

their lives a complete and utter misery because he was such an autocrat. But on the other hand he made, he did some amazing things. I mean he was a tremendous, active chap, he flew his own aeroplane and had his own yacht, and had a tremendous war in the Lovatt Scouts and then in the Paratroops and parachuted into Arnhem at the age of forty-four, something like that. And then after the war went back to Whitbreads brewery, which was then a very small family brewery, and it was he who built it up to be the great sort of conglomerate which it became, and just simply by grinding by the seat of his pants and by his personality. It was a time when there were masses of little breweries who were all being snapped up by the big brewers and they all came to Bill Whitbread for protection really. And he invented the thing which came to be known as the 'Whitbread umbrella', and he said, 'OK, I'll look after you but you must give me ten per cent of your shares,' and when he finally stopped being Chairman, apparently, it was by that time a large company, but I think in a most frightful muddle, because it had 112 directors or something like that, and his successor had to sort the whole thing out.

And would you have picked up the sort of business acumen from him? I mean the fact that you've run your own business, would that have come slightly from Bill?

To be honest I never think I've got any business acumen at all, and it's partly because Studholmes have traditionally always been disastrous. But I'm the first Studholme I know who has actually been in business, let alone sort of started his own business; my family have either been farmers or in the law or in the Church or in the Army, you know, no grinding commerce, I mean I... Practically to the day he died my father, you know, never could really bear to think about Editions Alecto, he used to speak about my place of business, and I suddenly realised after I had been, you know, running Alecto for several years that he never actually had been to see what it was, and I asked him down to Kelso Place, and you could sort of see the relief, to think that it was a real place and there were real things going on.

Do you think he had been wanting to come for a long time?

I don't know. I think that the, we started, you know, publishing contemporary work, and I mean he was completely out of sympathy with the sort of artists we were

publishing. I do remember actually he came to the first exhibition we had at the Print Centre in Holland Street, which was the first place we had in London, for David Hockney's exhibition, to go with his first one-man exhibition actually I think, of 'The Rake's Progress' and other etchings, and we, David was on some television programme at the same time as the opening at seven o'clock, and we hired a television set, we sat on the floor, and when the magic moment came we all sat on the floor and watched David Hockney on television. And I think my father was horrified, the sort of worship for this strange chap who he didn't think really could draw very well, and very surprised by the whole thing.

He wasn't impressed?

I don't think he was at all impressed. But he was very supportive, you know, he was very supportive of me, and you know, supported me in what I was doing.

But were you disappointed that he couldn't enjoy Hockney for example, did you feel slightly abandoned?

Not really, because I just knew he wouldn't really. No point in trying to convert him.

And, just going back to Bill for a bit, did your mother get on with him adult life, or was there quite a lot of resentment there?

They didn't speak from the moment my grandfather died in 1948, for about forty years, and, I mean, total lack of communication. But Bill's second wife, Betty, sort of kept links going, and in fact they used to ask me to go up to Scotland, he had a most wonderful deer forest in Scotland, and when I grew up I used to go year after year, and I came to, certainly respect Bill a lot; I mean I could see all his down side, but he was a very remarkable man, and I got on very well with him because I had absolutely no axe to grind, I wasn't after a job in Whitbreads. The trouble was, he was a terrible bully, and he tended rather to surround himself with yes-men, and I really got on well with him because I remember very very early on, he began being rude about my mother, and very intrepid, I flew to her defence, and after that we got on marvellously well. And he also was very supportive of me, not unfortunately financially but, of

Alecto, I mean he was always sort of talking about it and saying what a good thing it was. 'Oh this is my nephew Joe, he's got this wonderful printing business.'

And was there ever any suggestion that you too would go into Whitbread?

I think my brother would have liked to, and my mother actually plucked up her courage and wrote to her brother and said, you know, would he see my brother Paul, and I don't quite know what happened but there was certainly, he never went to Whitbread's, and I think that I think slightly exacerbated the rift.

Right. And so they weren't reconciled at the end of his life?

They were, at the end of his life they were absolutely reconciled, because Bill in his old age, I mean I think sort of, you know, everybody hated him, it was all rather sad, and he was sort of abandoned by his family – well not abandoned, they didn't get on at all well, and if they did go they were terrified of him. And he let it be known that he would like to see my mother again to talk about old times, and they were both actually frightened of each other, it's rather interesting, because my mother is a very strong character, I mean she could have run Whitbread's Brewery just as well as Bill, without lots of the aggro. And he said he wanted to see her, and eventually it was arranged that they should meet, and I went along as a sort of gooseberry, you know, to sort of hold the peace. And he had a hunting lodge in Gloucestershire where he kept his horses, and we went, my mother was frightfully nervous, I've never seen her more nervous. And we went in, we went into his study, and he was obviously terrifically nervous, and he got up and went towards her. And he had an old spaniel, who absolutely got the message of the moment and went out in the middle and rolled over on her back with her paws in the air, and it broke the ice and everybody laughed. And then my mother and uncle began to reminisce about events before the First World War, which was a very sort of safe thing to do, and they talked all through lunch, and my very garrulous aunt I know sort of shut up so we could listen to what they were saying. And they met several times after that, and pretty well had a reconciliation.

And so did that reveal anything about your mother to you, did you see a different person there, because you were finding out about that part of her life?

No, I don't think, I mean I knew what her feeling was with Bill, because he had sort of bullied her all his life. I mean when he was doing a lot of race riding she used to drive him round from race meeting to race meeting, and said it was absolute hell because he was a big man, and he was always banting and living on two dates and, you know, a bowl of porridge and a frightfully bad temper, and he usually fell off, and then she got it in the neck all the time. And then I remember once she told me that he, he got religion in a big way at one time, and started going to early service every day, and it was an absolute disaster because he used to get up, come back to breakfast in a foul temper and take it out on my mother.

And do you think it affected her relationship with your father? I mean did she regard men as something to be handled rather...?

Yes very much, she did, and my parents were devoted to each other, and were married for fifty-something years, but they, we all of us felt in a way they never really connected, and, they were very very fond of each other, I mean really, devoted I think, but I don't think they ever really had any proper conversations together, and when he was in his not so old age actually, in his sixties and seventies even, my father never wanted to go away, he had travelled a lot in his youth, and he was a tremendous gardener, he just wanted to stay and garden his garden. My mother on the other hand was longing to travel, and she used to go off on her own on, she became, there's a travel company called Serenissima, and she became a sort of stalwart of that, I mean famous, she was one of the first people there, and she went with them, you know, for twenty-five years. But there was always the most frightful fuss about whether she was going, and this awful sort of totally obvious stage-managed thing, you know, 'We'll have to tell Father that I'm going off and he doesn't know, so, you know, we'll broach the subject very carefully later on'. And of course Father knew perfectly well. But unfortunately he never really entered into that side of my mother's life, and I know it disappointed her hugely that when she came back, sort of bubbling over to tell him all about the things she had seen, he was never interested, and I know that was a great disappointment to her. But she used to tell us, and I'm a passionate traveller and we used to talk about it a lot.

End of F6488 Side B

F6489 Side A

And just before we leave Bill behind, can you just give me a taste of what his household was like when you used to go and stay? How would it have been different, for instance, going to stay with Bill than staying with your Studholme grandparents, as an environment?

He had a house called Warinmere[ph] in Surrey, near Send in Surrey, which I think was a Lutyens house with a Jekyll garden, meant absolutely nothing to me, and masses of horses. And my cousin Mary, who was a bit older than me, was a real tomboy, and I remember having tremendous rides in the woods round there, a lot of birch trees, and again regularly falling off and Mary would always be laughing and rushing away and having to climb on again, it was quite tough. And, that's about all I remember about it actually, I can't...

Would you for example have had a formal breakfast in the same way?

I simply can't remember it at all. I think it was more relaxed really. I think probably Uncle Bill was not there a lot, probably up in London, and it was rather organised by my Aunt Betty, who was a very good organiser.

And do you remember what was on the walls there?

No, I don't remember, but I now know what would have been on the walls. I mean very much sort of hunting prints, and pictures of racing, and probably sort of Balfour-Brown[ph] stalking scenes of Scotland, and lots of stags in rather misty landscapes, that sort of thing.

And, going back to you, the house you were born in, you left because of the war?

Yes.

Do you have any memory of it? Presumably not.

Just I remember it, because my parents kept it on through the war, because my father lived there in the war, and very occasionally we went up there, and I've got a feeling that the upper floors were sort of not used, we lived in the basement and the ground floor, and I've got a very clear memory of it, and I now realise it was a sort of typical terraced house, you know, with a narrow hall and two rooms on the ground floor, but then downstairs was the kitchen, and my parents had a wonderful old Irish housekeeper called Mrs Seggy[ph], who had a wonderful laugh I remember, it was a sort of growly laugh, who we were absolutely devoted to. She used to make very good porridge.

And your brother and sister had also been born in that house?

My brother and sister, no, my brother and sister were born in Sussex Place; I think I was the only person who was actually born in 12 Oxford Square.

And your sister was the younger?

No, she was the middle, I was the youngest.

Right. And what was her name?

Henrietta.

And do you know, when you were born, were your brother and sister pleased to find that you were being added to their family, or not?

I've no idea at all. I got on terribly well with both of them, and I was four years younger than my sister and six years younger than my brother, you know, until the age of ten I absolutely idolised my brother and I used to be a little, I know I used to be a little slave running round after him and doing what he wanted me to; must have been rather nice for him.

And, what is the first house you really remember living in then?

Well it's my grandfather Whitbread's house in Wiltshire, Norton Bavant.

Right. And can you describe that one to me?

Yes. It was painted yellow, and it's, you know, a big house, gosh, what period would it be? I suppose it was sort of early 18th century, with a lot of back regions and a big stable yard and lots of outbuildings, and a big annex which I think was much, was always known as the annex, which I think now looking back on it must have been much older, it was probably a 17th century house, which featured very largely in our lives because that's where the evacuees lived, and that's one of my earliest memories, of the evacuees, the Gridleys, arriving, it couldn't have been in the middle of the night but it was in the middle of the night for me, in the evening, and Mrs Gridley arrived with several children, three or four, and one baby in a dog basket which caused great interest. And Corporal Gridley was in the war, and he used to come back every now and again and then there was always, I subsequently learnt, another little Gridley appeared nine months later. And they featured enormously in our lives because it must have been very early in the war, and you know, in the sort of surge of patriotic fever, and everybody fighting the same war and getting together, you know, all our toys were given to the Gridleys, and some absolutely wonderful toys which my uncle Bill had, I mean wonderful train sets and forts and things, used to be given to the Gridleys, and within a matter of seconds, you know, would be totally broken up. I remember, that was an early moment of being horrified by destruction of things, I just...

And if they were doing that to your toys, I mean were you able to form any kind of relationship with the little Gridleys, or not?

Yes, I think we did, we used to play like mad. We used to, from a very early age I used to keep chickens, a great joy of my life, and, it was a great thing in the war to have fresh eggs, and I remember keeping a little book and counting the eggs and collecting them, and I used to do that with one of the little Gridleys. We led a very bucolic life. And one of my earliest memories, which will no doubt shock you horribly, is the excitement of when the pig was killed, which we, I remember at an early age one wasn't supposed to go and look at because it was, you know, not right

for susceptible little boys of six. One of my earliest memories is, you know, creeping round when the pig was having its throat cut and squealing, and then having its bristles singed over an open fire, and the wonderful sort of smell.

Why did they do that?

I think they did that before they butchered it, just to get the, I imagine, I don't know what breed it was, I imagine it was a rather sort of hairy pig.

And you actually watched its throat being cut?

Yes.

And what did you feel?

Thrilled. No feeling of, I mean, no feeling of, how awful at all. Although it was a great friend, I mean it's rather odd isn't it, because I mean we used to, when it was alive we used to go and feed it apples and it used to put his feet up on the sty and we used to scratch his ears and things. I remember the smell of pig very strongly.

Did you actually have domestic animals, animals you were fond of?

Yes, we had dogs always. We had a very, rather scabrous Scottie called Robbie who I was frightfully fond of, who got mange, like all Scotties do, in his old age.

And if you made this observation about the little Gridleys, I mean who actually told you about sex?

I just don't know. I was very very innocent, I don't think I really knew about sex until I was at the end of my prep school I suppose, when I was twelve, I know we had a sort of sex talk then.

From a teacher?

From a teacher. My parents certainly never talked to me about it at all. I remember actually, the nearest we got was when, after the war, so it was, six, I must have been about ten, we used to go and have our summer holidays with some Irish cousins who lived in County Cork, a wonderful place called Carrigacunna Castle, Killavullen, County Cork, which sounded frightfully grand but it was a sort of farmhouse but it had a very ruined castle in the garden, hence the name, overlooking the Blackwater, it was a lovely place, I absolutely adored it, and the Irish, and still like the Irish to this day because of it. And I remember asking my mother what a gelding was, and I can remember her saying, 'Oh well never mind about that,' and then saying, 'Oh well you'd better know. You know the little bag between your legs? Gelding is when that's cut off.' And, it didn't mean much to me actually at all, but...

And when your schoolmaster talked to you, was it individually or as a group?

I simply can't remember Cathy at all. I mean I think, you know, little boys, one talked about sex and, you know, probably got it all very muddled up. Yes, I think, you know, lots of little boys together once.

But would you have, do you think he would have told you, he was really telling you the biology rather than any morality about it?

Yes, entirely the biology. I don't think much about morality. I think probably there was, you know, a pitch about, but it was so heavily veiled one didn't really understand it, about homosexuality, you know, and that it's not a good thing at all, and one must sort of watch it in one's public school. But I was so naïve and innocent, it never came my way, I've never had a homosexual encounter in my life, I just, I just didn't, it didn't feature in my life at all.

And, with the little Gridleys, are you still in touch with any Gridleys?

Absolutely not at all, but it would fun to be wouldn't it. I mean we left there in 1948, when I was twelve, so, I've no idea what happened to them.

Right. And, the house we're talking about, what was on the walls of that house?

Very, no modern of art of any sort. A lot of very good prints, mezzotints, of Whitbreads, all of whom had been painted by good people, I mean Gainsboroughs and, I can't remember who else, but I mean some very...[inaudible] there were some very good pictures indeed. And as was the custom, prints were made of them and sort of distributed round the family. And I think oil paintings, I can't remember actually. It wasn't until I was really, really grown up that I suddenly realised what a tremendous kick I get out of looking at pictures. I can remember the exact and absolute moment of my road to Damascus.

When you...?

I remember the absolute moment when I realised what tremendous pleasure and enjoyment...

And what was that moment?

It was, I rather blush to tell you Cathy, it was when I was totally grown up. It was my first summer at Oxford, I went with a friend in a very ancient Hillman Husky to Morocco, we had a wonderful time, I mean you know, eight weeks one just went away buzzing around down Spain. And we came back, it was terribly hot because of course it was in the summer, in August, and we came to Madrid where it was absolutely stifling, and really more to get in the cool than anything else we went to the Prado. And I can actually remember suddenly seeing the Velasquez and thinking, God! they're wonderful. I mean I have a vision in my mind of seeing it. And I didn't go back to the Prado for thirty years I should think, and of course it's quite different, but that was the moment I absolutely know when I realised that this was part of, you know, the world that I would like to be involved in at some stage. I don't think it was so clear, but I mean it was certainly a moment of eye-opening. And it's very odd, looking back on it, that both my parents were extremely educated and civilised people, but I don't remember ever being taken to an art gallery or a museum by them at all, it's very strange.

Not even the Royal Academy, you wouldn't have gone to the Summer Shows or anything?

Not even the Royal Academy, at all, very strange. I don't think either of my parents were sort of very visually aware, although my mother was an absolutely brilliant needlewoman, and, I mean really brilliant, and has done marvellous tapestries and, you know, chairs and curtains and bed-hangings and carpets, and every sort of thing.

And would you, as you were growing up, would your mother have taken magazines? I mean would 'The Illustrated London News' have come through your door or anything?

Oh I think absolutely, because I remember those wonderful pictures of archaeological digs with Bryant & May matchboxes to show the scale. And of course in the war we certainly had 'The Illustrated London News', and I don't know what else, because of all the identification of foreign aircraft, I mean from a very early age I remember being extremely knowledgeable about Messerschmitt 109s Fokker whatever it was, and in fact one of the highlights of my life was being taken to Salisbury to see a Messerschmitt 109 which had been shot down, and it must have been very good, you know, undamaged, and it was set up in the market square in Salisbury and roped off for people to go and look at. And we went on the bus to Salisbury, which was twenty miles, it was always tremendous excitement going there and I was always sick half-way, I live very nearby there now and I can still rather queasy going round the hill. And duly went into the market square in Salisbury, and as I say it was all roped off, but being a sort of sweet little boy of five or six I was allowed under the rope, and I was lifted up into the fuselage and allowed to walk up to the front, and looking back on it, it's quite clear that the aeroplane had been completely stripped, no doubt to be analysed and so on, and I went up to the front and there were the two pilot seats, the pilot and the co-pilot, which were just the metal seats, the metal backs. And I clearly remember thinking, goodness me, that blighter Hitler, he was so mean he didn't even produce cushions for his pilot. Which actually is quite interesting, because it must have meant that we were brought up to hate Hitler, but not particularly to hate the Germans.

When you say we would have gone, who would have gone on this trip?

Oh Nanny and my brother and sister.

And, do you remember other images from magazines? I mean 'The Illustrated London News' had very potent imagery, didn't it, for a lot of people.

Yes. I mean one, there were a lot of images from the war, which was very exciting, and I mean I rather tagged along with my elder brother, and we had a neighbour who lived in the rectory, which was a vicarage which was sort of next door, who was a year or so older than my brother, who was tremendously interested in the war and made wonderful models of aeroplanes which he hung over his bed, and kept terrific scrapbooks, and my brother was a great scrapbook man too.

But not you?

I don't think so. I didn't do it, I don't think so, I was either too young or...

And what early books do you remember, what were your childhood books?

Oh we always had lots of books, and my mother read to us a great deal, and so, I mean, well I was brought up on, the sort of early stage, on the Babar books and Beatrix Potter, and the Dolittle books. And then my mother used to read us Sherlock Holmes, and Brigadier Gerrard, and a lot of Henty books, G.H. Henty, which possibly interested, made me more interested in history, I'm not sure. And later on Dickens we used...and I know at my prep school we used to be read Dickens, and my mother used to read us Dickens. So books were very much a part of our lives.

And were you a child that would ever have done any writing yourself?

Not really, no, I don't think I did much. I mean I wrote letters and so on but I didn't, I'm afraid my creative skills are not very great.

And would you have been a child that drew?

I did draw, yes, but terribly badly, I have no talent for it, but I used to draw a lot, I remember drawing things.

Would these have been war drawings, or...?

No, absolutely not, mainly nature drawings I think, I remember drawing, you know, robins on logs and things.

And would you have been very well informed about the names of plants and wildlife, or not?

Yes, my mother was very good about that, and very knowledgeable about wild flowers, so I always knew about that.

And how much time would you spend with your mother? Was it a sort of nursery existence, or what was it?

A lot really. My mother used to have breakfast in bed, I don't know whether always, but I can remember it as a very small child, and she had a large four-poster bed, and I used to go up and play with her on her bed, which I remember as being terribly large. And then in the evenings she used to read to us. So we saw her, you know, at least twice a day; it sounds a rather odd thing to say, but you know, they were very...I think nowadays, if you're politically correct you would say we had quality time together, but of course it wasn't like that at all. And in the war she was very busy doing all sorts of things, I'm not quite sure what but doing things in the village, and you know, the W.R.V.S. and...

So, she had, although she wasn't leading a professional life in the sense of being paid, she actually did have a lot of duties that she carried out, she wasn't...

Well it was very, it was a very sort of bucolic existence, in the middle of Wiltshire in the war, and you know, we lived in the manor house, and therefore, you know, she was the sort of leader of village events. And for instance I remember one of the great

excitements was when the Woolton pies were delivered, which were the sort of awful pies which were made by Lord Woolton when he was, or, you know, instigated, named after Lord Woolton when he was Minister of Food, and sitting in the hall and dishing out the Woolton pies to the village people who came up. And the great excitement of having half a Woolton pie for tea, which I should think would be absolutely revolting now but I thought it was the most wonderful thing, with Cross & Blackwell Branston pickle, real highlight of my culinary life. I am now extremely greedy and love my food, and I date it back to that time.

And do you think your mother enjoyed that sort of life, or was she doing it out of duty, or...?

I should think she would be doing it out of duty, she's a very dutiful person, and I think, I don't know but I mean in the war, you know, there was this tremendous feeling that everyone had to do their bit.

And did she then and then later on have her own social life, or not? Did she have a close friend, if she wasn't that close to your father in a funny way?

No, she had never, she had a few close friends, but not really, no. She was a great letter-writer, and I know she had various correspondents who she wrote to once a week I remember.

At particular times, I mean was it the sort of household where there would have been the letter-writing time, or not?

Not particularly, but I remember she, you know, did write a lot, and she kept a diary from the day she married until she was about 94, which I've now got, and she kept a lot of ephemera. I mean her war scrapbooks, which she has still got, will be fascinating, they still are fascinating to look at, because she kept all the ephemera which was dished out in the war about, you know, what to do with your Woolton pie, and how to manage your stirrup pump and what to do when the Germans landed, and how to deal with your gas mask, and all the things about food coupons and clothing coupons and the instructions for that. And lots of things, she was a tremendous

cutter-out of things in the, from the newspapers, some of which she stuck in her diary and some more general things she put in her scrapbook.

And are there any revelations in the diary that surprise you?

I've got them all, and I simply can't, I can't read them actually, until she dies, I feel it's sort of intrusive, which may be a mistake, perhaps I ought to read them so that I could question her about them.

Do you know what she wants?

What she wants?

Would she like you to read them?

I don't think she would mind, at all.

Did she actually formally give them to you?

She formally gave them to me, yes. When we moved out, when my father died we moved out of the house in Devonshire and she moved into a little tiny flat in a sort of retirement place near Amesbury, near where we live now, you know, the things were divided up, and my sister got the photograph albums and I got the diaries.

Right. And, was her relationship with your sister different from her relationship between you and Paul, or not?

I should think it probably was. My sister is a lovely person but very conventional, and would never know it but is rather artistic, but her artistic talents lie in making wonderful houses wherever she's been. Her husband was in the Army and they moved house, you know, twenty-three million times in ten years, that sort of thing, and everywhere she went was an army quarter, she always made a wonderful house. She's extremely talented at doing flower arrangements for instance. And now has millions of grandchildren around the house, and is very...we must have picked up

somewhere both she and I a tremendously, it sounds rather sort of hidebound thing to say, sort of, what I'm trying to think of, the word? But you know, we're very keen on detail. I mean I've spent a tremendous amount of my life worrying passionately about detail, you know, getting typography exactly right or the presentation right and so on, and she has that in a different way, that you know, if... I remember once she was ill in bed, when her children were all quite grown up, and one of her daughters brought up the tray to her, and she said, 'He hasn't even put a bit of parsley on the butter'. I mean that's the sort of ridiculous thing my sister did, I mean she always had to do things absolutely right. And you know, we used to have rather formal dinners, until the day he died, you know, whether they were alone or not, my father always changed for dinner, and put on a black tie, and I mean, frightful old smelly brown velvet smoking jacket and old trousers, but it was always, you know, he had a bath and changed for dinner. And then we used to, they used to have, you know, soup and then a main course, and then a pudding or a savoury, and then fruit, and a finger bowl, and you know, always in the finger bowl a leaf of lemon verbena to make it smell nice.

Wonderful. And who would have been looking after all that at that point?

They always had, they always had a couple living in the house, and some were good and some were frightful, and some stayed a long time and some didn't last any time at all. And it was a very, the house was called Wembury, Wembury House, Wembury, Plymouth, Devon, and it was a very, very austere but rather splendid Georgian house, in fact built in 1802 but it looked as if it had been built fifty years before, because I think, you know, times hadn't moved very much in Devon. And it was a very formal, very formal life, and it had a great influence on my children for instance, we used to go there, stay there, and everyone had to be on their very best behaviour. And you know, it was one of the sort of maxims of the family that you wouldn't do it at Wembury. Or, what would Granny say? They were devoted to Granny, but it was all very formal stuff.

And was this the house you moved to after being in your Whitbread grandfather's house?

Yes, absolutely.

So there was complete stability there?

Complete what?

Stability, and consistency.

Absolutely. I mean I have the most incredibly stable background, as indeed did my children. I mean until my youngest son was eighteen, they had a full set of grandparents, both my wife's parents and my parents were rather splendid people and very much alive and knew them and were interested. So we had this amazing solidity.

And if you had had that rather wonderful consistency, and although, obviously there's a down side to formality, there's also a tremendous plus side, did you take some of that formality into your own married life? I mean would you have had any of those dinner rituals in the same way, or were you always different in the way you lived?

No, I think, I think that a certain amount of the ritual goes on, and, for instance, you know, we always have three meals a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner, and we always, I mean my wife Rachel had the same, exactly the same sort of upbringing that I did, and you know, we always had family meals, and we always had, you know, we never had tele-suppers, sounds rather old-fashioned doesn't it, but we always sat down as a family for dinner, much to the annoyance often of the children who wanted to go and see things.

But you wouldn't bath and change?

No.

And you wouldn't have a finger bowl?

No.

And would you have parsley on your butter?

No.

And so standards have really dropped.

Standards have really dropped, yes. No, my sister used to make little butter balls, you know, with butter batters. No, we didn't do any of that stuff. But on the other hand, I mean you know, we don't for instance, one of the great things in our family, we never have the milk bottle on the table, that's about as far as the standard's kept up, it's one of the fetishes.

But, when you say that you used to used to see your mother at the beginning and the end of the day, if you, say, fell down during the day, would you go to your mother? I mean was she somebody you went to with problems, or not?

I guess that sort of thing, one would go to Nanny. I mean I had this wonderful nanny who arrived in our family when my elder brother was six weeks old, and you know, was sort of part of the family until she died in her eighties.

And what was her name?

She was called Winifred Chilton, and she was just called Winifred Chilton, so initials were W.C., which we thought frightfully funny when we were children. And she was the daughter of Sir Waldron Smithers' gardener in Knockholt in Kent, and as a result of which she had incredible green fingers and she could, absolutely anything she planted and touched, she didn't know how she did it but she grew things wonderfully. And she was a marvellously gentle, kind, lovely person, and we were all devoted to her.

And as you were growing up, you would have called her Nanny presumably?

Always, yes, Nanny.

And was she somebody who gave you hugs?

Oh very much, yes, we used to have hugs from Nanny, we were very fond of Nanny. And my mother used to give us hugs too, my mother is very demonstrative really, and warm.

And would you have had a nursery life, is that where you would have your meals for example?

Yes, absolutely, and you know, it went on longer for me, well it didn't go on longer for me, but I mean my...you didn't go down to meals in the dining-room until you were seven or eight I should think, so I remember we used to have nursery meals and things were sent up to the nursery and Nanny and I used to have meals together.

Right. And what else was in your nursery?

What...?

What was in the nursery?

Well, the nursery I can remember at Norton, I mean originally, at the beginning of the war, the nursery was on the top floor, and there was a proper day nursery and a night nursery, and my earliest memories of being in this very sort of garret room I suppose at the top, with two poplar trees outside where the pigeons used to coo. I mean I remember the sound of the coo-coo, coo-coo. And then, I don't know quite when, I suppose to economise, and presumably because heating was very difficult, the top floor was abandoned and we moved down to the next floor, and all my childhood, my nursery was in the corner of the billiard room, which was a huge room I remember, and you know, a little, a square table in the corner where Nanny and I had our meals.

And what were your important toys, what mattered to you?

I had a very wonderful dog on wheels, I was very keen about. And we had a wonderful toy called Minibricks, which was a sort of precursor of Lego, which were

sort of rubber bricks with sort of, like poppers you have on a jacket, you know, sort of popped in, and that was a great thing, you built stations and houses and things.

Did you have a bear?

A what?

A bear?

A bear? I can't remember whether I had a bear or not.

End of F6489 Side A

F6489 Side B

.....you spent quite a lot of time out of doors, and you had stories read to you, were there other childhood activities that were quite potent?

We used to walk a lot; I mean there was a lot of outdoor stuff, and excitements, you know, going and collecting mushrooms I remember was terribly exciting, in the early mornings, you know, in September, and a particular smell and everything, the cow-pats and thistles and things. And of course one always remembers childhood as one long summer, but we used to bathe in the river Wylde in the millpond, which was always I remember terribly cold and very uncomfortable because you had to sort of pick your way through the thistles and nettles and cow-pats, so I always put it down to the fact I didn't learn to swim until I was about thirteen. But that I remember was a great feature. And we used to go and collect things in the war, we used to collect foxglove seeds and poppy seeds in biscuit tins, and they were sent off, sort of, 'to the war' it was always called [inaudible], and we did that in Sutton Veny woods. And, it was only when I went back there, when we lived in London, and the children were small, we had a cottage in the next, six miles away in the same valley, and I suddenly realised how incredibly narrow our horizons were in the war, it was really as far as you could go in a pony and trap, or walk, or bicycle, and my legs were pretty short in those days. And I'm terribly grateful to it, because one had a very small world, you know, which was all-encapsulating and was very secure, despite the war, and one was very lucky, because it gave one a tremendous feeling for the seasons and land. I mean I have a great sort of feeling for farming and land, and in fact all my youth I always wanted to be a farmer.

And why didn't you?

I don't know. I grew out of that idea.

Right. And, would you have had any holidays? I know it was wartime, but...

Well I think holidays were going and staying with Granny you see, in Perridge.

Right. And what would family Christmases have been like?

Very very traditional, tremendously traditional, and my mother always did it amazingly well, and there was a certain moment when the tree was brought in and a certain moment when the tree was decorated and everybody joined in, and tremendously, you know, regular Christmas Day and stockings, and then church, and then terrible anticipation of presents but not allowed to have it until lunch, and a tremendous lunch, and then after lunch everybody in the drawing-room with their piles of presents and scissors and bits of paper to write down who they came from, opening presents, and then watching the King at three o'clock, or listening to him actually in those days.

Was the radio very much part of your childhood?

Tremendously, yes, very much, I remember it very much, because of the war you see, and listening to the Six O'clock News, and a large sort of cabinet radio, so you had to turn it on to warm up, and making sure it was warmed up for six o'clock so you got the news.

And, with the nanny, I mean would she have been part of the household at all at Christmas, or did she lead a separate life somewhere?

No, she did, she was part of the household at Christmas. It was always a great joke because Nanny used to come down and, it was the only time she ever had anything to drink, she always had half a glass of cider and got frightfully giggly and we all used to laugh about it.

And were there other living-in staff who would have really been part of family life, or was it separate?

Yes, very much, we were tremendous friends, and my grandfather, my grandfather's valet was called Dolphin[ph], who became the cook in the war in this huge kitchen, and he was a tremendous friend and very nice. And there was a very nice parlour-maid who was called MacKenzie[ph], I mean, she must have had another name but

she was always called MacKenzie[ph], who was also a great friend of mine, I used to play with her a lot. And there was an under-parlour-maid called Betty, who I hated for some reason, I don't know why, and I remember, talking about death, but one of the first moments I now remember when I thought about death was that my sister had a canary also called Betty, and I remember going down to...and Henrietta coming bursting into tears and saying, 'Betty's dead, Betty's dead,' and I thought it was the under-parlour-maid, rather pleased, and frightfully disappointed to discover it was only the canary. So I must have been quite a nasty little boy really.

And, I can't remember, tell me again, what age did you move away from there, to your real home?

Twelve.

Right.

And so I, that is the place I really feel is my home, my roots, and we've gone back to live in Wiltshire now largely for that reason, because I'm very much with the Jesuits, give me a man for seven years and you've got him for life. And I think the reason is, what I was saying before, that you know, you see the seasons round, and I belong to that, you know, generation and type who were sent away to boarding school, so in our new house in Devonshire, I never really felt it was home, and I told you my father was a tremendous gardener, and he was always going on about the wonderful peony border, and I never saw the bloody peony border because it comes out in May and I was always at boarding school; it was only when I was grown up I suddenly realised, you know, what a wonderful feature of the garden it was.

Right. And, was your very early education at home, did you have a governess?

No, I don't think I did. I can't remember, I think my mother taught me, and then I went away to a school called Greenaways, which was in Codford, which was about ten miles away, and I used to be taken there by my grandfather's chauffeur who was called Burt, and that was his surname, B-U-R-T I think, and at the time, you know, all the cars had been laid up for the war. I remember one of the great excitements in the

war was going into the garage and climbing into the Rolls Royce which was put up on bricks, so it was terribly dangerous to get in, it was strictly not allowed, but I remember the smell of it. And their descending in the war to having a motorbike and sidecar, and you probably don't remember it because it's passed a long time, but they were the same sidecars as the A.A. servicemen used to have, like a coffin, only it wasn't yellow, it was painted black, and the lid was propped up, and I used to sit on the bottom of the coffin and Burt used to drive me to school. And half-way, at Heytesbury, we used to stop to pick up Georgie Sassoon, who was Siegfried Sassoon's son, who had married very late in life and rather...even I remember Mrs Sassoon as being sort of rather, rather sort of fluffy, sort of, very blonde. And Georgie had his mother absolutely round his little finger, and one of the earliest memories I have, of being frightfully annoyed of other people's deceit, because, you know, at the end of the day Georgie used to say, 'I'm not coming in tomorrow,' and I'd say, 'Why on earth? Nothing wrong with it.' 'I'm going to have a cold.' So, we used to arrive at the gates of Heytesbury House and somebody would come out and say, 'Master George is not feeling very well today,' and I knew he was malingering.

And would you have been aware of poetry, would you have known about it?

I think through my mother, because I think we did read poetry, yes.

And what was this little boy like, apart from being a liar?

I can't remember him at all, and I've only seen him once since and he's had a very chequered career, lots of wives. And Heytesbury House is a wonderful house, it's been completely ruined by a by-pass round Heytesbury village which went through the park. And he was a mathematician, and he's had some terrible sadness, he's just been in the papers recently, that I think, a son or a daughter was killed in very tragic circumstances. I haven't seen him. But I didn't last very long at Greenaways for some reason, or it wasn't a very good school. I do remember it quite well. And then I and my sister went to Warminster Grammar School, and we spent, I spent about two-and-a-half years there before I went away to boarding school.

So at what age would you have gone to this first school?

Six I should think, five.

And that presumably was chosen because it was relatively close?

Yes.

And what do you remember of it?

Well I remember the size. I mean my memory, it's slightly difficult to tell whether they're memories or what I now know, because I, you know, see the house quite often, it's now a private house again. I can't remember very much about it. I can remember another little boy having his shirt-tail out and being told to tuck it in, I mean silly things like that.

And do you remember that you were quite at ease there, or was it nerve-racking to go into a public environment?

I think I remember being pretty nervous when I first went there. I was a very stoical child actually, you know, if I was told it was my duty to do it, I knew it was my duty to do it, I mean I just accepted, I was very accepting of those sort of things.

Was it just a boys' school or was it mixed?

I should think it was just a boys' school, I really can't remember. I mean at Warminster Grammar School, Lord Weymouth's Grammar School it was called in those days, my sister was one of only three girls I think, the headmaster's daughter, Gina, and I think one other. And that was, I remember that very clearly indeed, I mean the early days and playing in the school yard, a tarmac yard, with brick walls, and the outside loo in the corner, frightfully smelly and horrible. And you know, lots of rude, rough boys rushing around. I think I quite enjoyed that too.

And had you lost your heart to anybody at this stage?

No, I don't think I had. I think I was a very slow developer, I don't think I lost my heart to anybody until I was about thirteen or fourteen.

And would you have had any heroes at this point?

I think my brother was a great hero, and when he was at boarding school we had, you know, absolutely long-running, it must have been very convenient for my parents, we had, we lived on the River Wyley, which was a very small trout stream, chalk stream, and it had an island, I mean very miserable little island, tiny, the river went round it, which we adopted, and it was full of, must have been willow trees, and we had a tremendous ongoing project for the Castle it was called, the Castle, which my brother built, and his cousin, my cousin John Studholme. And it was tremendous fun, it was very hazardous, we had planks and built them right up into the trees, it was terribly exciting. And I was absolutely the dogsbody, I mean I was always being sent home to find out what the time was and come back and...

What was Paul's character at that point?

I don't know. He was also a very straightforward chap. He was... I can't answer that. He was a very nice fellow, nice to me.

And Henrietta?

Henrietta, I got along very well. She and Paul didn't get on frightfully well together because he thought she was too girly-girly, and her interest in the Castle was always to make it pretty and put in sort of hanging baskets of flowers which were always flung down, because it was a fighting castle and not a home thing at all.

[break in recording]

Recording on December the 3rd 1996, at Editions Alecto.

[break in recording]

Before we start today, could you spell for me the name of the castle that you used to go to stay in in Ireland?

Yes. It's Carrigacunna, C-A-R-R-I-G-A-C-U-N-N-A, Carrigacunna. It may be K. Carrigacunna. I think that's about right.

And also the name of the house your parents bought when you moved out of your Whitbread grandfather's house.

It's Wembury, W-E-M-B-U-R-Y.

Good.

[break in recording]

We talked last time quite a lot about early childhood, and your first schools, and, I presume you went on to Eton, did you?

Yes.

Can you tell me what that was like? You went at thirteen?

I went at thirteen, yes.

[break in recording]

What do you think you were like at thirteen?

I was an extremely sort of malleable, normal boy who had...I mean I was tiresomely obedient and attentive and a pretty boring chap really. I mean I'd been, you know, captain of my prep school, I think I was a horrible little prig really, and I can remember very clearly in fact being released when I got to Eton, which was a much more liberal regime. And I can actually remember the very moment when I wrestled with the Devil and lost, when somebody said to me, you know, 'Come on Joe, we're

going on the river,' and I knew that I should be doing some extra work or prep or whatever it was called, and I decided I'd go on the river instead. And it was a great release, it was one of the turning points in my life and I realised that you didn't have to do exactly what you were told. And that was one of the good things about Eton in fact, strange place that it was, I mean people always get annoyed when you say it was a sort of original comprehensive, but actually the way it was; of course there were certain givens, you had to have parents or scholarships to pay the fees, but it was an incredible mixture, probably less so now, from the unbelievably stupid to the superlatively clever, and there was a very, and it was a big enough school to be able to, you know, move about within it and really follow, if you had any, you know, enthusiasms, practically any single discipline, much more now but even in those days you could do all sorts of different things.

And at the previous school then, if you had been the head boy of it, had you been quite competitive, or had you been steered in that direction do you think?

I don't know. I imagine that, you know, not much competition and, you know, the best of a bad lot probably. But I think I always was rather, I think I...I still do actually, sort of respect authority, you know, and I feel that, I think I was brought up that way by my parents, that it's one's duty to take the lead and do things.

Who do you see as authority figures now?

Goodness me. I don't think I really do actually see very many authority figures. I still have a, I mean I'm sad actually that I don't have as much respect as I used to do, I think it's one of the sadnesses that, perhaps it's just getting older, that you know, you can't pick out some great political leader or some great church leader, or some great business leader, I don't know who my heroes are.

What about Mandela?

Mandela is a hero, yes, I think that's about right, Mandela and Cardinal Hume is a hero, I think he is a great and good man.

Why?

Because I think he's a very spiritual, holy man, and you know, is totally genuine, and, I mean I've heard him preach, actually at lower chapel at Eton, and of course he had been a schoolmaster, and he was absolutely brilliant. He spoke I suppose for ten minutes, maybe a quarter of an hour, he said three things, you know, three times, talked to the boys completely, just, with no side, you know, just what he believed in, and it was very impressive, and they were all on the edge of their seats, as was I.

Do you remember what the three things were?

No, alas I can't, but I think it was about... Gosh, you know, isn't it awful, here I am, rabbiting on about how good it was and I can't really remember what the thrust was.

And, just going back to your prep school for a minute, were you good at all the subjects sort of generally across the board at that stage, was there some problems and some high points, or was it all...?

No, I think I was very middle-of-the-road really. I mean I was not at all a high-flyer but nor was I at the bottom, I mean I was...I was jolly good prep school material, I gave no trouble.

And were there any teachers who were particularly important to you?

The headmaster was a very nice man called Pat Knock-Shore[ph], who I respected I think, and who had been a prisoner of war, and so regaled us with wonderful stories of the war, which we liked very much. And there were some very odd balls, looking back on it, masters, I mean you know, prep school masters after the war were a fairly odd lot, I remember Mr Norbury[ph] who, looking back on it, was a real rake and had come out of either the...the Merchant Navy I think and he used to regale us by saying that he never darned his socks, he waited until they became all holes and then he threw them away, which we thought was frightfully wicked, having been brought up, you know, with nannies who darned one's socks.

And do you know what happened to him?

No idea at all. I shouldn't think he remained in the teaching profession, I should think he was rumbled probably.

So when you went to Eton, what were the enthususiams that came to the fore?

Well when I was there, there was tremendous emphasis on games, which has all changed now, and the heroes in the school were all people who were frightfully good at football or cricket or something like that. So that became an enthusiasm in quite a sort of big way, I mean I rushed around running and jumping and playing cricket and things.

Were you successful?

No, not at all successful. But again, for some reason I, you know, was made captain of the lower boys football team and so on. I think looking back on it, I must have looked a sort of safe bet by the masters.

Presumably though you had a sense of team spirit, which is what they wanted too?

Oh tremendously, yes, and I still have, I'm awfully good at teams, I like, you know... Actually I don't think I'm very good at teams, I'm rather arrogant in fact, but I...with a team I will support it like mad.

Even if you're not the leader?

Even if I'm not the leader, yes.

But the aim is usually to be the leader?

I don't think it is particularly, but if, you know, if drafted, will run, as the American politicians say.

And, were there friends that were particularly to do with sport, did you have sort of departments of your life that fitted together, or were friends people who went across the board?

I think pretty well across the board. At Eton, it was divided up into houses, sort of forty-five boys, and really all your friends were the people who you lived with, you know, probably no more than a dozen or less, you know, and the people in your same level in your schooling.

And who were your particular friends?

Who were my particular friends? A man called Anthony Hignet[ph], who went on and did nothing very much in his life. He ran his family brick business in Lincolnshire, and then as far as I can gather has done very little. Mervyn Fox-Pitt[ph], who was a regular soldier and became a frightfully good polo player, rather surprisingly, and now lives in Scotland and is in the insurance business. They were my two great mates. I haven't really kept up particularly with my Eton friends, and the people in my house who were exactly my level, two of them became parsons, rather strange, Nicholas Charrington and Geoffrey Holland[ph], and one of them is a High Court judge, David Pitman, and one of them has just I think retired from having been a tremendous brewing tycoon, Alec Rankin, who ran Newcastle Breweries, and funnily enough another brewer called Jasper Clutterbuck, a wonderful name, who was managing director or chairman of Marston Breweries. So they all went on and did things. Quite a lot of people who are professional soldiers, a man called David Gordon-Lennox, who became quite a high-powered soldier.

And having become very used to interviewing people in the city, the Eton connection comes to the fore quite often there; have you found that it's crossed your professional path quite a lot in the future, or not?

Well no, not really. I think I told you, when I came down from Oxford I had just got married, or was just about to get married, and my father not unreasonably said I had to have a proper job; I had no idea what I wanted to do. And he sort of placed me in the City, it's rather scandalous, I mean talk about silver spoons, but he had been in the

Army with Lord Kindersley, who was then Managing Director of Lazards, who I think said, you know, 'Any son of yours, Henry, we'd be delighted to have'. And so I just waltzed in, knowing absolutely nothing about the City, I mean the word economics meant nothing to me at all. And it was a very odd time, the City, this was 1959, right at the end of 1959, when the City was a very enclosed place, and you know, young graduates who had been in the Army and thought they were pretty, you know, mature and senior, you know, were shoved into the Cash Department in Lazards and behind a great big grille, and people used to come and poke buns[??] on their umbrellas through the bars, thinking it very funny. And one just had a very very boring time; the only amusing thing was seeing what Lady Kindersley had spent on her dress allowance that month, I mean it was extraordinary. And we had, the chief cashier was a splendid man who was just about to retire, called Mr Tittensor, who known in the market as Itchy-Udder, it was considered an extraordinarily funny joke, you know. It was very childish.

Were you still there when Kindersley got into trouble with the Bank Rate Tribunal?

No, I think I must have left by that time. I was only there a year, and then I went, and then I moved to a very odd bit of the City called a bill broker, which you probably know about, having done your research in the City, a firm called King & Shaxson. And again, I mean it's...this is all very confidential, this is not going to go out on the airwaves, but I mean looking back on it, it was absolutely monstrous how one got a job. My father-in-law worked for the Queen, he was Land Agent at Sandringham, and one of the courtiers, I can't remember what he was, I think he was Controller to the Queen Mother, was this wonderful man called Sir Arthur Penn, who was a partner in this firm called King & Shaxson, and they were looking for a young man, and my father-in-law said, 'I've got this worthless son-in-law, you know, maybe you would like to look at him'. And I went, the only interview I've had, a real interview, was at St. James's Palace in the evening to go and see Sir Arthur Penn, and it was incredibly civilised, and we sat down and some butler arrived with a little tray with little carafes of whisky and water, and we sat and drank our whisky, talking, and he asked me what I had done and so on, and in the course of the interview I remember he said, you know, 'What have you been doing?' And I said I had just come down from being at Lazards, and I had just come down from Oxford, and I'm afraid I didn't get a

particularly good degree. 'Oh I wouldn't mention a degree in King & Shaxson,' he said. And it was just like a Hilaire Belloc poem in the bill broking business at that time, you know, it was all day long from ten to four, half-three[??] or even more. And you started in the morning at half-past nine, you went in, and at ten o'clock you went out on your rounds, visiting all the banks wearing a top hat, and you lent and borrowed money to the banks. Then you came back at the end of the day and you wrote it all down in a great big ledger, you know, what you had borrowed and what you had lent. And then you had lunch and then from two to three you had to balance the books, and then at three o'clock, if the books were balanced, or not actually [inaudible] were balanced, and then you sort of wound it up, and if you weren't home for tea and crumpets by quarter to four things had gone badly wrong. And of course it suited me absolutely wonderfully because we had already started Editions Alecto, so I used to go off in my pinstripe suite down to Kelso Place, or actually first of all to 8 Holland Street where we had our first shop, and you know, muddle about with Editions Alecto, looking a real fish out of water.

I want to go into more detail about both Lazards and the bill broking when we get there, but, therefore in the sort of Editions Alecto world, are you, is the implication that the Eton connection hasn't really cropped up very much?

No. I mean I'm much more confident than I was, now. In the early days I kept jolly quiet about it, I don't know why, but I mean, looking back on it, people tend to ask you whether, you know, it was an advantage or not an advantage to go to Eton, and I must think it's an advantage because I sent my three sons there, and it was rather a different place when I was there. But in the art world, which you may have gathered, you know, was a very foreign country to me, I mean when I first got involved in Editions Alecto it was, you know, on a very basic premise, and this brilliant idea of getting artists to make views of schools and colleges didn't have an awful lot to do with art, and I had had no connection with the art world at all, except, you know, very feebly and incompetently in the art department at Eton under Wilfrid Blunt. So I really thought that artists had two heads and came from Mars, I mean it was amazing to find that they were perfectly ordinary human beings. But I was a bit shy about saying I came from Eton, although as it turned out it didn't sort of come up in conversation. And I thought these were so extraordinary and wonderful people, and it

was thrilling to suddenly be involved with people like that. You see I didn't sort of question their background either, but looking back on it now I realise, I mean I still don't really know, and it's quite irrelevant, that a lot of the people we were working with also were public school boys, but I sort of thought they came from a different world altogether, and there was a long period when I, again looking back on it, was a complete fish out of water, because all my friends in the City thought I was wildly bohemian and all my friends in the art world, quite right, thought I was hopelessly square.

The ones who had been at public schools, had they been at a particular public school?

I don't know, you see we never talked about it, I have no idea at all. But I mean Robyn Denny I guess must have gone to a public school. Howard Hodgkin went to Eton actually, and was sacked or left.

Did you know him there?

No, he's older than me, but I think he had already left, I think he, you know, he must have been there when I was a little boy there.

And do you think on the whole that the values that you absorbed at Eton have been useful ones in future life?

Well I think they have been in a positive and a negative way. I think that they do...it's very old-fashioned now, and it certainly didn't last through my children's education, that there was definitely a feeling that, you know, it was one's duty to go out and govern New South Wales, and take responsibility, and that was sort of made even clearer when one went into the Army as a National Serviceman. I mean one of the most sort of formative moments in my life, looking back on it, was starting my National Service as a rifleman, you know, as a squaddie, and being flung in to a platoon which was completely mixed, you know, some people like me, public school boys, and then a lot of wonderful cockneys from the East End and, you know, and Yorkshiremen and people, for whom it was the most frightful shock, to come away

from home probably for the first time into a barrack room. Whereas we took it green, I mean it was, you know, slightly more uncomfortable than life at a public school, but not that much.

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But, in retrospect you might know that the Yorkshiremen and the cockneys were charming and everything, but at the time it must have been quite nerve-racking, wasn't it?

No it wasn't, because, it's an extraordinary thing about human nature, is that you adapt absolutely. I mean, I've been in prison, no doubt I'll tell you about it sometime, and I find that, you know, whatever environment you're in, you immediately adapt. Maybe that's part of one's sort of programming and childhood, of being moved from one thing to another, and you know, getting to the top of the tree and then going to another institution where you're right down at the bottom. But there was no feeling when I went into the Army, we were all together, there was no, absolutely no feeling that, you know, we were better or more superior or anything, we were all bloody well in it together.

I wasn't thinking particularly of feeling superior, I was thinking it might have been slightly nerve-racking because of them being an unknown quantity, that you might have been fearful of it in some way.

Well I don't think one was really. I suppose, I mean at the beginning obviously, like, you know, dogs sort of sniffing each other and wondering what was what, but you jolly well quickly got into the fact that you were all being marched round at the double and had all your hair cut off, and doing...

And the ability to adapt, is that not part of good manners almost, is it to do with good manners?

Well perhaps it is. I mean it was a feeling that it was, you know, that one had been programmed to be adaptable, and, yes, I mean I think again, it's a frightfully old-fashioned thing to say, but you know, I think one was brought up on the sort of, I think it was Arthur Bryant, the historian, who said that, you know, you must...the one thing you must remember in life is to treat everybody exactly equal, regardless of where they come from, I mean that is the mark of a gentleman, you know, and I think

it's actually terribly true, it's like sort of any, you were asking me about Cardinal Hume, I mean I think that one thing which I absolutely hold up in the Christian faith as been the sort of kernel of the Christian philosophy is, honour all men and seek the common good. And I think that if one can live one's life like that, that's pretty good news, and of course one doesn't because one, you know, takes people on different levels and sucks up to some and is dismissive of others. But you know, if one does either, and thinks about it afterwards, one is rather ashamed.

How do you vote?

I usually vote Conservative; I have, I voted Labour in local elections but always, have always voted Conservative in the General Election.

And will you do so in the next one?

I don't know, I'm open-minded, I don't really want these people to go on, but...I don't know, I'm a very apolitical chap actually, I always vote but I've never belonged to a political party, and my father was a Member of Parliament for many years and it put me off politics in a big way. I simply can't bear the compromise of it really, I just, you know, I hate the fact that it's so confrontational, you know, and one side says one thing and the other side says the opposite, and it's so patently completely ridiculous, and I know from my father's time that, you know, away from the chamber they talked to each other and got on perfectly well. Although, as a matter of fact, he was such a strong Conservative, and he was a Whip for many many years, and he really was a very passive chap in a way but he really hated some of the, his Labour opponents, I mean he had a very low opinion of Hugh Gaitskell, and Hugh Dalton and people like that.

Do you know what was at the root of it?

I think in those cases, probably he thought they were traitors to their class. It's rather interesting isn't it. I mean you see how, what a programmed childhood I had, I mean I've been fighting it ever since. It's very interesting, and I'm very grateful actually that I happened to have escaped the sort of straightjacket of my particular upbringing,

and I, you know, do observe now people who didn't, who just went straight from Eton, probably into the Army and then into the City, you must have come across it, who actually still have extremely rigid views. And, I mean I'm really grateful for the fact that I've sort of hopped over the wall and it gave me a completely different...I don't think a different set of values, but it gave me, I hope, a much clearer idea of what other people's values are.

And, going back to the Eton values, you talk about it not being the same for your sons. Can you pinpoint where the shift is, what's happened between then and now?

Absolutely. I mean it's the Beatles again as usual, you know, it's the fact that when we were growing up we were little clones of our parents, and you know, looked quite different from the sort of boys on the street. And you know, when one came up to London one wore a suit, and I remember at the age of eighteen I probably, I hesitate to say, but I probably had a watch-chain, you know, and a double-breasted waistcoat. I mean really, it's ridiculous. I mean I remember being mistaken for a shop assistant at Harrods, which was the ultimate sort of, showing you were frightfully well-dressed. Whereas when my children were there, everything had changed, you know, the young looked like the young, and everybody wanted to look like, you know, the Beatles or pop stars and so on, so there was a completely different philosophy of life. And whereas I was brought up to have absolutely trust in authority, and respect for policemen for instance, really because you know, police were awfully nice to us because we were the little gents, the whole thing changed, and you know, my children, who were little Eton boys, looked like anybody else, not quite like everybody else probably but jolly nearly, and certainly had very little respect for the law, and therefore there was a great ethos that it wasn't really the, you know, it wasn't really the thing to take responsibility. It's very very strange. None of my children really took responsibility, it really amazed me, none of them wanted to, you know, be head of the house and that sort of thing. They none of them for instance went into the Corps at Eton, and, which I think by that time was anyway voluntary; when I was there you had to go in the Corps, and it was terrific fun because you used to have wonderful field days and mob about, and you know, eat buns and things, and put corks on the end of your rifle and fire at the flags and squirrels. I mean it was all rather funny. But I mean my children never went into it, and I remember, I can't

remember which one of them it was, I remember overhearing them saying, 'Of course we're all pacifists like Dad,' and I said, 'You stupid boy, don't you realise there's a difference between being a pacifist and being against war?' But they never did. And maybe that was a spin-off from, you know, the way Rachel and I had brought them up, because, I mean, in sort of relatively liberal ways, we didn't encourage...

So are you still sad they didn't go into the Corps?

No, not really, a bit, not at all, it doesn't...no, I don't mind that a bit.

And do you think if you were going to Eton again, you would go in?

Well, I don't think you can change your spots, absolutely, and I think I probably would, you know, I rather enjoyed it. I mean I certainly wouldn't have ever thought of being a regular soldier, but it just came up for my generation that there were these two years where you knew you had to do National Service. I would have been much more worried if I had, you know, failed my medical; actually I was a frightfully weedy youth and I suffered from asthma, so I was terribly worried that I would be spun out, because they would say I couldn't run or something like that, and I was delighted, which shows in a way one was rather sort of immature and unsure of oneself, and other people who actually rightly saw that they wanted to get on with life, and pretended they had in-growing toenails or something, were perfectly fit.

And what you were saying a bit earlier about the mark of a gentleman being that you treated everybody in the same way, do you think your sons would think of themselves as potential gentlemen?

I just don't know at all. I don't think, I mean my middle son's a Buddhist now, and he's a very gentle chap, and... I hope that I've brought them all up, or they've grown up, well I mean, to treat everyone alike. I don't...I genuinely don't think that they have tremendous sort of class feeling, but I'm sure that's right, they get on very well with everybody.

But would the word gentleman ever enter their vocabulary?

No, I shouldn't think it would actually.

And going back to your Eton, who was your house master? Because that's usually an important person.

A change in the middle. My first house master was a man called Reg Colquhoun, who was, you know, had been in the Scots Guards with my father and therefore, you know, had that sort of, actual bond, and who was a very small, dark, hairy, enthusiastic classical master, who I think looking back had quite an influence on me. I mean one, in a very facile way, that he used to teach me, try to teach me Latin, which I was extremely bad at but rather imaginative, and I remember doing Latin construes, he was always saying, you know, when I had made something up and hadn't looked at the thing, he said, 'Believe your eyes boy'. And it's been frightfully useful to me, because when I drive about, as I constantly do in America, you know, and you're driving along a freeway and you know Chicago's over there and the signpost says over there, I think to myself, believe your eyes boy, and I follow the signs, and I usually get there. So he had that influence on me. And he gave up after I had been there about three years, and his successor was a man called Bud Hill, who was much mimicked and rather loved and rather a nice man with a very high-pitch voice, had also been in the Scots Guards I think. And that was wonderful, because by that time I was getting to the top of the house, and he was terribly new, so we were able to manipulate him.

Over what sort of issues?

Well I mean telling him, 'Well that's the sort of thing we do, Sir, you know, it's perfectly all right if we, you know, have coffee after lights out,' and this sort of thing, that everyone's always done it. I mean little things like that.

And, what about Wilfrid Blunt?

Well Wilfrid Blunt, I mean I was so incapable and incompetent as an artist, I didn't really know him very well. Have I told you this before? I mean I actually was so bad

at drawing and painting that I took up calligraphy, which was one of his skills also, the sweet Roman hand, it was very much the vogue at the time in the, whenever it was, early Fifties or, yes, early Fifties, to write with a beautiful italic script, and I did that, and I thought I was pretty good at it, but I actually obviously wasn't. Wilfrid Blunt wrote, I think he said other things in the course of his report, but he wrote what must be the most minimal report any boy has ever got, he said, 'Studholme writes a very good H'. Which is actually quite true, I still write a rather good H. And I'm trying very hard now to write better again.

Would your report be something that your parents went through with you in quite a lot of detail?

Oh yes, Eton reports were wonderful, and still are, I mean certainly when my children were there, and they're very perceptive and very full. And they take the form of each, the house, the form masters of each, you know, geography or maths and things, write a report to your house master about Studholme doing this and that and the other, and then the house master writes a very perceptive and rather long report. It's one of the best things about Eton. And it was very reassuring, I think, reassuring, rather daunting, that one knew that one was being analysed and looked at in quite detail, one definitely felt that one was under the spotlight and unlikely to be able to get away with things, which I think must be very difficult now that children who, you know, adolescent grown-ups who go to these huge universities with no particular sort of corporate collegiate structure, it must, being rather a weak scholar myself, must be rather difficult to actually keep your motivation.

And, when something like Blunt's comment came in on your report, how did you cope with it, were you shattered, did you giggle?

I can't remember at all. I mean I was a very dull boy really, I didn't have any sort of highs and lows particularly, I had sort of good, reasonable, middle-of-the-road sort of reports.

And your parents would have let you off over calligraphy presumably?

Oh yes I think so, yes.

And were you given any rewards if you did well, was there any sort of system to invite you...?

No, not at all. My mother is a quite demonstrative person; my father and my father's family generally are incredibly undemonstrative, and you know, one was never praised at all, ever, and it was just accepted that, you know, you might be blamed for not doing well, but if you did well that was what was expected of you.

And going back just a bit to Blunt, because it's so irresistible, I mean did you pick up on his disposition, do you know what he was like as a person, even if you...?

No, not a bit, except he was...he had...there was Wilfrid Blunt and Mr Thomas, who was always known as Oily Thomas because he had very Brylcreamed hair, black lank hair, who I should think probably was a jolly good artist as well, but as I say I just showed no formal talent and so I didn't really know much about it.

And did Anthony Blunt ever come into your life?

Not at all, no, not at all. I mean not really until the great exposure.

And, were there other teachers who were important? What were your other influences, do you think, that made a lasting impression?

Well I was, I mean my favourite subject, I mean I was very keen on history, and I had rather a good history tutor called Giles St. Aubin, who, I mean must have been in his early twenties in fact, we thought he was awfully old, and who was rather an influence on me I think.

In what way?

Well he, I mean I think he was the first person to make me realise how interesting it is reading about history, and I think he was the first person who really impressed on me

that the interesting thing about history is that you've got to read it with the knowledge of what was in the heads of the people who were actually there at the time, and not superimposed with hindsight, all the things we now know, which actually is a jolly useful thing to learn quite early on, because you then are much less judgmental about people, because you can understand why they do certain things.

The down side of being not judgmental is that you will tolerate almost anything, isn't it?

Absolutely. I think that's a very fair criticism of me, I'm very un-judgmental, and now looking back on it, I'm amazed now how, you know, I took it as green, all the strange things which were going on in the early Sixties, and you know, when we were publishing Jim Dine and his exhibitions were being closed down in Robert Fraser, shock horror, because you know, he had a picture of a penis wrapped up in Miss Selfridge's paper, or you know, vaginas and things, and I, do you know, just thought that that was all right. But I think it's odd now, looking back on it, because I'm sure my parents would have been frightfully shocked about it, but I was being I suppose sort of non-judgmental; maybe it was just being rather feeble.

I mean, there must have been a certain amount of pressure on you not to be shocked by it, mustn't there?

Oh there was a lot of...absolutely, absolutely, there was a lot of pressure not to be shocked.

So might you have been shocked inside, do you think?

Possibly, yes, I think one possibly, one probably thought about it, and the strange, you know, Allen Jones, we published a lot of his work in the early days, when he was going through his most hermaphrodite phase and all sorts of odd things, it was all rather shocking. And of course the, you know, if we're on sex, the whole business of the sort of change of view about homosexuals, about gay people, well we didn't call them gay in those days, I mean that I remember sort of agonising about really, and feeling, you know, it was frightfully wrong and wicked and disgusting and all those

sort of things. And I think it was probably at Oxford where I got over that, because, the first time I went to parties and you know, the boys were dancing together and things, and then of course in the sort of art world of the early Sixties, you know, you had to be very blind or very blinkered or obtuse not to realise these sort of things went on. But it took me a long time to come to terms with it in fact.

Mm. And do you think in terms of self-expression, I'm not talking about homosexuality but, say, in a comparable way, I can't think what it would be, to the way that Jim Dine was expressing himself, was there any part of you that quite wanted to be really unlocked and go slightly wild, or...?

Yes absolutely. I mean absolutely. And do you know, one of my great regrets is that, you know, I was young in the Sixties and didn't, you know, jump over the traces, because I was already married, you know, awfully respectful, living in a house for goodness' sake, in The Vale in the King's Road, and the great excitement of course was, you know, on Saturdays, wandering up and down the King's Road and looking at all the people who came in, dressed up in their funny clothes. But I didn't on the whole dress up in funny clothes, I was probably wearing corduroy trousers.

What's the most outrageous thing you've ever worn?

Oh goodness me, I've no idea, I can't answer that. I mean one dresses up for fancy dress things I suppose, but...

But, no, I was meaning in relatively normal, everyday life.

No, I suppose, you know, the first time I... I mean it's pathetic, I wore a corduroy suit, I mean I thought that was very *outré* really.

And have you any desire to sort of dye your hair green or anything?

Well I would have loved to have done, I didn't dare you see. It would have been tremendous fun. And likewise, unfortunately none...as a family we are very un-hirsute. I mean I longed to have a tremendously strong beard so I could have hidden

behind an enormous great sort of forest of hair, and you know, become a different personality, but you know, I did once grow a moustache and it was so sort of wispy and Che Guevara-like, it was absolutely absurd, so I never did it.

And if you had been able to unlock in the Sixties, what do you think you might have done?

Unlock?

Mm.

Well, I don't think much...you know, I suppose one might have... I mean, in a way we were, we were on the cutting edge, Cathy, in the Sixties, you know, in the art world, but I was sort of bumping along on the outside, sort of slightly looking in, but on the other hand also being quite part of it in a way, because one, you know, we had all these wonderful people coming to work in our studios, and goodness knows what they thought of me. But eventually, you know, quite quickly really one sort of came to terms with them and could talk to them in the same way. And it was very, you know, there came a moment, which was my only sort of artistic expression, because I can't barely write my name, but it was great fun, it was really exciting having people coming and working in the studios, and doing things, and they were feeling their way and working with professional printers and really testing the medium. The first things, a lot of Alecto publications were very often the best, because it was somebody coming in, given the opportunity to really throw the traces, and there came moments when, you know, one was in the studio and one was standing behind somebody and saying, 'Why don't you do that?' or put in some green, or, you know, make certain... And sometimes they did, and that was a big thrill, that one felt one was imposing one's artistic note.

Can you remember any that have got a Joe Studholme input?

No, they would be absolutely minimal, I mean, of course.

But in a way you were becoming an enabler for them, a bit like a parent, weren't you, I mean it goes back to the leadership thing in a way doesn't it?

Yes, I suppose one was an enabler in fact, and because I knew so little about it, I think, you know, we operated a very liberal regime in a way, I mean anything went. I mean, in fact that was the point really, to find painters and sculptors who were obviously doing interesting work in their own field and then give them the opportunity to make multiple works, and it started off flat, you know, prints and things, so that their original ideas could be disseminated around the world. I mean that was the sort of beginning of why we started Alecto, it sounds rather highfalutin but actually was true.

And, sorry, I'm going to make you go back to Eton again. So history is your main subject, and, are there other academic subjects that mattered a lot? How did you do in English for example?

Moderately I think.

And what about hobbies, because those are a very important part of Eton aren't they?

Oh, while we're on subjects, Eton I said was a comprehensive, which actually it was, and there was a very clear division between the boys who weren't considered quite intellectually up to doing Classics and those who were. And I mean I remember my tutor saying literally, you know, 'You will be a Greeker, Joe, because you will mix with a better class of boy,' which didn't mean a class in class, it meant an intellectual type. As a result of that, one had a very warped education, because for instance if you were a Greeker you gave up geography, so I mean I gave up geography at the age of thirteen, gave up science at the age of thirteen; my science career began and ended with the Bunsen burner and dissecting a worm, and I can't remember, some ghastly experiment where you had, you know, little lead shot[??] and you measured it and people always jogged your elbow so that it all ran away and it was considered very funny. So I have huge gaps in my education. And I remember being in the Army and being sent off at a moment's notice to Bahrain, to the Persian Gulf, and having secret

orders as we got into the aeroplane to see where we were going, and having no idea where Bahrain was, it might have been Ecuador.

I have to say I'm rather the same now. And have you conquered it, I mean have you made sure you now know where Bahrain is?

Oh very much, because I've travelled about a lot and I'm fascinated by the world. Yes, I do know. I don't know about principal exports and crops, but I do know where things are.

And what about science?

Absolutely not, a closed book. I've got a very scientific and clever, scientific brother-in-law, who is actually a brilliant teacher and has explained various things to me. He once explained to me about how the atom bomb worked, and I rushed out and told two people before I forgot, but I mean I don't know anything about it. I've just been staying in Adelaide, in Australia, with a nuclear physicist and I suddenly realised, you know, how little we knew about each other's discipline; actually he knew much more about mine. I went to his laboratory and he showed me some amazing experiments he was doing and I just simply couldn't understand.

And, what about music or any other hobbies, what was that like at Eton for you?

It was very good indeed, except that I again showed, alas, no talent. I learnt the piano at my prep school, and my parents, much to my fury, you know, didn't give me piano lessons at Eton, they obviously thought I wasn't up to it. They were probably right actually; I was rather hurt. I did quite a lot of singing at Eton, there was a very good, the Eton College Musical Society was very active, and you know, we used to have school choirs, that sort of thing. So from that point of view there was quite a lot of music and quite a lot of concerts we used to go to. And one of the things, extraordinary sights which must have amused people who were passing through Eton at the time, in the evening all the boys went out all with cushions, you know, to sit, to put on the hard seats, it was just a sensible thing to do. And actually we were even more laughed at, but we felt awfully smug because we felt we were so sensible, we

used to go to the Greek plays at Bradfield, which was incredibly uncomfortable because they had a, you know, a Greek theatre with stone seats, and all the Etonians used to bring their cushions and sit on them and all the other, you know, masses of other schools used to come, they used to think we were frightfully effete and wet, and we felt awfully smug, and we didn't get piles.

And did you enjoy the Greek plays, or was it an ordeal?

Looking back on it, some of them I did. I mean 'ricciccaccix, coax coax,' I can...one sort of knew about it I think, one had learnt about it, so it wasn't mumbo-jumbo, and one knew what was going on, and they were actually rather well done.

What about any other hobbies or broader things you did at Eton? Did you do for instance photography or anything like that?

I did a phase of being very keen on photography, and had a darkroom at home and an enlarger; it didn't last very long, but it was very fascinating, I enjoyed doing it. And my friend, Mervyn Fox-Pitt[ph], was a very good photographer and he and I used to do a certain amount of that. I used to, I was very keen on nature, I used to, I was very keen on bird-watching at the time and used to do that, which gave one a rather good excuse to...you'd get a bicycle and go and go to, Slough Sewage Works was the key place for bird-watching.

Right. And, when you were just sitting around with friends, what would you be likely to have been talking about?

I can't remember, but you know, what little boys talk about, and bigger boys talk about. Nothing very deep, is the answer, I don't think.

And when we talked before, you said you first really lost your heart to somebody when you were about thirteen or fourteen. Who would that have been?

Oh that was a very nice girl called Deirdre Tuckitt[ph], who was a neighbour of ours in Devonshire, who I was besotted by, and we used to write each other letters.

And how old was she?

She was, I mean I was probably fourteen and she was thirteen I should think.

And what was special about her?

She was very pretty indeed, and still is, blond hair and blue eyes, very bubbly.

And if you saw each other, what would you be likely to go off and do together?

What what?

What would you be likely to do with her when you saw her? Did you actually spend time with her much?

Not much, no, but we used to, you know, there were a lot of children's parties we used to go on, and we used to have parties at the Moorland Links Hotel in Yelverton, just on the edge of Dartmoor, and they were very chaste really, mostly, looking back on it, perfectly frightful, Scottish reel parties, when you danced about and shrieked, and we thought it was wonderful.

Would you have been a confident dancer?

Probably was quite, yes, I've got quite a good sense of rhythm.

And you had been given lessons?

No, but one was taught, or one sort of learnt how to do Scottish reels, but ballroom dancing, one made up as one went along.

And, who would have been your heroes at this point? I mean had you begun to have statesmen or sportsmen or whatever as heroes?

Sportsmen, I mean earlier on, the great year of Compton and Edrich in 1948 were the great Middlesex cricketers, were terrific heroes. And, you know, I used to collect autographs, and used to write off to all these heroes and get their autographs back. I mean I remember being absolutely amazed when Harold Larwood died the other day to discover that, you know, when I had sent off my autograph book to him he was in his mid-twenties, because one thought that he was absolutely, you know, grander than the Pope and...

And would you be taken to cricket matches?

No, absolutely not, I never went to a professional cricket match till I grew up.

And were there public events in this sort of period of your life that you felt connected to?

Yes, well there were, I mean the public events, the death of George VI, and the death of Queen Mary, and then the Coronation, they were three very big events in my life, and...but the funeral of King George VI and the funeral of Queen Mary were at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and, I mean it's so bizarre, you would hardly believe it, but the guard of honour lining the route in Windsor Castle was the Eton College Corps, were the most, you know, hopelessly amateur and shambly things, and we were taught to rest on your arms reversed, you had to twist your rifle up and down and put it down with the spout, with the barrel down, with your hands over the butt with your heads down. And I remember, you know, sitting like this, looking up under one's eyebrows and one's beret, seeing all the people who were coming in to church.

End of F6490 Side A

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And what would you have been feeling at that moment?

I was feeling, what, in the funerals? I think one was feeling, you know, gosh, how exciting it is to see all these people, and who is that, and who is this, and hope nobody notices one was looking up. And you know, one wasn't doing lessons too, which was great fun.

And did the Festival of Britain effect you at all?

Quite, yes, but not tremendously. Yes it did. I don't remember really going to the Festival of Britain, I mean I think I may have complained gently about it before. I mean my parents were frightfully civilised people, and I must have been very unimaginative, I mean I never actually remember being taken to museums and galleries or things like the Festival of Britain, but I suppose I must have been.

So why do you think that it did have an effect on you, what could that effect have been?

Oh, because it was, you know, exciting, new developments after the war. It was quite exciting, 1951, the Festival of Britain, and you know, this strange new Skylon I remember was an awful design, a sort of cigar on its end, and...

So you definitely saw it at some point?

I definitely saw it, or if not saw it, saw it in pictures in 'The Illustrated London News', which was one of the sort of great icons of life.

And what about the Coronation, what did you feel at that time?

Oh it was very exciting, the Coronation. My father was a member of the Household, I mean he was called a Vice-Chamber to the Household, which was a sort of parliamentary link with the Household, he sent a telegram to the Queen every day

about what was going on in the House of Commons. So he was in the Abbey with my mother. My brother, elder brother, was in the Army, he marched twelve miles, he was extremely annoyed not to get a Coronation medal when my mother got a Coronation medal just for sitting on a comfortable chair in the Westminster Abbey. And I and my sister and Nanny had seats in The Mall, but you know, we always slightly held it against my parents that, you know, there were either covered seats or uncovered seats, and of course we were the uncovered seats so we got absolutely soaked because the Coronation day was the wettest day of the whole world, ever. And my wife, Rachel's father also worked for the Queen, he was an Agent at Sandringham, and she was just next door in the same stand, although we didn't know at the time, also getting incredibly wet.

But even though you were wet you felt part of it all?

Oh it was thrilling, tremendously exciting. I remember it with the greatest, greatest pleasure and excitement. And the Queen of Tonga of course, great cheers went up because she went the whole route with the roof down of her carriage, and, Noël Coward made that famous remark about the little man in front, which you must know; somebody said, 'Who is the little man in front?' 'That's her lunch,' he said.

And what do you feel about the Royal Family now?

I feel a great, actually respect and affection for the Queen, and slightly less so for the Duke of Edinburgh, although I think he's done a pretty good job. I feel extremely sad that the whole thing's sort of fallen apart now, I wish it hadn't but it has happened, and I feel rather resentful really that, you know, that the two girls have done such, what I think is a great harm to an institution which worked, and probably is not a bad thing to have. I mean I think that the argument about what would happen if the Royal Family wasn't there, you know, makes the case very clearly that, you know, if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and the idea of having a head of State who is somebody who is clearly so very responsible and good and, you know, full of the right ideas, is rather a good thing to have, outside politics, as a figurehead.

And you think it's irretrievable?

I don't think it's necessarily irretrievable, because things change a lot, and I think that, you know, the Queen will soldier on ahead for quite a long time. But who knows what will happen in five or ten years' time.

Mm. And so, if those public events impinged on you all quite a lot, were there also sort of schoolboy type events, either nationally or within Eton, that stick out in your memory?

No, not at all, I can't remember anything. I mean one, you know, school was school and holidays were holidays, and...

Mm. Did you encounter any anti-Semitism at Eton?

Absolutely not, no. Funnily enough, absolutely not. And I just, I've often thought about it, whether I was just extremely naïve. I mean Jacob Rothschild was a contemporary of mine and quite a friend of mine in those days, and I mean you will think I am absolutely mad but I just, I didn't realise he was a Jew, I mean it just didn't come up, I had no idea about it, I had absolutely no anti-Semitic feeling at all. And it came later, I mean, Jacob Rothschild had a terrible time in the Army for instance, he, I think he eventually got a commission but it was quite clear that he didn't first of all get a commission because of anti-Semitism. And funnily enough, I mean I rather respect my parents about this, because they must have brought me up in that way; on the other hand I don't say that they're anti-Semitic, but there was definitely a feeling, in a way they are anti-Semitic, in that, you know, they have a feeling that Jews are sort of, not only a different race but something that are quite separate. And, I'm very grateful to them that they didn't imbue me with any sort of, because I was a very malleable chap, I might easily have accepted a line that one should be anti-Semitic, but I can absolutely tell you that I'm not. And of course being in the art world, again it was quite funny, even when I was sort of grown up I had no anti-Semitic feeling, I had no views about it, and so, it was wonderful. I mean I really, one of the things I've most enjoyed about being in the art world is knowing such a lot of wonderful Jewish people, I've an incredible respect for them because they're so warm and loving and wonderful and artistic and funny and...

And what makes you think your parents did have some sort of reservation?

Well I know they did, I mean I can tell you one absolutely sort of minor, rather sad case actually, that my New York lawyer was and is a great friend of mine called John Kriz[ph], actually his family are Czech, and he and his family were having a holiday in France and they were going to, I asked them to come and stay at my parents' house. And my father took it into his head that John was a New York Jewish lawyer, and arranged to, he didn't actually say it but I do know it's true, that he wouldn't be there when they were there, he went off to stay with my brother who lived, you know, forty miles away near Exeter, and in fact, for some reason, either they came a day early or something, anyway they were there when he was there, and he was tremendously relieved to find that John Criz[ph] was a, you know, perfectly good wasp.

And he would actually have said that to you, or you just put two and two together?

Just really put two and two together, about it. And you know, there were certain sort of comments. But I don't think they were vicious comments really; I think it's the same sort of thing as now, in the great world of political correctness, we know that, you know, there are some things which do hurt people which one didn't accept at the time. I mean I was brought up on the Babar books and 'Little Black Sambo' and things, and we just took it green, and didn't realise. I mean it didn't make one feel differently to black men. But perhaps it did actually.

Did you meet any black men or black boys?

No, absolutely not, and it's an extraordinary thing, really still have not. I mean I've been going to America for thirty-five years or whatever it is, thirty-something years, and I don't really know any black Americans, and after all it's a huge section of the population; the only one I knew was a man I now can't remember, was a curator at the Museum of Modern Art, and he actually was an Englishman from Jamaica.

Right. And there weren't any black boys at Eton at this stage?

I don't think there were, no, although there are now quite a few.

What was Jacob Rothschild like, as a schoolboy?

I think just a schoolboy, a nice chap. I mean I, very clever, I think he was in a sort of higher form than I was, although contemporary.

And how competitive were you all encouraged to be?

Oh I think we were quite encouraged to be competitive, yes. And, you know, you definitely had to try. And particularly in games of course there was great competition, you know, and we were all imbued with a sort of, you know, the house must come top, and we must all try very hard. And some people didn't; I did actually, I was very conventional like that, I rather enjoyed trying very hard.

Did anybody particularly rebel in your years?

Some people did, I mean I remember one boy who shocked me to the core by, you know, walking out of the Confirmation class, or making, you know, saying, 'It's a load of rubbish,' and you know, 'I don't believe in Jesus,' and I was frightfully shocked.

And was there any comeuppance for him, or...?

No, I don't think there was to be honest. But in terms of competition, again it's back to the fact of Eton being in a way a sort of comprehensive, I don't think there was any competition for work, and it was probably a very bad thing. I mean you know, one was in a certain level, and a) one didn't have any jealousy, if that's the word, of the sort of people who were in a higher form, or you know, despise people who were in a lower form, it was just, there were lots of different people about who life was either tough or easy for.

Was there anybody who was in any way a scapegoat? Was there anybody who was somehow trailing behind in some way socially, or anything?

No, I don't think there was really, certainly not in my house, but I do know there were, in fact, again in retrospect I now realise, because there were one or two people then, I think as now, who were there on County scholarships, and I know, there was a chap called Grey[ph], I can't remember what his Christian name was, who was a great friend of mine, who, again I must have been very naïve, you know, I only realised when I was sort of in my last year, didn't come from the same sort of background as everybody else, and I think he was given quite a hard time in his house, which happened to be full of rather snobby people.

And did you start going to stay with school friends in the holidays, did you get an idea of how other people's houses operated?

Yes. Not tremendously much but I did go away and stay with people, yes.

And was any of it surprising, did it widen your horizons in any way?

I don't know, I mean, much further back, when I went to Warminster Grammar School I used to go and stay with people, that made an effect, when I went to stay with Neville Coombe[ph] in a farmhouse where there was no electric light, it was terribly exciting. Of course a lot of houses in the Forties didn't have electric light. But we did.

And in your holidays during your period at Eton, what would you have done? Was there anything remarkable about any of them?

No, nothing very remarkable. We went abroad a bit, and I was sent abroad, to France, to stay with a French family who had...exchange, with my elder brother and elder sister, and that was quite an eye-opener. At the age of thirteen I was sent off, and it was the most wonderful, I can't...it seems a very long time, but probably was only a fortnight, but it was the golden wedding of the grandparents of the family, and they had large chateau, Chateau de la Bibriaire[ph], in Normandy, and I was the only foreigner, the only Englishman, *le petit anglais*. And it was absolutely packed out and we sat down, sixty to every meal, and they were always plying me with cognac

and a 'cigar, *comme Churchill*' I remember. I was the only person who had got a room of my own, a little, with high roofs, mansard roofs, and I remember leaning out of the window smoking this cigar, because I didn't dare to do it downstairs, and actually have been passionate about cigars ever since, it for some reason didn't make me sick. On the other hand I remember the sort of long-drop lavatory at the end of the corridor certainly made me sick, it had a particularly ghastly smell. But it had a great effect on me, that, and I think was the first time, you know, I had been deliberately sent out, you know, to stand on my own feet and be alone, and my mother had arranged an elaborate sort of failsafe mechanism that I was to send her a telegram wishing her a happy birthday, which would mean I was absolutely miserable, and was going to be extracted back again. And then after that, after the golden wedding episode which I suppose lasted for two days or a week, I went to stay with my, you know, proper friend, who was called Yves de[??] Varine-Bohun, who became rather a distinguished archaeologist.

How do you spell him?

V-A-R-I-N-E, B-O-H-U-N I think. And he lived, his mother was widowed, a very very nice woman who subsequently became a nun, and talked very good English, which was rather nice, and they lived in a wonderful house just outside Baune in Burgundy. And in those days it was incredibly rustic, rural. And Eug[ph] was a bit older than me and very much more sophisticated than I was, we used to go off in the morning with packs of cards and a packet of Gaulloises cigarettes, and go and spend the day in the hideouts, the mucky hideouts in the wood, it was frightfully exciting [inaudible], you know, [inaudible] always blown[??], and fish for shrimps in the river. It was very, it had a great effect on me really, looking back on it. And it's the first time I read 'The Mill on the Floss', because it was the only English book I could find, and I only got through the first volume; it was years later that I finished volume II.

And when you first went, did you get at all near sending your mother a happy birthday telegram?

No, not at all.

And how did your French do?

Not very good, but, better.

Did you, I mean it must have been the same at Eton and the same over this, did you have a sense of following in your brother's footsteps?

I was very, my brother was six years older than me, and he was my great hero until I was about ten, I used to, you know, follow him about and do as he bid, I was a docile younger brother, then I think I probably saw the light a bit. And I didn't follow my brother's footsteps because he always wanted to be a professional soldier, and went to Sandhurst and joined the Coldstream Guards, and one sort of definite decision was, I didn't in the least want to follow in his footsteps, disastrous. And so I went into a different regiment, a rifle regiment.

But in this sort of stage, sort of going to France, I mean, there was a sort of pattern ahead of you already, you knew that your brother had been to France and come back in one piece for example.

Yes. I mean, you know, looking back on it, there's a great advantage to being a younger son, because you know, a lot of the battles were fought and won by my brother and I came along behind and it was all... It's like any, well I know with my own family, you know, that you practise on your eldest child and make a lot of mistakes, and by the time the third one comes along, you know, you realise it doesn't really matter if they don't eat their spinach or go to bed at half-past six, that life goes on.

And did the fact that Paul had been at Eton make any difference?

It only made a difference that when I arrived there he was sort of remembered as quite a tyrant actually. He was a very nice man indeed, he's now dead, he died of cancer, but he was very military at that stage and a bit of a martinet, and in those days, as in my day actually, that, discipline was kept at Eton houses by the captain of the house beating boys who had erred, you know.

And he did the beating?

And he did a lot of beating, so he was...and so did I, I beat lots of people.

Were you beaten?

I was beaten, but not very often, I was only beaten about once or twice.

And what do you think about it as a means of controlling?

I think now of course it's absolutely antediluvian, and one simply couldn't do it. At the time it was a very good way of maintaining discipline, and actually, not too bad actually, because it was instantaneous, you know. What's so awful about corporal punishment is the idea that you do something and then there's a hell of a long pause and then somebody actually formally does it. What happened at Eton was that, you know, you were terribly wicked and threw paint at the parlour-maid or something, and got caught in the morning and then you were beaten in the evening when it was all over, and you were a bit of a hero with your mates actually also. And you know, whoa! you know, got six of the best.

Can you remember what you were beaten for?

I think, I can't remember actually, bobbing about I think, just, you know...

And given that military service was on the horizon, how much discussion was there at Eton about what would be your future, what would be a career?

I think the thing is that we were extraordinarily privileged, and we just, you know, it was a sort of seamless...we would, you know, gradually go through different rounds of things, and the next one was the Army and after that you would go to university, and you know, not university, you would go to either Oxford or Cambridge. And my father had been at Magdalen and his father had been at Magdalen, and you know, that's where you went.

And was it discussed with anyone what you might read when you went to university?

No, not at all. And, but I think, I suppose it must have been a bit, because I mean I read history, I suppose it was my least bad subject, you know. But it was very different from nowadays, and I look back on it in amazement, I have to keep rather quiet about it, because I remember my tutor coming to my room in the autumn term, autumn half[??], and saying, 'Oh by the way Joe, in ten days' time you're going to up to Magdalen to take the entrance exam.' And I said, 'Oh am I?' you know. Off one went. And there one sat, it was terribly foggy I remember in the exam, it was very romantic really, and one lived in these very cold rooms, and did one's exams, with no preparation at all, absolutely none at all, and just did sort of general papers. I had no idea what it would be, I mean I had no idea, nobody showed me, and I was too stupid to ask what the examination papers were going to be, and they were sort of general essays I seem to remember. And then we had an interview with the president of Magdalen who was a splendid man, a great art historian scholar called Tom Boase, T.S.R. Boase, who had also been at Oxford with my father, and he was much mimicked and caricatured, particularly with his handshake, he always shook his hands like this. And I remember him saying, you know, 'Any son of Henry Studholme is always welcome here.' I mean it's monstrous really. And so again, you know, as with getting a job in the City, the silver spoon did its job.

Had it occurred to you you might not get into Oxford, did it even cross your mind?

No, I don't think it did. I mean I just sort of knew that this was the next phase in one's life. And I suppose, I mean my brother didn't go, because he wanted to go in the Army; my sister, certainly it never occurred to my parents that she would ever go to higher education, although she's quite a clever girl. And I think that, you know, I was sort of marginally, did marginally better at school than either of those, so it was sort of generally thought. And my father was a younger son, his elder brother was killed in the First world War, it was the sort of tradition, the second son should go to university.

Did our sister ever regret she hadn't gone into higher education?

No, absolutely not.

And did it ever occur to you that you might not want to go to Oxford?

No, it didn't, and again, you know, I was terrified of being out of the ordinary actually really, I mean I, as I was saying, if I'd found I'd, you know, got in-growing toenails or, disaster, that I had asthma and couldn't have gone into the Army, I would have been frightfully sad, which sounds awful, I mean God! what am I going to do next? And at Oxford at the time, I think it happens actually, an absurd system, you do prelims and exam in your second term, and then you do nothing else until your final term. And so I mean, the awful feeling that you might fail your prelims, that would have been absolutely ghastly, what would have happened? You're being thrown out in the world. As it was, one's first summer at Oxford in 1957 was just magic, because you know, the world stretched away, there was no more hurdle to be jumped for another two-and-a-half years.

Mm. And, when did you actually leave Eton?

When did I actually leave?

Yes.

I left in the end of the summer 1954.

And did you leave with regret?

No, just come to the end of that thing and going on to the next.

And how much gap did you have before National Service?

Whenever Eton term finished at the end of July, and I joined the Army on the 2nd of September.

And do you know what you did in between, anything in particular?

Nothing much, no, I went, you know, at home.

And, I don't want to go into it in too much depth, but tell me a little bit about National Service, where were you physically and what did you...?

Physically, I mean, you did your basic training at Winchester, and then you went to WOSBY at Barton Stacey, passed that, and then you went to Eton Hall all through the winter, which was exceedingly cold, a place in Cheshire, a huge house that belonged to the Duke of Westminster, has now been pulled down, it looked like St. Pancras Station, in the middle of which you had an exceedingly cold battle training in the middle of Wales, a place called Tresfennith[ph], where there was feet deep of snow, pretty nasty. And then I joined the regiment and went, the 60th Rifles, and went out to Germany for the summer and had an extraordinary time, because they had been there a long time and they were just coming home, and so the three months I was there was really one long party, and everybody got incredibly drunk. I mean it was a bit of an eye-opener really, terrific fun. And then, I had a spell in Tidworth, and then we went out at the end of 1956, 1955 I suppose, 1955, to North Africa, to Darnah, Libya, and from there, in the middle of that we were whizzed off at six hours' notice to go to Bahrain, to support the civil power, and spent four months there. I had a wonderful time in the Army, I enjoyed it hugely.

Were you ever in danger?

No, absolutely not, except we were sent out to support the civil power in Bahrain, because some passing Colonial Secretary, I think he was Oliver Lyttleton, had a stone thrown at him by some disgruntled Bahraini, and so we all whizzed out. And at that time Bahrain was very much a British protectorate and there was a political resident who really ran it, and the Sheikh of Bahrain was very pro-British and they had forgotten to tell him that the company of Riflemen were appearing, so for quite a long time we had to live incognito on the RAF base at Manamah. But as we only had our battle kit, we spent all the time playing hockey in our PT slippers and, you know, singlets and shorts and things. And eventually he was told we were there, and then

we had a happy time, driving around in Land rovers, not doing very much, pretending to be trained for civil disobedience. I mean all sort of apocryphal tales because we had a sign up, because all the sort of rigmarole you had to go through, written in Arabic, and it was always said that it was supposed to say, you know, 'Disburse or we fire', and it actually said, 'Disburse or we flee', but it was all quite light-hearted in a way. And we all flirted with the daughters of the local doctor, called Eunice Grant was one I remember, it was great excitement, great competition to go swimming and riding.

Did you succeed?

What?

Did you succeed?

Well, I was up there, you know. [laughs]

And, we talked about your first girlfriend. Have there been some in between that we should document?

Not really, no, very modest. I mean I had little, you know, childhood romances.

With people you are still in touch with, or not?

Oh very much, yes, a lot, yes.

Did anybody break your heart?

No, didn't really, no. Nobody actually broke my heart.

Did you break anybody's heart?

I shouldn't think so, no.

And what do you think the period of National Service gave you? Do you think it was valuable?

I think it probably was valuable. I think it sort of reinforced one's feeling that it was, you know, one's duty to lead actually, it sounds a rather awful thing to say, but you know, that one sort of reinforced the fact that you know, one had a very privileged upbringing, and that one would always be in a position to order other people about I suppose if I'm really being very honest about it.

And what did you feel about Suez?

Suez, we left, I mean we were very ignorant about it. I left the Army when the mess silver was packed up for Suez, and I thought it was a very prudent moment to leave. And we knew terribly little about it, I mean I was very very naïve. And we were in Libya, which was just, you know, and the Egyptian-Libyan border was only a couple of hundred miles away, and fortunately there was a very strong treaty which forbade, with the Libyan Government, which forbade us for some reason from advancing over the Libyan frontier into Egypt, otherwise no doubt we would all have run away. But I didn't quite understand, I mean looking back at it, I was very naïve, I took the sort of party line I think probably from my father, the Conservative line. I mean I remember it was the time my father gave up taking 'The Observer', and it was a terribly shock, you know, this was terribly unpatriotic, and he was a great friend of Selwyn-Lloyd and so we used to get a certain amount of sort of back-track about what was going on, but very, rather discreet. I remember my father saying that he, when the Suez thing was all going wrong, he came back and said that he had just been in Selwyn-Lloyd's office and he had his head in his hands saying, 'It's all over for me.' My brother was out there in Suez, he went out in the Army.

Did he tell you anything?

No, he again, I mean I think that the military were not very well briefed really, they were, you know, doing the job they had been trained to do, without much political awareness, and we all thought Nasser was a bit of a wop and a rogue.

It must have been quite exciting, hearing what Selwyn-Lloyd was thinking and saying, wasn't it? Didn't you feel an insider?

Not really, because it was very rare that that happened, but that's what my father liked about being a politician, he was a Whip for ages, and I think, I mean very much respected, he was a very sound chap. And maddeningly he was, being a Whip and being intensely loyal, he took the conservative line right or wrong, or right or right as he would say, you know, and so we never knew what was going on. That's what put me off politics, I just simply couldn't bear this business.

And it must have been quite a difficult transition from National Service to Oxford, wasn't it, or not?

Yes, terribly difficult. I mean really worrying. I mean it was a real culture shock, and one's first term, and this is one of the reasons why I've so much enjoyed publishing the Domesday Book, because you know, when one was learning about William the Conqueror, I mean such a spin about, you know, having to use one's brain for the first time, probably for three years, well the last year at Eton I don't think I used my brain at all. And also the terrible shock, frightfully good for one, that having arrived there, thinking one was, you know, a bit of a swell having, you know, done pretty well at Eton, or come out at the top of the thing, and then go in the Army and being an officer, and suddenly arriving and realising how incredibly stupid you were, and what a lot of very clever people were there with such a lot of different values and different ideas. It was really quite exciting, but rather intimidating.

When did you join Oxford?

In 1957. No, 1956, yes, yes the autumn term of 1956.

And do you keep in touch with anybody you met in the Army, have any of those people become important?

Yes I do actually, I do, because I went on, at that time you had to do three years Territorial, which was also rather fun, and one was working in London, and so I was a member of the Queen Victoria's Rifles, with rather a nice.....

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Yes.

Territorials. So I, you know, have quite a lot of...I have quite a lot of friends. And the 60th Rifles was a very good, very good regiment, it had a very good sort of attitude to life, and everyone giggled a lot and laughed. It was serious but it had a very nice relationship. One of the things which we always used to pride ourselves on as Riflemen is that everyone thought for themselves, unlike the Guardsmen who were square-headed and did what they were told, because the Rifle regiments were actually invented to be the reconnaissance units, so you know, each, the humblest Rifleman was made to think for himself. And, there were some exceedingly entertaining people, which was also a great, a wonderful eye-opener, all these cockneys. I mean, I'll give you an idea of their humour. When we went out to Libya, everyone went out on a troopship, and we arrived at Benghazi, and were met by the advance party, and all the Riflemen were leaning over the edge saying, 'What's it like then, mate?' And a voice came back saying, 'Bloody 'orrible, miles and miles of fuck all and a load of old goats trying to eat it'. Which actually the most brilliant description of the North African jabble[ph]. I mean that sort of thing. And I had a wonderful, I mean it seems archaic now, being a young National Service officer, but one had a soldier servant, and I had a wonderful soldier servant called Jim Stevens who was a real cockney, you know, his bruvver was always, you know, 'was inside for robbery wiv violence'. I mean it was totally sort of alien to one's culture, but we became terrific friends. And he was terribly homesick, being in North Africa, and I remember we were driving in our, whatever we had, Land Rover or something, over this sort of miles and miles of fuck all, you know, very rocky, and he turned to me and he said, 'Cor bloody 'ell Sir, what a marvellous city you could build 'ere.' It was rather poignant.

Presumably that was to do with thinking about bomb damage, wasn't it?

Well I don't know, but it was just sort of miles of space and how nice it would be if there were streets and houses and...

Mm. And of the people you stay in touch with from the Territorial Army or the National Service, what have they gone on to do?

Oh all sorts of different things.

Tell me two of them.

Well, one became a tremendous business tycoon, has just retired at the age of sixty having been chief executive of a very large international, you know, F.T.100 company. And, who else can I think of who was in the Army? One, you know, lives on a large estate in the Isle of Arran, [inaudible], I can't think really.

And have any of them come into your working life?

Only obliquely, thinking it's rather funny, what extraordinary things I've chosen to do.

And, so what do you think you were like by the end of your first term at Oxford, for example?

I think probably rather nicer than I had been before, rather more humble and subdued.

Was there a turning point in all this, or not?

I think there probably was. I mean actually one of the people who I didn't mention who was a tremendous friend of mine from the Army but sadly died of leukaemia about fifteen years ago, was a man called Richard Snow, who was a Wykehamist and very clever, and the son of a diplomat, and had had a sort of completely different attitude to life to Etonians, much more intellectual, and I think, you know, one's first year at Oxford one became frightful sort of intellectual snobs, and there was great competition, you know, to be able to turn on the Third Programme and instantly recognise the music and talk about it, which I wasn't very good at actually, but you know, one went along with it. And, you know, one went to see obscure Kafka plays. I remember going to see 'The Castle', and that sort of Oxford dramatic group in

Abingdon, and being completely bemused, not having a clue what it was all about but pretending it was all frightfully significant, and trying to discover who Kafka was, that sort of thing. Of course one had very high-powered tutors.

Who were yours?

Well, a man called Carl Leiser[ph], who was a sort of, a mediaeval tutor, who was a splendid man, a very clever scholar, he's now also dead, but a brilliant mediaevalist. But he was also a tremendous snob, and had been in the Black Watch, he was very small and very black, and we called him the Geppi[ph] just because when we were doing the sort of Dark Ages, there was a tribe called Geppis[ph] who were wiped out to the last man and we assumed that the last man was the ancestor of Carl Leiser[ph]. And then, I mean other tutors I had, I mean the best known tutor I had was A.J.P. Taylor, Alan Taylor, who, because I specialised, I mean I never admit to my children what my period is but I can tell you, it was actually the 19th and 20th century history, and so I did that under A.J.P. Taylor, which was extremely...

Well that must have been marvellous.

Well it was, extremely entertaining. He was a very stimulating chap, wicked as hell, and you had to be right on the balls of your feet when you were with him. Luckily, mostly one had tutorials by yourself, and for some reason with Alan Taylor I shared it with a man called Adrian Lyttelton[ph], who is now Professor of History at Reading I think, I'm sort of right out of touch with him, but he was frightfully clever. And so he, that was very good. And the other thing was that at the time Alan Taylor was writing for 'The Sunday Telegraph' a great deal, I mean he was an extraordinary chap, because he was absolutely besotted by Beaverbrook, and he had these extremely left-wing views but actually wrote for 'The Sunday Express'. And if you knew that you were in trouble and hadn't actually done what you should have done, you could always get away with it by coming in and saying, 'God! you wrote rubbish in the "The Sunday Telegraph", Alan, this week,' and he would say, 'Oh no no, just writing for the little old reader,' as he always called me, the little old reader. And then, you know, you could have a discussion about that, and by the time that was over you probably got away with doing a very indifferent essay.

And did you see him socially at all, would he have...?

A bit, yes, he was quite sociable about, and he was of course very liberal. I remember a friend of mine who, you know, had a girl in his rooms, and for some reason Taylor was there, because he had his rooms along the next staircase and he had gone up to have a pee or something, and we being all rather worried about what would happen, Taylor not worried about it. And he was very wicked though, because he was a tremendously good talker, and he liked you to pick him up, and if one had a hangover and wasn't feeling...that's why Adrian Lyttelton[ph] was such a boon to be with, because you know, he'd say, 'One moment please, you really mean...' And, 'Oh, just testing you out,' you know. He was frightfully arrogant, A.J.P. Taylor. He used to give his lectures at nine o'clock in the morning, because he said that if he gave it later in the day there would be no lecture room in Oxford big enough to take the crowd. And it was quite true, it was always absolutely packed out. And everyone was there, as good as gold, at nine o'clock in the morning, and this funny little figure in his corduroy suit used to walk up very fast to the top of the room and turn round and say, 'Morning ladies and gentlemen,' and then give a lecture for exactly forty-five minutes without a note, and you know, you could write it all down. He was very good, very clever. That's how he became such a good television journalist, historian, because he had that skill.

And did you stay in touch with him?

No, I didn't stay in touch with him, but I did go, you had things called Gaudies, sort of old boys' get-togethers at Oxford, and I, one of them I found myself sitting, I think not next to him but one away from him, and we were all sort of pulling his leg, and somebody said, you know, 'Why don't you write your memoirs Alan?' 'Oh no, I couldn't do that, it would just be lies, lies, all lies.' And actually then he subsequently did write his autobiography.

And was it lies?

I don't know, it probably was, very entertaining anyway.

And what were you specialising in within that specialisation? I mean, that's a large area to cover.

It is. I think my special subject was the Corn Laws, which I can remember absolutely nothing about, Robert Peel and the Corn Laws.

And did you actually get into the 20th century?

Yes, we did, but not much further than the First World War. In fact it ended at the First World War I think in those days.

And he wrote one of the key books on the first world War I seem to think.

He did, yes, yes.

And was that quite an influence on you?

Yes, I think it absolutely was, I think I was a little A.J.P. Taylor clone probably.

Right. Did you join debating societies and things like that?

A bit, not very much. I never really, I used to go the union occasionally but I never, you know, stood for office or joined in, or even became a full member I think.

And what about things like drama groups or anything like that?

No, I never did actually, I rather regret it now. I used to be very keen on jazz at the time, and I was a member of some jazz, not group but, a place where you used to go to listen to people, you know, Chris Barber and people like that, with our date.

And, dining clubs?

Dining clubs, yes, absolutely. We had a dining club, and I'm just trying to remember what it was called, it had some frightfully sort of effete name, in the Oscar Wilde rooms, we used to have, who was an old Magdalen boy. And, what was it called? I can't remember. Anyway, about sixteen of us, and we used to ask people, and had incredibly good meals, very... You used to be able to, you know, the chef at Magdalen was a very good cook, and you used to be able to have these marvellous meals, very very cheap, and masses of drink, and we all got rightfully drunk and told dirty stories and things, because it was very puerile, but rather fun.

Was there any bread roll throwing?

I think we were sort of grown-up for that really, for bread roll throwing, but we all got very drunk, and used to roar around the college shouting and singing and making a nuisance of ourselves.

Was it all male?

Absolutely all male, yes, absolutely all male. And we used to ask people, we used to have invited guests to come. But I remember, you know, we thought we were awfully grown-up you see Cathy, and took things awfully seriously. I remember an awful fuss when, you know, the '36 port ran out and we had to have the '45 port, and it was £1 a bottle, and the steward at Magdalen was a most frightful snob called Bond, who was always known as 007 because it was just when those books came out and we thought that very funny, and Bond's room was a sort of inner sanctum which was actually the acme of Magdalen snobbism, you know, if you were allowed into Bond's room you had really made it on the social scale.

And were you allowed in?

Oh yes, absolutely. And you know, one had glasses of port after dinner and things. I mean things which one would think so ridiculously pompous and silly now.

And did you live in the college the whole of the time?

No, I lived in for two years and then I lived just over the wall in Long Wall for my last year, with Richard Snow, and Kenneth Baker actually, who was absolutely maddening because he was, you know, a sort of little tiny Cabinet Minister at the time, and read 'The Financial Times'. And we had a rather nice landlady called Mrs Oliver, and much to our fury Kenneth Baker called her Brenda, when we all called her Mrs Oliver, and Mrs Oliver used to ask us each term to have a drink with her, which was the most appalling ordeal, because her idea of a drink was something called a feather duster, which was half gin and half very sweet sherry, rather dusty, and it was a) very nasty, and extremely intoxicating. It was with great difficulty that one, you know, didn't have the third glass, but of course one always drank anything that was put in front of one anyway, and had the most frightful thick head.

Have you ever come across anyone else who drank that?

No, never, and in fact I'm always warning people against it.

And, so you all each had a room rather than a communal life there, or how did it work?

Yes, we did. Well we had, in college we had, I mean in theory a set of rooms, but in fact they had all been split up, so one had a bed-sit. But in New Buildings, which is the splendid Georgian building built in the early 18th century looking over the deer park and very high ceilings and lovely windows, actually it was Gilbert Ryle the philosopher's rooms before I was there, but they had been split up then. And you had a double door, you had a sort of ordinary door and you had a big oak door which was sort of absolutely solid, and if you wanted to get on with your work you 'sported your oak', and if you went up and found people had their oak door shut, it meant that either you had a girl in there or you were doing your work.

And, when you were living out with the landlady, what was...?

It was a very, you know, frightful little house in Long Wall, I don't know whether you know it, but just, it runs along the side of Magdalen deer park, right on a very busy road, and...

But did you have a room that was a shared sitting-room or...?

No, you just had a room. Had a room and a real slit of a bedroom, I mean, you know, the size of those two, just big enough to have a bed in.

So you weren't leading any kind of student life there in that sense, it was just a place...?

Well you were leading a student life, in that you... We didn't eat there, no, we ate in college.

But you weren't, you didn't have anywhere to have a party or...?

Well we did, we had a party, I mean in one's rooms one had parties, yes.

And what was your social life then?

Used to go up to London a lot, and in the summer you used to go to all these amazing parties.

Such as?

Well, I mean, gosh, how embarrassing it is to talk to you about this Cathy, but you know, deb dances we used to go. I mean again, which one just thought were a matter of course, and some of them were absolutely wonderful.

Can you tell me about one of them?

Well yes, I mean one, actually two, I went to two amazing balls at Cliveden, the Astor place, and you know, you stayed in a house party and, you know, then you all went out and had this incredible party.

What were they like, tell me?

Well they were, you know, like a sort of 18th century entertainment, I mean the whole thing lit up and everyone wearing white ties, we all wore white ties, it's amazing isn't it, and stiff shirts. And, I don't think we actually wore white gloves, I think they had gone out. And, everybody was all dressed up.

What did you talk about?

I think probably we talked, we tried to impress the young girls by how very sophisticated and intellectual we were, and they were probably much keener on having the young guards officers who didn't bother with that. I don't know, I don't know what we talked about.

And would you have enjoyed those occasions?

Oh yes, very much, it was great fun.

And would you be confident at them?

Quite I suppose, yes, because there were a lot of other people who one knew, and so one could always retreat into a... Yes, I think one was fairly. Sometimes it was a bit overwhelming, some of them were very overwhelming.

And these would involve a lot of people having a sit-down meal presumably?

No, you usually had a, you usually either went to dinner with somebody first, or you stayed with them, so you had a terrific dinner, and then just as you actually really think that you want to go to bed, at about eleven o'clock, you all then went off to the dance. And, I think actually now I come to think of it, I'm slightly exaggerating actually, because I don't think at Oxford, I think one was too old in fact to have many dances, and I think one had sort of, one had sort of got through that. It was when one was in the Army, my first year in the Army, one spent one's whole life going up to London, when I was based in Tidworth.

And at that point what would your London have been, what districts are we talking about, where would you have gone?

Knightsbridge, my parents had a flat in Knightsbridge Court in Sloane Street. And it took me a long time to realise, I mean I was born in Oxford Square in Paddington, so I knew that very slightly, but I mean it was ages before I sort of pieced together the jigsaw of London.

And had your parents always had that flat?

Well they had it when my father was a Member of Parliament, because they had to have somewhere to live in London.

So as a child would you have stayed there a bit, or was it really only when you became an adult?

Yes, I stayed there, I stayed there, well I remember they kept Oxford Square through the war, and then it was bombed – no it wasn't bombed, the house next door was bombed, then it was pulled down. And then they got Knightsbridge Court after the war I think.

So when you had come up to London as a child, what would you have done?

I can't remember, go to Harrods I think, I can't remember what we did. I didn't like it, you know, I was a country boy.

And, going back to the Oxford days, I mean, presumably by this stage girls had started to figure quite a lot in your life?

Yes.

Anybody in particular?

Well my wife actually. I mean it's very boring, I mean you know, we walked out like the under-parlour-maid for ages. I mean I met her in my first year at Oxford.

And she was also at Oxford?

She was doing a secretarial course with Miss Brules' [ph] Secretarial Academy, and living with her great-aunt who was our sort of Cupid, a splendid lady, Aunt Dolly, who lived on Headington Hill, her house eventually was bought by Robert Maxwell. And, I met her at a deb dance, we met on Ware Station, going to stay with the same house party which belonged to a family called Buxton, John Buxton. And it was so long ago their telephone number was Ware 2.

Wonderful. And is this any relation to Andrew Buxton?

The banker? No, it's a different Buxton, there are masses of Buxtons about.

And what was her name?

Her name was Rachel Fellowes.

And what was special about her, why did you fall in love with her, which is presumably what you did?

What a difficult question. She always holds it against me that I didn't dance with her the whole dance, or talk to her very much, but I gave her a lift back to Oxford. And, actually funnily enough I do remember the journey very well, so she must have made a big impression on me, and I took her out to dinner, and we never looked back really.

So what was she like, what did she look like to start with?

I suppose you would say gummar [ph], I mean she was sort of dark-haired and tall and thin, and very lively, she's a tremendous personality actually, she, very outspoken, she was rather inclined to say, 'Rubbish,' you know, to people, which was rather refreshing, because other people said, 'Oh yes, how nice,' you know. You couldn't

get away with anything. And she was very forceful and funny. Her family are very funny, they laugh a great deal, tell jokes, and you know, talk all the time. Her father was a tremendous raconteur, but also very interested in everything, so that, much more than my family where we didn't tend to talk about, so that was very liberating to find a family where you could argue and discuss and do things.

And what had her father done, what was his profession?

He was Agent to the Queen at Sandringham, and he had been, he went to Oxford, failed his degree in agriculture, because he spent all his summer racing or playing tennis and all his winter hunting, anyway he didn't. And then he became Agent for some big estate somewhere, and then he was the last person to be employed by Edward VIII, he was appointed by Edward VIII to be Agent at Sandringham, and he was the only royal servant of the Edward VIII era who survived into the next regime, and he was Agent from 1936 to 1962 I think.

And had Rachel been quite involved with the Royal Family, or not?

Well only that, you know, she was brought up there, so it was going to stay there, they lived in a house, the Agent's house is just on the edge of the park. And it was like a sort of odd sort of ballet, we used to go out for walks after Sunday lunch, and you would see little parties, the royal party going through, one would turn round and go the opposite direction. But she was, yes, she, you know, my father-in-law was always, you know, part of the, you know, going up to dinner at the house. And Queen Mary was my sister-in-law, her, Rachel's elder sister Susan's godmother, and one of, I know, the great events in her life was being summoned up to Sandringham House by Queen Mary, who apparently was awfully nice to children, used to get out her doll's house and her amazing sort of Fabergé little objects and show the little girl, play with the little girls. She must have been a menace actually because when she was there she had to be entertained, so my father-in-law had to invent some other entertainment every single afternoon, and all the stories you hear about, you know, of everyone putting away their most loved possessions, 'Oh I think that's very nice.' 'Will you have it your Majesty?' was actually rather true, and he used to say in the sort of heat

of summer have to dress p in a pinstripe suit and a bowler hat and sit in the front of the car and drive around, descending on wretched neighbours.

But he was presumably devoted to it, I mean he...?

Oh he was the most royal of royalists, yes. He was a very good man indeed.

Do you know anything about his growing up?

His family comes from Norfolk, and they had a big house called Shotesham outside Norfolk, a big estate, and who had been there for donkey's years, I mean, William Fellowes, Robert Fellowes, you know, I don't know how they made their money but they built it in the middle of the 18th century, have been there ever since. He was the youngest son, therefore had to make his own way. And his elder brother lived at Shotesham and managed to lose money, which amazed everybody, and wouldn't take his younger brother's advice about how to run his estate.

And what about Rachel's mother?

Rachel's mother was an absolutely lovely person, but very very withdrawn, never showed any emotion. Very talented, very artistic, and very, an extremely good draughtsman and watercolorist, and wonderful with her hands, she made some, you know, doll's houses and all sorts of things, and then became a very good gardener; after my father-in-law retired they moved somewhere else and developed a terrific garden. But very quiet, very withdrawn, always smoking, died of lung cancer. Very un-tactile, you know. I mean I think did kiss her on the cheek occasionally but you know, one knew it really wasn't quite the thing.

And, did Rachel have...she had one sister obviously, did she have other, brothers and sisters?

A sister and two brothers, two younger brothers, yes.

And what have they all gone on to do, and what are their names?

Her next brother, Robert, is the Queen's Private Secretary, and her younger brother, at the ripe old age of fifty, is just about to retire from being a bill broker in the City, Deputy Chairman of Gerrard & National.

Is he Tommy Fellowes?

Yes.

Ah!

Did you meet him?

No, but we did a couple, three people at Gerrard & National, so he cropped up in their interviews.

He's a very funny man. I mean they're a wonderful, wonderful family. And Robert who is, you know, much in the news in that ghastly job he has being Private Secretary, is a very remarkable chap, exceedingly clever, and, I mean, I don't know whether he actually got, he certainly could have got, a scholarship to Oxford, and my father-in-law said he couldn't go there because he would waste his time at Oxford and he wasn't going to have any of his sons wasting his time there, and anyway he had no money, and he would get in the wrong set, because at Eton Robert had been a terrific swell and, you know, had been in the first level at cricket at the age of thirteen, and sort of, you know, knew everybody. So he didn't go, which has always been a great regret to him, and I think when he finally retires he says he's going to university to take a degree.

And it sounds as though you got on very well with both of them?

Yes, very well. They were younger than me, I mean Tommy's ten years younger, and Robert's six years younger.

Mm. And what about Rachel's sister, what did she do?

She married a scientist called Michael Cole, who's a very clever chap, and was a metallurgist and had a tremendous success in the beginning of his business life, and then grew and grew and grew and grew, and had a business which employed four hundred people, two hundred of whom were doing pure research, and in the sort of early Seventies clearly, he was either going to have to retract or expand, and encouraged by Mr Wedgwood Benn, who was then Minister of Technology, they took over for some very small amount of money a firm called Cambridge Instruments with the idea that there would be a complete synergy, and it was a disaster, and the whole thing went dramatically bust, and he since then has had a very tiresome time. He started another business and then, you know, the recession caught up with that, but he is an inventor and you know, I was saying I know nothing about science, but I think he is now just about to have the breakthrough. I mean he has invented a better vacuum pump, and something else, and then I can't even remember what it's called, which, if he gets sort of that much on the world market, it's going to be absolutely wonderful. Meanwhile he's had a very tough time.

And if they'd had a financially difficult time, I mean has Rachel's sister been earning any money, or not?

No, she's been working for him, they work together.

Right. And did she have a scientific understanding?

No, not at all, but she's a very clever girl, and very competent, and you know, we always thought, we always thought rather wasted not doing anything, not having made anything of her...I mean it's a rather silly thing to say because they've got four children, but you know, not having done a proper job.

Had she gone to Oxford or anything?

No, no idea, girls didn't go to Oxford.

And, did Rachel really think she might become a secretary?

Oh, she knew she had to make her own way in the world, you know, and so she, you know, went through Miss Brules[ph] and then she came to work in London. And she worked for an architect who actually was Stephen Garratt[ph], who became the Director of Getty, built the Getty Museum, but when she worked for Stephen[ph] he was a struggling young architect in [inaudible] Street and had the greatest difficulty in paying her £6 a week, whatever the going rate was for a secretary.

And did she enjoy that time there?

Oh I think she enjoyed it tremendously. Then we got married you see, so she didn't work very long.

So tell me about your courtship, in the last few minutes that we've got. What was your courtship like? What year did you meet her?

In '57 I think, yes. I don't know, we, you know, I used to come up to London, take her out and do things. I actually, we were so young, I tell you, I proposed to her after we had been to Battersea Fun Fair, and she was feeling rather sick I think, having been on a whirligig. I refused to go on whirligigs but she rather liked it. And we got engaged to be married on the 13th of January 1958, when she was eighteen and I was twenty-one.

And what would you both have been wearing to Battersea Fun Fair?

I don't know, I'm sure we thought we were wearing something very sort of common, you know, I mean, to sort of fit in. I don't know what we were wearing, I can't think what we were wearing. No, perhaps we weren't, I think we were wearing, I suppose it would have been in the middle of January, we must have been wearing something quite warm.

Do you remember what your clothes were at that time though?

Well I remember at Oxford, yes, they were very, very trad things. I mean I had a nice tweed suit, like gentlemen did, and wore corduroy trousers, and things that, you know, young officers did, and sweaters and...

And what would Rachel have been wearing?

Rachel would be wearing a nice sort of, she had sort of polka-dot dresses and I'm not sure, she almost certainly had a twin-set and if not pearls, you know. No, still being little clones of one's parents.

End of F6491 Side A

F6491 Side B

When you weren't doing things like Battersea Fun Fair, where else might you have taken her in this period?

Oh I used to, I used to take her to the opera, because I was a terrible intellectual snob at that time, she'd never been. We went to see that terrible opera, 'The Carmelite', is it called 'The Carmelite', where all the nuns get executed. Didn't understand a word of it. I remember it very clearly actually, it was a very good thing. And then we used to go to the theatre.

And what do you remember seeing?

Well we went to 'Waiting for Godot', I mean all terrible snobby stuff. And we used to go, at Oxford we used to go to the movies a lot, sit in the back rows which were double seats, it was a very civilised place.

And what do you remember seeing? I mean was the cinema quite important to you?

Oh yes, very much. We used to see all the things which were going on, you know, the top of the pops. I think 'My Fair Lady' was later, but that sort of thing, you know, and Humphrey Bogart, and Edward G. Robinson was a great hero.

And what about a bit later with people like Truffaut, would you have gone to them?

Yes, very much, yes, absolutely.

And again a bit later, would you have gone to the Royal Court?

Yes, we went a lot to the Royal Court, because we lived in the King's Road you see, we lived in The Vale.

When you say we, is this after you left Oxford?

Yes, when we were married, mm.

Right. And did you have a sexual relationship before you got married?

No, absolutely not. I mean, not what we called in those days, 'all the way', but you know, heavy petting I would say. It was just, you know, just, there were people actually who lived with each other, went to bed with each other, but we didn't.

By sort of mutual acceptance, I mean it wasn't a conflict?

No, I don't think so, I think it was just respect I think really, I mean it was just not the thing to do.

Did you know anybody who took drugs?

No, not at all, absolutely not, and it never came my way. I mean I'm very unobservant about that sort of thing.

And when did the King's Road start to figure in your life?

Oh well straight away when we were there. We lived in Kensington for about six months, and we moved in to number 6 The Vale on the 1st of January 1960 – the 1st of April 1960, April Fool's Day 1960.

And where did you actually get married?

We got married at Sandringham.

And what was that wedding like?

Oh it was tremendous. Actually I didn't like it much, because it was miles away and all my family came from Devon, so I felt a bit of a fish out of water. But my gosh, it was very old-fashioned really. For instance, all our wedding presents were set out on tables in the sort of ground floor area at Sandringham House, and the whole thing was

organised by the Tapisserie[ph], whose name I can't remember, who is the sort of, you know, royal servant who did that sort of thing. And we had a large marquee on the lawn of Lacotch[ph] where my parents-in-law lived. I mean it must have been a very good wedding actually, because everybody came, you know, and all the locals, and people were being fished out of ditches days after, having drunk too much champagne. And no speeches. I mean the idea of speeches, Rachel's uncle Charles just got up, there's this wonderful picture of him holding his champagne glass saying, 'Bride and bridegroom,' and that was it, and I didn't say anything at all.

Did you want to?

No, I was scared witless about it.

And were your parents pleased, I mean did both families get on with each other?

Oh yes tremendously pleased. Well I mean it's amazing actually, they were extremely good, because we were very young, and they didn't object at all, I mean they never said, why don't you wait? Oh they did say, they did make a reasonable undertaking that I couldn't get married while I was still an undergraduate.

And had you always assumed you would get married?

I think I had really, yes. But it was very odd, I mean you know, assume you want to get married, but it sort of crept up on one, a most extraordinary thing to do, looking back on it, to get married at the age of twenty-three and twenty. And one just...but there was no question about, you know, we'll try this and see whether it works. I mean, it was for life, one knew absolutely.

And did any of your friends get married at a comparable age?

The friend I was talking to you about who has just retired as a chief exec. of this company, he got married very shortly after, and he was my great mate, we used to travel about and log[ph] back, and you know, moon about our respective and beloved, and he got...

Is he the one you went to Spain with?

Yes.

What's his name?

David Lyon[ph]. And his marriage certainly didn't last, and he's now married again, a very nice woman.

OK.

End of F6491 side B

F6492 Side A

It's Friday the 8th of August 1997, and we're sitting in my study, no, in my office really, which is at the Courthouse, Lower Woodford, in the Woodford valley just outside Salisbury.

Yes. Beginning this recording session, we're going to concentrate on Editions Alecto.

Right.

We're picking up in a sense from where Cathy Courtney left. Could you say how the idea began?

Well the idea began not with me at all but with my two original partners, Mikey Deakin and Paul Cornwall-Jones, who had the brilliant idea of commissioning artists to make lithographs and etchings, original prints of schools and colleges, and then writing to old boys and saying that they had commissioned John Piper or whoever it was to make a pair of lithographs for the old school, and they would certainly remember it's four hundred years old this year, and if they are very quick, and wrote at once, they might get beautiful lithographs of the west front in only seventy-five impressions.

They were undergraduates at Cambridge?

They were undergraduates at Cambridge, absolutely.

What were they studying?

Paul was studying architecture, and Mikey, I can't remember, I think he was studying Classics, whatever they call it at Cambridge, Latin and Greek. I only think that because the name Alecto is one of the Greek Furies, and I know when they were thinking what on earth to call their brilliant new company they got as far as *Éditions*, because there were a lot of French publishing houses called *Éditions* this and that, and

they sounded very prestigious, and then got totally stuck, and Mikey I think it was who spotted Alecto as a footnote, one of the Greek Furies, who were horrible people with bats' wings and bloodshot eyes, snakes hair, who pursued children who were rude to their parents and people who were unkind to strangers, and for a time thought that Alecto, A-L-E-C-T-O, would be instantly recognisable and pronounceable in any language including Esperanto. Actually most people think we're electrical engineers, but you know, once you've got it, you've got it.

But did that come, presumably after Cambridge this...

Not a bit, no no no, this...

They actually had the name at Cambridge?

Oh yes, at, this was the original name for this wild scam of commissioning artists, making schools and colleges; it wasn't a scam at all actually, we did lots of things. And I was roped in with another friend of mine called Richard Snow, in theory to deal with the same sort of thing in Oxford, and in fact neither of us did anything whatever about it at all, and got involved in other things, but we sort of observed what Paul and Mikey were doing in Cambridge.

How, I mean why would two undergraduates have a link-up with print publishing? I mean it's a strange kind of turn of events in a way.

I think you were just...I think it was probably Mikey Deakin's idea, he's a most inventive fellow who went on to have a rather glittering career in television and writing books and so on. He's one of those wonderful people who always had ideas and got everyone to do the work, which I always admire very much. And I think they just, I don't know where they got the idea but from but they thought there was a captive market of people who would like to have pictures of their old school or old college, and it actually worked. And they ran it under their beds when they were undergraduates, and when Paul eventually came down to the real world in 1962, but he stayed up several years longer than we did, being an architect, we all found we had invented a business. And in July 1962 the business was incorporated, having

previously been a partnership, as Editions Alecto Limited, and four of us joined officially to Mikey and Paul who had been the original partners, and we took it away from there.

Perhaps before we move on to that, perhaps, I mean how did you first meet Michael Deakin and Paul Cornwall-Jones?

I met Paul on the 2nd of September 1952, which was the day we joined the Army together, or was it '54? I beg your pardon, it was 1954. And, it's a very traumatic business when you arrive as a civilian and have all your hair cut off and pushed into khaki uniform, get shouted at on the square, you rush around. We became tremendous friends, and then we actually didn't...actually we did do our National Service entirely together, and we went out to North Africa, to Germany and then to North Africa, and then he went up to Cambridge and I went up to Oxford.

I mean, did art or anything kind of artistic come into your relationship then, or...?

Absolutely not at all. In no way at all, no. Paul had had rather a glorious sort of schoolboy career, he was a very talented chap, a very good cricketer, but I don't think we talked about art at all, we didn't talk about art in the Army.

So, it was just, you got on, it was just a meeting up at that time?

Yes, we got on. And...

I mean what is Paul, what do you remember of Paul Cornwall-Jones at that time, or, how would you describe him at that time?

He was very bouncy, and full of energy, as he probably is still now, and very confident. I mean he became assistant adjutant, which you know, he was sort of picked out as being somebody who was very organised, and, he was just a very entertaining fellow, we got on very well.

And Michael Deakin, how did you meet him?

Michael Deakin, I met him through Paul, I mean he and Paul must have met at Cambridge, and he was an equally extremely talented chap, who as I say went on to actually work for the B.B.C. I remember when, his early days at the B.B.C., he was on the 'Today' programme when Jack De Manio was running it, and he used to ask, I never went actually but he used to ask people to go and sit in and see the recording going on. And he did quite a lot of things even earlier, before he graduated to the 'Today' programme, on the B.B.C. World Service, and he always used to say, it used to be broadcast in the middle of the night, 'To our listener in the Solomon Islands'.

So actually you then met up again when you were both undergraduates. You used to go across and visit them in Cambridge, or...?

Well we, yes, I mean, we sort of kept in touch I suppose and saw each other, we went sometimes. I really can't remember Tessa, I went over to Cambridge once or twice, more probably when I was at Oxford and vice versa. And I knew what he was doing, and you know, he was...

What was he doing, in a sense. Sorry, I don't...

Oh, what was he doing? Well I mean, what was he reading? I mean he was reading architecture, but I mean he sort of developed this mad idea about publishing prints. The original idea was very simple, it was to, you know, have a little bit business on the side, selling prints to old boys, but I think it was really inspired by the fact that they all in the beginning enjoyed working with artists, and nobody else was doing it. It was rather exciting. So all the printing in the early stages was either done by the artists themselves or we did it abroad, in Paris and sometimes in Zurich, and it was extremely entertaining of course because one went over to Paris, ate and drank the profit long before they materialised. But it was actually very good training for what we did later on, because we went into these Parisian ateliers and saw what was going on, and I suppose learnt a certain amount by osmosis. But it was very very inefficient, because they were awfully nice when one was there but you knew perfectly well when one went out of the door one got the bottom of the queue, so it wasn't a very efficient way to run one's production.

Yes. I think the earliest print was this John Piper, two lithographs, as you've mentioned, of Westminster School.

Yes.

I think in your commemoration book you mentioned that it might have been inspired by this Emanuel College print that had already been done and the idea was obviously to extend it with Westminster School. Had either of them gone to the Westminster School? Why Westminster School?

It's a terribly good question. I don't know, Paul decided to, Paul went to Penarvard[ph] or Fettes, some Scottish public school, and I've no idea where Mikey went. He might have gone there.

I wonder who printed those. Who printed those early Pipers?

The Pipers, I think they were probably printed at Kirwin[ph], I really don't know, I can't remember.

So they're around somewhere. And they are of Westminster, presumably they would be at Westminster.

They're rather nice, you see them occasionally, usually in rather distinguished barristers' chambers, I saw one the other day at Captain Porter[??] when he was a young stripling.

Do you remember what they might have sold for? I mean, something like...

Very little indeed, I mean, probably six guineas or something like that. We always dealt in guineas in those days, it sounded rather grand, you sell racehorses in guineas so we thought we ought to sell art in guineas as well, one pound and one shilling, as you remember.

And, I think the description is that they both wrote, or two old boys, and the idea was that they wrote off these letters to old boys about this print, and they were bought as a result of that...

Yes. Yes they had actually developed a very good formula, it really was, that you know, if you had five thousand names and you were publishing an edition of seventy-five, you almost certainly sold out. And they also discovered, fairly early market research, that it really didn't matter very much whether you put in a picture or not, funnily enough, I mean sometimes they spent a fortune making little pictures, and it actually didn't necessarily work any better than just writing a letter. They were very amateur looking on their typewriter, you know, not like the glossy things that you and I now do on our wonderful computers. And people sent back the money.

So they were learning very fast in a way through that time, that project.

Yes, it was...I can't remember how they were done in the Cambridge days, I really can't, we'd have to find out, but you know, we went on publishing topographical prints for quite a long time after 1962, when we set up the company, and we, you know, pursued different schools, I mean we, you know, sort of ticked them off I suppose. And we did quite a big series with Walt Hoyle of Cambridge, and then we did quite a lot of Oxford with Richard Beer.

Right. In fact the Pipers were followed up by other schools, am I right, for example Eton and Winchester and Downside, Charterhouse, is that right?

Absolutely, yes. I think they were all done...

Who did those?

What?

Who did those?

Edward Ardizzone did Charterhouse, and Valerie Thornton did Eton and Harrow, and Winchester too I think, and she printed them herself, very good prints actually, I've still got my print of Eton, a deep white[??] etching. She's a very talented print-maker. And Edward Ardizzone was wonderful, he was tremendous fun to work with, he didn't...you know, he wasn't teetotal, and he was so entertaining. And those, he did black and white lithographs, with lots of little figures, lots of little Ardizzone figures sort of scuttling around in Charterhouse.

When were those done, those second sequence...?

Those were done, I think in the early Sixties, I mean sort of...

Were you there, were you already involved with that set?

Yes I was more involved. When we, as I say, when they came down from Cambridge they really found they had sort of invented a business, and had got a lot of good connections with a lot of artists who were amazed to find the very enthusiastic young man who rushed around selling their stuff, and inevitably a stock of prints of things which hadn't sold. And we also at that time, I mean we used to talk about it, and became very intrigued with the whole sort of philosophical idea about publishing prints and making visual ideas of living artists available wider than the particular little pool they were working in. So I think even at that stage we began to have in our, in the collection, Paul and Mikey had in their collection, you know, other work by the artists who we were commissioning to make topographic prints.

I see.

And the first thing that happened when we formed a company was that we hired a pretty girl called [inaudible] Ely[ph], who subsequently married Paul, and she really had started off the business side of it, I'm not sure whether Paul was even working full-time or not, selling prints to, really to architects and designers, that sort of thing. We went along, you know, this same old idea of commissioning specific views of schools and colleges and selling through the mail. Rather advanced, don't you think, for the time.

*Absolutely. So in fact the series of schools was set up in London, not Cambridge?
I'm just trying to pinpoint it in the chronology.*

Yes. It's a frightfully good idea to pinpoint, and I wish, I should have done my research before, and, I mean we certainly did a lot of things from London, and we set up first of all, our first offices in London were at number 8 Holland Street, off Kensington Church Street.

I mean before we get to that, I'm just kind of, drawing back a bit, this array of artists, you've mentioned Ardizzone, I don't know if you want to, you recall anything more about him, and working with him. I mean how would you work with Edward Ardizzone, or Valerie Thornton, at this early time, I mean...?

It was really all, it was really all done at that time by Paul, and he, you know, wrote to the artists, he actually selected the artists too, and you know, commissioned them to do views of schools and colleges, and they worked in a way that most suited their techniques.

And they had to come up with, find the kind of, the studio setting, I mean for the presses?

Well no, I mean sometimes, some of them, I think Valerie was one, did their own printing; otherwise, you know, we had to raise the printing ourselves, and that's, as I said a moment or two ago, you know, there really were no facilities in England for doing that, apart from Curwen[ph], which also had a connection, or now has a connection with Alecto, because it was Robert Erskine's initiative to train Stanley Jones who first set up the fine art studio, lithographic studio, for Curwen[ph].

Yes, I want to ask you certainly about Robert Erskine. Osbert Lancaster was also one of those artists, I don't know if you recall anything particular about him. Do you think he...

One of which artists?

I think he actually, well he did one of the schools, the images for that early school set.

Not in my day.

I don't know yet which one.

I mean I would certainly remember because I'm a great fan of Osbert Lancaster.

Yes, yes. Well I think it's just trying to pinpoint the chronology. Perhaps as you've mentioned Robert Erskine, anyone looking at this period, obviously you've got to consider the pioneering work of Robert Erskine, and he quite early on became connected with Editions Alecto. I mean how did that happen? I mean had you visited St. George's Gallery quite early on?

Yes. Absolutely, I mean Robert was, as you say, he was sort of Mr Print, and had a gallery frightfully grand in Cork Street, and he used to sit on his little high stool and his little sort of cubby-hole at the back where he did his business, which he always called his Robbery Box. I mean he was really, he was a marvellous man, Robert, and he was pretty eccentric and got involved in prints for absolutely all the right reasons, that he was intrigued by the idea of working with artists, and again wanted to disseminate artists' original ideas. But I think he would be absolutely the first person to admit he was an absolutely hopeless businessman, simply did not interest him at all. I mean when he was in St. George's Gallery they began losing money quite seriously, and then it was discovered that actually his bookkeeper was cheating him, and far from being annoyed he was rather relieved to find that it was actually, you know, something sort of outside his control. But when we came on the scene, he...I suppose, Paul was very, was and is actually, a very aggressive chap, and he was always going to conquer the world, and I think Robert saw the opportunity to sort of get out of print really, he was really an archaeologist, and I think he had done it and set it up, and the lease of his Cork Street gallery was coming to an end anyway, so he was quite, certainly very sympathetic to the idea of absorbing really himself with Alecto. I can't remember which way round, we said we bought his goodwill, he said he sold his something-or-other. Anyway we joined forces, he closed down in Cork

Street and we absorbed all St. George's Gallery stock, and much of which we had for a very long time I may say, but he had done some interesting things, and it actually of course gave us a sort of a pass. And Robert became very much a sleeping director, but he was to appear at board meetings and amuse everybody, and was very good and very supportive. Much much later in Alecto's career he came back to Alecto, which we get on to in due course.

Yes. I mean had you heard of St. George's Gallery while you were at Oxford, or even before that? I mean when did you first, do you recall visiting the gallery, or your early visits to it?

Well I do recall going to it, but it was quite late in the day, I mean it was certainly, certainly after I came down from Oxford I think. I mean this is, it's rather like a confessional this, there's something terribly self-indulgent in these sort of things, but I must tell you why I got interested in the art business at all. I mean I had really had a road to Damascus, because one of my very first long vacations at Oxford, which was in 1957, I went with a friend, we drove all down Spain down to Morocco and round about in extreme heat, and then came back through Spain, which was also very very very hot, and we went to Madrid. And it was unbearably hot, it was in the sort of thirties, and we thought, gosh, you know, we've got to get out of the sun, so we went into the Prado, really to get in the shade. And suddenly I realised what an incredible kick I got out of looking at pictures. I mean I can remember it absolutely clearly, seeing the Velázquez for the first time, and I really think that that was what first set me in mind of doing what I've done for the last thirty-five years.

Yes. I mean, to someone that perhaps is coming to this period of kind of print time if you like, and people talk about what was done by the St. George's Gallery, what they achieved, how would you describe the British print scene in the mid-Fifties, and set it against in a sense what Editions Alecto began to achieve? I mean, what was this post-war print scene like in London that you first encountered?

Well I mean, I'm trying to tell you, it was a closed book to me, I knew nothing about it at all. And you know, it wasn't really until I, you know, Paul and Mikey started

Editions Alecto, and we saw it happening, we knew nothing about it at all, and it was only gradually that one became very intrigued by it. I mean it's a very nice concept.

Well what were the issues that you might have been talking about in those early days?

In the early days, in the Fifties? We'd have been talking about what everyone did talk about as an undergraduate, but certainly not about art. I mean my nearest, I mean, it was very a passion when I was...I read history at Oxford, we used to go to Professor Wind, Edgar Wind's lectures on art history which I remember were great occasions, because he always used to take the theatre, because he always had such a big following, but you know, it didn't, it wasn't a big part, a big feature of my life, and I look back at it, it's amazing actually that I have been involved in the art world for so long, and I had, you know, extremely civilised parents who I was devoted to, but as far as I can remember I, you know, never went to galleries and museums and things, so it was very much a, it was very exciting to move into this world. When, I know you want to talk about the Fifties, and I'll come back to that, but I mean when we formed Editions Alecto, and there were four of us joined, Paul and Mikey, and really we joined, he asked me because I had a certain amount of private money and he wanted me to put some money in, and I mean a tiny amount of money looking back on it, a few hundred pounds I think, and the other three were John Guinness, who was actually asked for the same reason, and Anthony Longland, who was a great friend of Paul's at Cambridge, and Mark Glazebrook. And at the time Mark was very much the sort of most, the most involved in the art world, because he after Cambridge, he started with Kokoschka, I think had a term at the Slade, or a year at the Slade, and then went into the Arts Council, or actually taught I think. But it was Mark who really I think was most influential in moving Alecto away from this very narrow field of making topographical prints, to embrace a sort of wider idea of working with painters and sculptors who were doing interesting things, and who obviously, we thought obviously would benefit by having their original ideas made in multiple form in print form so that they could be disseminated round the world. And of course the very first person we did in that field was David Hockney, and that was absolutely an initiative by Mark, who must bitterly regret it now, but I mean, that he hasn't got him, but I mean who was a very very early supporter of David Hockney, and has some wonderful paintings, I mean which are now famous, I mean, don't worry, this is

still[??], you know, one of the tiger leaving [inaudible], and also, he had several, but he had a wonderful figure before a curtain of cairs[ph] looking out from the glass[??].

So, it was very much you, you were drawing from the experiences of St. George's Gallery, but obviously...

No we weren't really. I don't think we...

You do, you don't think...?

No we [inaudible] from St. George's Gallery. St. George's Gallery only really came into the picture when we had actually set up our own gallery, we called Print Galleries, [inaudible] unimaginative name, we couldn't think what on earth to call it, in Holland Street. But we only got really serious about publishing prints I suppose when we had this extraordinary episode of going to America.

Yes, I was...I mean, you're moving ahead in a sense. I mean, what you were going to set up was a development out of that St. George's Gallery, because I mean, what other gallery was selling prints in a specialist way in London in the late Fifties, early Sixties?

No, it really, Alecto absolutely did not come out of St. George's Gallery, it was sort of parallel thing to... It was when we were sort of established, been in business all of a year-and-a-half or something, I mean you know, we really thought we were the most important act in town, that we absorbed St. George's for the reasons I told you, that Robert was getting bored and his lease had come to an end, and he didn't really want to go on, and you know, it seemed a very sensible idea to amalgamate.

Right. You mentioned that the directors, the early directors, and, was their relationship...they contributed a certain amount of money, in a sense that was one role that they had, and you were also friends who...

Yes.

And how did you meet, I mean how did you work as those first directors?

How did we meet each other, do you mean? Yes.

Well how did meet and function.

Oh we used to meet, it was terribly formal, we used to have board meetings, and we...

Was this in Chiswick, am I right?

[inaudible] Gardens, yes, and also sometimes at my house in 6 The Vale, we used to meet. And in the early days we used to take it in turns to be chairman, quite efficient, because we all [INAUDIBLE]. And you know, Paul was the only person who worked full-time at it, and, I can't remember what the timing was; I suppose we...

I mean how formalised were you?

Well we thought we were very formalised. We were terribly young, and you know, we had a proper company, and you know, we were advised by Farrer's, the Queen's solicitors, and, actually by Matthew Farrer, who is the great Sir Matthew, who was the most lovely man, and latterly by Henry Boyd-Carpenter, who is now the Queen's solicitor, he was very grand. There was a wonderful time I remember when we – this is right off the point actually – when I went to see Matthew in Farrer's in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and you they're frightfully discreet, always are, they never like to talk about their other clients, and I suddenly noticed on his desk there was a great fat file which said, 'Client: Queen, H.M.'. And I said, 'Oh Matt, I'm so glad Mr Queen has been in.' Put it away. [laughs]

So, you were all very young, but it had to be formalised, you were a company, you were...?

Oh we were a proper company.

A registered company, yes.

Absolutely, we were Editions Alecto Limited, and, oh yes, and we had, you know, proper board meetings, and the accounts and all that sort of thing. And we very quickly began employing a lot of people. Paul was a great empire builder, and you know, always thought that you must have more and more people. We had the most extraordinary, amazing staff in the early days.

Well, before we talk about that, I mean how do you think you all worked as kind of, you know, as individuals, how did you work as a team, how would you describe each of your strengths in a sense, how they worked together at that time? I mean were you tapping each other's strengths to put together this early creation?

I think...I think Mark Glazebrook was very influential, because he was much more involved in the art world than any of the rest of us, and therefore, I mean it was sort of his eye I think was very influential in the early stages of, you know, deciding who we were and who we weren't going to work with. But you know, these things sort of work a bit by osmosis, one was, you know, you go for one person and they have a friend of somebody else, and you...I don't think you, I don't think it was a sort of stable of art that was built up in any formal way, it just sort of grew. The other people who were involved were really involved because they had put a small amount of money in, and liked the idea, it was rather exciting doing it. I mean, John Guinness was in the Foreign Office, Mark Glazebrook was in the Arts Council, Anthony Longland was in advertising, I was in the City, working in a merchant bank, and you know, it was wonderful fun going back and, you know, and having these evening board meetings and talking about this crazy idea. And my career in the City was not at all glittering because I didn't like it all, and I knew I was never going to sort of make it my life, but after a year working for Lazard's, the merchant bank, I became a very strange animal called a bill broker, I won't describe you what it is, but in those days it was a very leisurely and very profitable world, because you only dealt with the banks, so when the banks closed their books at three o'clock you also closed your books about, you know, three-quarters of an hour later, so you had a very very short day, so mostly you went off and played golf or something. And I used to go down to Holland Street to work at Alecto, which is really where I learnt, began to sort of get involved and learn about it, and I suppose, I can't remember what my role was,

making coffee I should think but I mean, you know, thinking about, talking about how we were going to sell things and who we were going to commission and how we were going to get things done.

So, was it slowly slowly that you became more involved? Because in a sense you gave up making money, and you began to enter into...

Well, this was entirely because of the American venture.

Could you say a bit about that?

Yes. I mean it is actually quite a good story, and you really ought to talk to other people about it because I'll probably get it completely wrong, but what happened was, that one evening when the partners of Editions Alecto, the directors of Editions Aleco, were having a meeting at Priory Gardens, I think it was Mikey Deakin, always late for everything, and was having a bath; it might have been Mark, probably was Mark, was having a bath upstairs and listening to the radio, on which there was a news item about the movie star who specialised in horror movies, and the awful thing is, his name's gone completely out of my head.

Vincent Price.

Vincent Price, yes, who had been hired by Sears Roebuck to buy an art collection for them. Sears Roebuck is a great mail order company in America at that time, it was a great big fat catalogue that, they used to have everything from, you know, whole houses down to boxes of matches. And they suddenly thought it would be a brilliant idea if they also added to their range of services an art gallery. And they hired Vincent Price, who had won some amazing early version of the \$64,000 Question quiz game in America where they took some, a variety of odd people who had a perfectly good career, in Vincent Price's case as an actor, but he might have been a jockey or a merchant banker or whatever it is, and then have some other quite separate skill, or interest. And Vincent Price took as his special subject I suppose, the art world. Whether it was fixed or not, nobody knows, and certainly I wouldn't dream of suggesting it was fixed in anyway. But anyway he answered all the questions right,

and in everybody, lots of people's minds in America, he became Mr Art; oh, Vincent Price, you know, he really knows about art. So.....

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....a quarter of a million dollars worth of original prints from all the French studios and galleries and so on. And we thought, hell, what a pity, you know, we're just starting, wouldn't it be wonderful if he had come to us. And it was after dinner, and we were all feeling rather mellow, and, as I say Paul was a very sort of aggressive [inaudible], and we were all sort of egging each on I suppose, and he said, 'Well why don't we ring up Sears Roebuck and suggest it to them?' And this was in 1963, about March, May, I can't remember, anyway, early 1963. And so we placed a call, in those days you didn't dial, you had to place a call with the operator, through to the press of Sears Roebuck, and to our absolute amazement we got through. I mean I suppose transatlantic calls were quite rare then, at the time. And Paul was very good at talking to people. 'We've just heard that Mr Vincent Price has been in Paris buying art, and we are extremely disappointed he didn't come to England. We are the leading publishers of original prints, and I really think he's missed out on this.' 'Oh gee, I'm really sorry about that,' you know. 'I'm sure it was a slip-up', you know, 'when can you come over with your stuff?' So, a certain amount of huffing and puffing, because we hadn't had this idea at all, and eventually Paul said, 'Well you know, we are extremely busy at the moment, and you know, before we make that sort of commitment we want to know that your budget hasn't been totally spent.' 'Oh shucks,' he said, 'if I like your stuff I've got another quarter of a million bucks,' you see. So we fixed a date three weeks hence, and then spent an absolutely hectic time rushing round all of the artists we knew in London largely actually, just collecting bags and bags of prints, eventually fourteen portfolios, all very very assorted prints.

Can you remember who, who were the artists?

Well they were sort of André Picard[ph] and John Ward and Eddie McDell[ph] and Alistair Grant, and Gergit Scholl[ph], and some Japanese who I can't remember the names of, who Robert had published. And Ceri Richards, and Richard Beer I suspect, and, a whole lot of people, I could work it out, I can let you know, lots of things, some wonderful, some awful actually. And I was getting fed up working in the City, and anyway this was a tremendous adventure, and so I arranged to take, I think only a week's holiday or something, a very short time, to go off, so that Paul

and I could go together, hand in hand, to see Sears Roebuck. And we all set off. I had a bad start because I had lots of preconceived ideas about America, mostly gleaned from B movies with Edward G. Robinson, and I got all sorts of ideas in my head, one of which was that you couldn't possibly go to America unless you had a hat. So I hadn't got a hat, so I went to Herbert Johnson in Bond Street, which was a sort of smart hatter, and I said, 'I'm going to America and I want a hat.' And so they produced a hat which was what they thought was suitable for wearing in America. It looked extremely silly in Bond Street, and even sillier as it turned out when I got to America.

Have you got a photograph of that?

I have got a photograph, but the story of the hat was very sad actually, because we stayed in the White House Hotel, a sort of club in Chicago, which was one of the early places which had nylon carpets, and I suffer cruelly from static electricity, and whenever I went, whatever I touched I got the most frightful shock. So it was rather nasty. Then eventually a shock with this bloody hat. So I figured it must be trying to tell me something, I left it in a cab, and that was the end of the hat. But now where were we? And so we...

And how did your meeting go? You got to Chicago, did you?

We got to Chicago, green as anything, and the first morning we were there, I mean I went out on the sidewalk to have a look, sort of very wide-eyed, and to my amazement there were two men with Sten guns on the pavement, and I thought, God! this is the St. Valentine's Day massacre. Although of course they were securicor people delivering money to a bank. And then we went off to Sears Roebuck headquarters, and the people who had been put in charge of setting up the art side of it were actually the toy division. I can't remember what their names were, I must look it up, they were very nice, and they obviously realised that Paul and I were really green [inaudible]. And my eldest son had just been born, and they were terribly nice to me, they were always giving sort of Fisher toys and things, and I came back laden with all these things. And we had, we arrived I think on Monday, and we went every day of that week, negotiating with them about price and how much, how we would deliver

and all this sort of technical logistical side, and you know, every day they sort of beat us down a bit in the price. And all this was because Mr Vincent Price was away filming in Jamaica, so couldn't come, so we were rather held up, it was rather annoying. And he was going to come back at the weekend. So we fixed it up that we would give a presentation of all our prints in a hotel suite on Michigan Avenue on Saturday. And so we took a huge suite on the first floor of a hotel, I can't remember what it was, on Michigan Avenue, which is the main thoroughfare as you know in Chicago, and we dragged all these fourteen awful portfolios up and got there terribly early and had two easels to put the things on. And then we waited and went and looked out of the window, and it happened to be the day that President Kennedy was going there on an electioneering trip, it was '63, with Mad Daly[ph], who was the famous, or infamous Mad Daly[ph] who fixed the Democratic machine in Chicago. And this again is completely, you can expunge it from the tape, but we looked out and we thought, God! this is extraordinary, looking down on this cavalcade, the presidential cavalcade going round, and we thought to each other, you know, we could actually shoot this man, the security is absolutely appalling, and we could have had any number of sub-machine guns in our portfolio. And of course it was only a very short time later that he was shot.

Months or weeks.

Anyway, eventually the moguls from the toy department came in and we made some [inaudible] conversation, and then rather late Mr Vincent Price came in and was absolutely charming. 'Oh Mr Studholme, I'm so glad to meet you,' that sort of thing. And Paul and I did a sort of Mutt & Jeff act, and Vincent Price sat in a chair, and I don't know whether they sat behind him, and we produced these pretty awful prints, and Vincent Price said, 'I'll take five of those, ten of those, and, I don't like that, and I'll take the whole lot of that,' you know. And we were actually seeing sort of dollar signs shooting through our eyes, it was terribly exciting. And we totted it all up, and shook hands and went away, and we made an arrangement to deliver the prints to Sears Roebuck some time in the future, and it was quite a lot of money, I mean, it was several thousand dollars, I mean in those days it was a lot of money; I wish I could remember what it was, was it \$5,000 or \$10,000, something like that. But the problem of course was that, they had beaten us down on the price quite considerably,

and when we got back to England we thought, well look, obviously this is a sitting duck, they're going to set up these galleries all over the States, there's going to be a goldmine, we can sell out with these things. So we, instead of buying five from an artist, if that's what they had ordered, we bought fifteen so that we could negotiate a better price for the artist, and that was terribly satisfactory, and we sent off the things they had ordered and got a cheque, and then we never heard from them again. We never got a repeat order. We have no idea to this day what happened, whether they ever opened a gallery, or whether they left them in a dustbin somewhere. But of course the result was that suddenly we had all these prints which we had bought, and so we had to do something about that as well. And that really I suppose was the moment when we began to, we realised that if we wanted to do it seriously, we were going to have to set up a proper sort of marketing, I don't think we called it marketing in those days but that's what it was, marketing campaign; and also we realised, if we wanted to do it seriously we would have to set up our own production facilities, because it was really too inefficient going over to Paris and Zurich all the time, and we needed to be able actually to control the production, and also to be able to give the facilities to people we wanted to work with, to come and work with professional printers, which is what precipitated the idea of taking Kelso Place.

Indeed.

But it also precipitated me in taking what at the time threw my father into a great state of despair, in throwing up this extremely good job in the City and to go to work full time at Alecto.

When did you actually do that?

In October 1963.

You remember that date clearly.

I do.

Yes. Was that a very difficult decision? I mean how difficult was that decision?

Well, [inaudible], it wasn't difficult at all, I just thought it was what I wanted to do. And you know, I sort of liked the idea of becoming a publisher I suppose as well, you know. And at that time, we subsequently had a frightful row as you probably know, but at that time Paul and I got on terribly well, and it was very stimulating. And you know, I had got very bored in the City, and I very much enjoyed, you know, going down after work in the City and spending two or three hours working at Bond Street.

Yes. Of course you mentioned the kind of, the timing, the '62-'63, because Editions Alecto was formed in '62 but things didn't really get going, is this right, until Sears Roebuck and '63, it took a little bit of time for it...

It took a bit of time, yes, it took a bit of time, because...but things were going on in a gentle way, and [inaudible] Ely[ph] was working there. I can't remember the exact time we took a lease on 8 Holland Street but it must have been I think at the end of 1962 probably, because I certainly...I certainly used to go down there from the City, so it was before, well, well before I left, well before I joined Alecto full-time in October '63.

Right. I was going to ask about that, but perhaps beforehand, thinking of 'The Rake's Progress', which, and in fact I think Hockney began to work on at the Royal College of Art in '61, these ideas were...

Yes.

And they were going, I think, was there a commission in '62 but it wasn't realised and exhibited until '63?

That's right, yes you're quite right.

Is that...could you say a little bit about what you recall about that, the whole Cavafy series, and how it came about?

Well the Cavafy series came later, but I mean 'The Rake's Progress' ...

Sorry, yes, 'The Rake's Progress', sorry.

'The Rake's Progress', again I think, I mean, Robert Erskine I don't think actually published Hockney's work, possibly he did; he certainly showed Hockney's work. Because one of the best things Robert ever did was to set up the Graven Image exhibition, which was the first, you know, of the print biennales, well I mean the first exhibition of prints, he was very clever about that and he got Trust Houses, Trust House Fortes to back it, and in the early days they had, the first few exhibitions there, slightly tame selectors who, to give the prizes, who slightly had the view that, you know, the backers were Trust House hotels, who wanted nice things for their bedrooms. And then they all got a bit bolder and had, you know, proper art historians and art critics looking at them who of course gave the first prize to Hockney, who at that time was an absolutely horror, filled with horror at the idea that any Hockney prints would go in a hotel bedroom. But I think it was, you know, he was, from his earliest days in Bradford, and certainly when he came down to London, I mean he was such sort of vibrant figure, everyone was talking about him, and everyone I think knew – when I say everybody, people who were sort of involved with the College knew that he was working on 'The Rake's Progress'. And I can't quite remember how we actually got involved in it. I think we just, we said we would publish it, I think that was the basis.

Do you remember the Graven Image exhibition actually?

Oh yes I do remember the Graven Image exhibition, yes.

Do you think it was important, at the time?

Well it was it was.....yes, it was important. And in fact one of the early things we did at Alecto, before we set up in Holland Street, is, we had a sort of follow-up to the Graven Image exhibition prints in Conduit Street in what used to be called the Royal Water Colour Society and is now part of Sotheby's, rather good rooms, a rather good space. And we had a big exhibition of prints, and quite a lot of American prints,

Albers, and Vasarely, not American, but, and a lot of English prints. It would be worthwhile trying to find the catalogue of that.

That's before the Print Centre then?

Yes.

Was that your first exhibition?

That was the first exhibition. It wasn't really an exhibition, it was a sort of general exhibition of prints, it was some things published by us but it was a general exhibition of prints.

So you hired out the space for so many weeks?

We rented the space.

Yes. And how was that received?

[break in recording]

.....how that went, that exhibition?

I don't think it went absolutely brilliantly, but it was a selling exhibition so we, we sold things from it. I'm just trying to think when it was. I think that probably was on sort of, November '62 probably, that sort of time. I remember I was working in the City at the time and I was going to.....

[break in recording]

.....the night it opened I was going to a frightfully grand, pompous dinner.....

[break in recording – background noise]

.....and everybody wore a white tie and tails.

This is in the City, yes.

And I remember being, you know, rather sort of embarrassed, because, by going and appearing at the private view, and going with a blue polo-necked jersey over my white tie. Because you know, at that time I sort of hadn't come to terms with sort of mixing my banking life and my artistic life as it were, and indeed for many years, many, well I have [inaudible] many years, I was, you know, a bit of a fish out of water really, because my City friends thought I was wildly bohemian, being involved in this exciting modern art publishing world, and my friends in the art world thought I was hopelessly square and, you know, some ghastly old merchant banker who shouldn't be there at all.

And did you invite a whole lot of people to that opening, I mean was that a...?

Yes, we asked a lot of people. It didn't last very long, it lasted for about a week I think. But I think it made quite a stir, it would be well worthwhile trying to find that. I mean the sort of person who might have the details of that is Eric Ayres, although I don't think he was very much involved with us then, or Paul might have it, but it really would be very interesting to see what that, the things we showed, because there was some jolly good stuff, I mean early Paolozzis, early Hamiltons, the Cohen brothers, and, you know, Denny and and Hockney.

Did anybody review it, do you think?

I wonder whether they did, it would be very interesting to see it, just to look back, November 1962.

Yes. Because, would you say that that laid the foundation for the Print Centre, or you realised you had to acquire an exhibition space?

Yes, I think we did. We sort of, again, I mean it went in stages. The first stage, we thought we needed to have a shop really just so that we could display our wares, and then very soon after that we decided we needed to have control of our own production facilities, and we started looking about, and we found 27 Kelso Place very quickly,

because the builders who had taken over from the non-alcoholic Communion wine people, who had gone bust or gone out of business or something like that, and it was available, and it was a wonderfully romantic site.

Perhaps before we move to Kelso Place, perhaps a little bit about the Print Centre in Holland Street. Can you describe it?

Yes, it was a little... Holland Street is rather a pretty narrow street off Kensington Church Street, it's the first street on the left as you come up from Barkers. And it had a, you know, a very small gallery, the size of this room which is I guess probably sort of twenty foot by twelve, that sort of thing, with a big shop window with little Georgian panes, and then two, maybe three floors above with sort of one room on each, one and a bit rooms on each. And the first exhibition we had was of Hockney, in, it must have been in October 1962, when we showed 'The Rake's Progress', and we showed all his prints.

So you opened with 'The Rake's Progress'?

Well I think we probably did. It certainly was the sort of first serious exhibition we had there, and we had various exhibitions after that. I remember it extremely well, because David was on the telly actually, terribly exciting, and we had, none of us had a telly, or we certainly had not got a telly in Holland Street, so we hired a very large television set, and he was actually, the programme was run, I can't remember whether it was 'Tonight' or something like that, about seven o'clock, on the night of the opening. And so we switched it on and saw it there, and we all sat on the floor and looked at it. I know my father came, and he was absolutely horrified at the idea that we were sitting sort of worshipping David Hockney on the telly.

Do you remember what the financial arrangement was for 'The Rake's Progress'?

Absolutely. We paid him £5,000 at the rate of £100 a month, and, so that, you know, stood him up for a jolly long time, however...that's...yes, fifty months. So, we may have paid a little more up front but I know thereafter it was £100 a month. And actually my money, so, you know, I've been very boastful, I say I started off Hockney

on his glittering career. Because as a result of that, you know, he went to America and did all sorts of things.

Indeed. Did you collaborate with Kasmin at all at this stage?

Yes, we used to, we didn't collaborate particularly, but we, you know, were very friendly with Kasmin.

Negotiate.

Yes, and Sheridan Duffield[??], and...

But you were able to deal directly with Hockney at that stage?

Yes, in those far off days people, painting and sculpture galleries weren't very interested in prints, it was completely separate. It was much later when the sort of so-called print boom developed, and everyone, wrongly, sadly, thought that, you know, publishing prints was a way to print money – it never was – and the painting and sculpture galleries became much more protective of their artists and thought that they ought to start their own print studio, print side, and it became more difficult for people like us to deal independently, and you know, of course that whole bubble burst as you know, but that's another story.

Indeed. I mean, in a way you were laying foundations with how you negotiated with Hockney in that financial kind of arrangement, what you paid him at that time. Did you feel you had to kind of professionalise that, the financial package if you like?

Yes, I think we did really. We knew jolly little about it, and we were terribly straight. I mean we, you know, we were very keen not to sort of screw people. And, yes we would try terribly hard to be very professional. To give him his due, Robert Erskine actually, hopeless businessman though he was, had sort of set the scene for that, I mean he was probably the first person to, you know, really tell people that, tell artists, it's no good producing an edition of prints with thumbprints on them in different colours and so on, that if one wanted to do it professionally one had to produce, you

know, as far as one can, a handful of things, identical images, and properly produced and properly numbered and identified, because it's all rather roguery in the print business as you know, and we were very, we always have been from the very start very punctilious in making certain that, you know, we produced what we said we would produce, and if there were artists' proofs, we labelled them as artists' proofs.

And do you recall those negotiations for 'The Rake's Progress', and with Hockney and with the printers presumably as well?

Yes. In those days I wasn't actually much involved in those negotiations; like latterly I was of course a lot, but in those days [inaudible] would.

Right. But the Print Centre, did it have a kind of policy, I mean did you see it as a shop, as a, a shop and a gallery, or, how did it function?

Well it really functioned as a gallery, and, I can't remember how formal we were, but we used to have a programme, a sort of regular exhibition programme, so that it gave one an excuse to bring people in and publicise it. And as I said earlier on, you know, Paul was a terrific empire builder, and to my horror he was always hiring new people. There was an amazing time when we had an ex-nun and an ex-monk both on the staff; the ex-monk was a marvellous man called David Lamont who had been, who had spent a long time in Morocco with William Burroughs, and had been a, who was a Canadian originally, had been a monk in Canada, and was a very very eccentric fellow. I don't know whether he stayed out of jail or not, I haven't seen him from that day to this. But he ran our framing department, because at that time in the basement at Holland Street we had a framing department. And the ex-nun was called Francesca, I can't remember what she was called, but she did the PR, she provided, she was our PR girl. And we had all sorts of other people. We had an extremely, incredibly pretty girl who was in the gallery, on the reception, I simply can't remember her name now, I'll remember it in a moment. Anyway she was our first romance, we used to spawn a lot of romances in Alecto because, and who subsequently married, who was called Larry Carter, came in to, and was absolutely smitten by her, and leant over the desk. And in those days we had one of those very old-fashioned spikes to put the invoices on, you've probably seen them in ancient

movies, and anyway he was so keen to lean over that he cut his wrist. [laughing]
And that was the beginning of that romance. What was she called? I'll remember it before the end of the day.

Because some of the exhibitions you had at the Print Centre, they, you brought in exhibitions, and you also showed work that you had commissioned, is that right, you had that mixed policy?

Yes, I think we did, because we probably weren't publishing enough to have exhibitions.

I think Atelier 17 is one that I have come across, for example, 1964.

Absolutely. Well Atelier...I mean, Bill Hayter was, as you know, very very supportive of us in the early days, and when we went over to Paris we always used to go to Atelier Dix-sept, and indeed we worked with a lot of artists who had been through Atelier Dix-sept, I mean Agatha Sorrell[ph] and Audray Beaker[ph], and I think Valerie Thornton was there, wasn't she?

She was indeed. Yes she was.

A whole lot, Jennifer Dickson[ph]. So that was a whole range of places, you were asking how we actually got our artists, I mean that was another whole source really.

I mean how influential was he, Hayter, I mean what do you recall about him?

Well I think he was very influential in that he had a very creative outlook on printmaking, I mean as a creative medium, intaglio printing, rather than just doing sort of copying. I mean his approach was very innovative, I mean he developed, invented perhaps, you know, the multi-colour single-plate printing, rolling it up in different coloured inks and so on. And he was a very strong character, and he used to have people come to work with him, and he always said, oh, you know, 'I have no influence on any of these people, they are all brilliant artists in their own right,' but actually they all came out making little sort of mock-Hayters, you know.

Yes. Did you like the idea of mixing kind of British and French if you like, artists from abroad, I mean was that the kind of idea that you were pursuing?

Well I certainly think that from the very earliest days we did sort of see we had a global mission. I mean really, I mean that really was very very early on; I don't know when we actually sort of formalised it or indeed whether we ever did formalise it, but the really always starting point of Alecto was what I keep on repeating, you know, that what we were trying to was to be a channel of communication for visual artists, and really on the basis that, you know, any other form of artist already has a channel of communication. If you write books, you know, you can have your paperbacks; if you make films, well you've got that, or you're a musician you have your music played; but if you're a painter or a sculptor, you are doomed to have your work shown in slightly, or very indeed, artificial spaces, and you know, everyone goes into a gallery and sees things, particularly sculpture actually, that, you know, where, they're not really shown off to the best advantage, with things juxtaposed together and not enough space round, and it's always too intimidating I suppose, you know, it's very difficult for people to get into the idea of actually acquiring new original work. And we thought that it would be a brilliant idea to encourage painters and sculptors who are already making interesting, unique work in their own pond, and produce original prints, multiples, and lithographs and etchings and screen-prints and so on, so that this original work could be spread round the world and get their work known outside their own particular area. That was the starting point of it.

So was it, was it a kind of a mission, would you say?

I think we were...I think actually, I think we were in a fairly starry-eyed way, yes. I mean, it was...and we tried frightfully hard to be very business-like about it, and we certainly, you know, tried to make money, but, looking back on it, I don't think we were exactly straight out of Harvard Business School.

I mean, did you view it in the kind of cultural terms, that there were, you know, the system was so much better in France for example and that Britain really post-war had so little, and it had to improve and gather momentum?

Yes. I don't think France really had so much of an influence on us as America. I mean what really got us going was America, and what got us going in America initially, as I told you, was a mistake, that we suddenly found we had got all this beastly stock we had to sell, and we thought that America was the one way where we would actually be able to achieve that. And to be honest we vastly over-estimated the sophistication of the American market. I mean at that time we thought the American market was...everything in America was wonderful, and everything in America worked just like that, very slickly and soon, and we thought that, you know, if we had once gone to America it would be easy business, it's such a big country and so many people, and we would be able to sell masses and masses of prints.

So how did you work in America before, because you then, eventually, I mean you did set up a centre in America, but before that how did you work with America?

Well we went, we went and travelled round, and actually on this first trip with Sears Roebuck actually, Paul and I went out to Los Angeles, because at that time the art market, the print market in Los Angeles was, I should think actually even more developed than New York, although of course we hadn't been to New York, our first landing in America had been in Chicago. But that was quite an eye-opener, seeing all the galleries on [inaudible] Boulevard, and going round and talking to people. And, I can't remember whether the Tamarind lithographic shop had already moved to Los Angeles or not, probably had.

It had, yes.

[inaudible], I think it actually had.

Did you first meet her in that Sears Roebuck trip?

Yes. I can't remember whether we did or not. I mean I saw her so much, I can't remember whether it was then or not.

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.....an experience. I mean what was it like in, when you went there in '63, and you were in L.A., what kind of things were you seeing, who were you talking to kind of thing?

Well that very first trip, I mean it was eye-opening, I mean it was most extraordinary. In those days Los Angeles, even more than it is now, was the most tiresome city because it appeared to have no beginning and no end, it was just completely sort of, you never knew where you were in it at all.

Were they interested in prints, do you think?

Yes, they were actually, there were a lot of galleries, particularly all around [inaudible], lots and lots, there were lots of, a very very, very vibrant scene, and certainly excited us a lot. And of course we came with our fourteen bags of stuff which we had been selling to Sears Roebuck, so we tried, I think fairly successfully I think, we sold a few, you know, certainly paid for the trip. I was extremely bowled over in fact, because I overstayed my particular leave from my City bank, and was in terrible trouble when I got home with my senior partner, and that was the beginning of the end actually, the beginning of the moment when I knew that I wasn't going to survive as a city tycoon.

Do you think, the Tamarind obviously a phenomena and the creation of Tamarind made a big difference?

Well I think it did. I mean I think, you know, that whole idea of Tamarind, which was very imaginative, you know, that certainly had an influence on our thinking I'm sure.

And then, did you go to New York, or is that, did that come later? I mean, do you recall going to U.L.E. for example, or...?

We went to New York, I didn't go to New York actually, Paul went off to New York, to set up an exhibition in New York, we thought big in those days, at the F.A.R.

Gallery, and we had an exhibition which opened the week Kennedy was assassinated, not good timing. So that was a bit of a flop because the whole thing, the whole world came to an end.

And how would Paul Cornwall-Jones, I mean how physically did you actually get the work out and on show in America, was this logistically difficult, or...?

I can't think how we did it, we just, we never thought it difficult. I mean we took the portfolios and talked very big, and, I mean you know, set it all up. I suppose there were probably exhibition frames we either hired or borrowed. I really can't remember what we did.

And was the feeling that, as you've kind of suggested, that America was really a market to go for?

Yes, absolutely. As I say we over-estimated the sophistication of it, but we, the first few years we covered the American market by actually just going round, travelling round, like what I still am, a travelling print salesman, and the very first American tour in fact which was just after Paul and Ianthe[ph] got married, and it was terribly modern actually looking back on it, that Paul sent off Ianthe[ph] with some man who was working for us, I can't remember what his name was, it was terribly shocking, you know, they were just getting off, and they travelled round America in an enormous car, selling things, several of which were stolen, I know, we had just bought some rather expensive and beautiful Vasarelys, who...probably[??] Vasarelys, I can't remember, they were all stolen out of the back of the car, which was rather disastrous.

So did you go around a range of public libraries, galleries, as well as, you know...?

Yes, we...

Hotels, private concerns, as well, or, on that American trip?

Yes, we did, we did, we went round to, I mean designers and architects as well as galleries really, and you know, museums and universities and libraries.

And were you already kind of being able to sell if you like the British phenomena, back in London if you like?

Well that was the idea. Yes, I mean we were very lucky of course, because, we were exceedingly lucky actually, because we just started at a time when there was tremendous feeling of optimism in England, it's now forgotten, and we had a wonderful and talented group of artists who were our generation, you know, making lots of splashes. I mean Hockney is now the best known, but you know, Allen Jones and Patrick Caulfield and Eduardo Paolozzi, a bit older, and William Scott, you know, a lot of jolly good people. Derek Boshier and Colin Self a little later on, that sort of thing. And, as I say there was a great feeling of optimism about, it was just at the time when 'Time' magazine wrote that article about Swinging London, which actually was actually was already a bit out of date. It was the time of the Beatles and everything, and everything was, you know, there a general feeling that if you were energetic and did things with a certain amount of style, that you could get things done. And there weren't many people doing this, well there weren't many people publishing prints at all actually, and there weren't many Englishmen going out to America I guess as well, so there was a certain amount of benefit in having an English accent. 'Oh gee, I really love your accent,' you know, this sort of thing, happened a good deal. And I suppose it was a bit of a phenomenon, having these, you know, strange young men who were so enthusiastic about what they were doing.

And it worked.

Well it worked, actually it did work, it worked pretty well. Then, I mean we worked like anything, and then we over-expanded you see, that was the inevitable, the inevitable happened. I mean I think it happened perhaps in a large number of new businesses, that we over-estimated the sophistication of it, we thought we were absolutely on the pig's back and we couldn't go wrong, meeting wonderful artists and all these new ideas and it was terribly exciting. And we ran out of money, and we produced a lot of wonderful things, and just when we should have made a

breakthrough, we suddenly realised that, you know, if we didn't do something very dramatic we'd all go bust. And I was the principal backer of the thing, so it was my money, so I was rather enthusiastic that we shouldn't go bust. Paul at that time thought that the only answer was to put another quarter of a million dollars, we never put a quarter of a million dollars in anything, but a quarter of a million dollars into Frank Stella, and that would save the whole situation. He may or may not have been right, but I actually hadn't got a quarter of a million dollars and we certainly weren't going to borrow it from the bank, so, we had a tremendous bust-up in 1967 and Paul flounced out and started Petersburg Press, and left me to pick up the bits actually. And, I can't remember, really, it's monstrous your spending all this time and money interviewing me and I haven't done my chronology right, but I did myself at least two, I mean really big travels – actually it must have been before Paul left – round America, and all over the place, selling our stuff, and did actually extremely well. I used to... Because we had some jolly good stuff to sell. And, you know, I used to go round with, you know, ten or twelve portfolios, and in those days there was supposed to be, you know, a twenty-pound allowance by weight or something on the aeroplane, and I discovered that if you gave the skycaps[??] five dollars, you know, it all mysteriously went on all right. And it all worked a treat, and I used to fly out and then hire a station-wagon and drive about. And the very first time, I first left from New York I remember in a huge station-wagon to sort of do the, go out to the Mid-West, and it's quite alarming actually when you suddenly set out, it was the winter, going out, and you not knowing what on earth you're going to see, and you know, driving in to a new town and having to sort of make your way, I mean I can't...one was quite intrepid in a way.

Did you enjoy doing that?

Well I did actually, because I love meeting new people and it was quite exciting. Once you've sort of taken the plunge you realise it's all right. And I used to have a portfolio which I called my Hamburger portfolio.

What was in that, for example, on, say your first...?

Well the Hamburger portfolio were sort of real, real sort of pretty-pretty prints which we were rather ashamed of because they were not very artistic, you know, and which, you know, you could sell for, you know, \$20 or something, to a designer, and you would always reckon that you ought to be able to sell \$100 worth of prints, so that paid for your lodgings.

And you had a second portfolio?

Well then I had all the serious stuff as well you see.

So did you sell more from your Hamburger portfolio than anything else, or...?

No, I don't think so, but it was very useful, the Hamburger portfolio, it kept one going.

Of course.

One tended to get cash for that sort of thing.

Yes. Perhaps, going back a little bit, obviously another major breakthrough was the 'As is When' series.

Yes.

What do you recall about that project?

Well, I recall, I mean, the amazement of first meeting Eduardo Paolozzi, who was, was and is, a very extraordinary chap, and also it was my first introduction to Chris Prayter[ph], who was a real genius at screen-printing. And it was a very interesting time, because, you know, Prayter[ph] was the first, or you know, Paolozzi particularly but also Gordon House, and Richard Hamilton, were the first people to, Gordon House was the sort of instigator I think, to, you know, encourage the use of screen-printing as an artistic medium. And we got very severely criticised at the time when we said we were publishing a series of screen-prints, because, you know, the general

feeling was that screen-printing is not a serious medium, it's an entirely commercial medium and you really can't be, you can't be serious doing this sort of thing.

Is this critics, or...?

Everybody, the whole of the art world generally, and the critics, yes. The arts, yes. I mean, looking back on it, I mean it was the same, different thing but the same mentality in a way that we got exceedingly seriously criticised for publishing 'The Rake's Progress', and that it was absolutely monstrous, you know, to have the conceit and arrogance to publish a portfolio of sixteen etchings by this young chap who didn't seem to be able to draw very well, and to offer them for sale at 250 guineas for an edition of fifty, really it was outrageous. And actually we had quite a lot of trouble selling 'The Rake's Progress' in the early days, it used to get fed backwards and forwards between Kasmin and Alecto, and...

Was it thought that that was too expensive?

Too expensive, yes, and we gave a third discount I remember, it would have been quite a good snip if one bought it at that time.

Did you only sell it as a set?

We only sold it as a set, yes. That again was considered pretty odd.

Did you also sell the book as well? There was the single print.

We didn't have the book, the book was put out by the Lion & Unicorn Press.

So that wasn't you?

That wasn't us, no.

Right. No, 250 guineas, that's a lot of money isn't it, in a sense, for a book, relatively, in retrospect?

Yes. I mean sixteen prints?

But...no, no. And 'As is When', I mean it was...it was printed at Kelf Road[ph] studio, wasn't it?

Yes. And it was a real, it was a real landmark in screen-printing, because it was I think the first edition, he might have done one or two others but I think it was a first edition where each individual sheet had a different colour combination; we published an edition of sixty-five, I can't remember for the life of me why we chose sixty-five; perhaps that was the number of one particular set-up, you know, when the screens plate[??] broken down or something, but each one throughout the edition was a different colour combination.

Did Eduardo Paolozzi actually suggest Chris Prayter[ph], or had you already met Chris Prayter[ph]? How did that collaboration come about?

I think it probably did come from Eduardo, I can't remember, I wasn't really involved in that side of it, and I think it probably came as I said from Gordon House[ph], I think he was the sort of instigator of it, that he was a designer as you know, but he...

A very influential designer.

Very, and he was sort of Marlborough's designer. That was the days of course before the Marlborough published any prints, so, you know, we had a free hand.

I mean, did you personally have to be convinced about screen-printing, or, do you remember your, you know, what your thoughts were on that as a medium?

I think... I mean, no, I don't think we ever did. I think we always, we always took the view from the very beginning, we took the view, endless discussions and agonising and ramblings and so on, about what is an original print, but we always took the view really when you come down to it that an original print is a creative work by somebody, using whatever means he chooses to achieve a multiple object, and I put

that extremely badly but it doesn't matter. I mean we, from the earliest day, absolutely did not buy the idea that an original print had to be an intaglio work [inaudible], or it had to be a lithographic print in stone or zinc, or it had to be a wood-block or something like that, you know, cut in by the artist himself, drawn by the artist himself, but we always felt that, you know, what was important was the idea for the artist. And there's a very, very clear philosophical difference which Pat Gilmore has expressed wonderfully clearly between the so-called original prints where somebody has made a work, a finished work in another medium, and then passed it to a printer to interpret in a different medium for you or I having an idea, working with the printer, but putting in all sorts of different elements, whether they are photographic or whether they are screen-prints or any sort of mixed media. And the criticism actually, to be fair, we got about screen-printing was largely on that level, that people said that, you know, you may be absolutely right, that these things that Paolozzi is doing are very creative and very innovative and very original, but just you wait and see, you know, what will happen is that people will do a nice gouache and slip it off to a screen-printer and it will be produced as a beautiful screen-print and signed and numbered, and passed off as an original print, and there will be no more original prints and, you know, your four-colour reproduction that you buy from the Medici Gallery... And in a way that's right, and of course in the sort of boom years of the Seventies when everyone was publishing prints, all sorts of terrible things happened on that basis, and a lot of the stuff which came out of Kelper's[ph] studio were actually, you know, made by Chris, nothing whatever to do with the artist. It was an extraordinary time when the Marlborough Gallery again were sort of riding high and publishing masses of prints, when I believe they had, you know, eight or ten or maybe twelve individual people in the firm each commissioning prints. And you know, it's a completely different mindset to being a dealer and dealing in painting and sculpture to being a publisher and a printer, you just, it just, we're different sorts of animals, and I don't, I think that was one of the main reasons why the print bubble burst at the end of the Seventies, because such a lot of, you know, frankly not very splendid work was done.

No. And in fact, 'As is When' was created over a period of a year, is that right?

Yes, or more, about eighteen months I think.

So, in a sense, that's not a money-making deal, that's a kind of nurturing, trusting kind of relationship that the work will come through, and in a sense you would just have to wait for it and...

Yes, well it was, you know, it was sort of backing a creative enterprise like building a house, I mean you know, [INAUDIBLE..] coming down.

Yes, yes. I mean what was the relationship with Chris Prayter? I think you established a kind of informal supportive relationship at this time, is that right, with regards to screen-printing?

Yes, we...I mean he was just very good, he was the best, he was the best act in town, he was the best, he was far and away the best, only actually at that time I suppose, fine art screen-printer. And when we set up studios in Kelso Place, the first thing we did was to set up an intaglio studio, an etching shop, and really later, I can't remember, I think it was actually after Paul and I, Paul had left, that I set up a screen studio, I can't remember, I think it might have been before Paul left, and then later still we set up a lithographic studio in [inaudible].

I think the reviews say, suggest, you know, that Chris Prayter would do work for Editions Alecto, or would be...yes.

Yes, absolutely, mm.

And, I mean just to be practical for a minute, I mean what would Chris Prayter[ph] actually financially be paid, what was the kind of ratio, proportion? I mean was there some sort of mechanism?

You mean cost price to selling price?

Yes, I just, yes, I mean, this is something that a lot of people don't really write about prints, and put on record, but, it can be of interest.

Yes. I mean it's...it's such long ago I can't remember what we paid, probably terribly little. I mean I know...I know that the first lithographs, we printed in Los Angeles with Kearinai[ph], which is the Hollywood Collection, they charged us \$20 a print, and we thought it was absolutely outrageously expensive, and really out of sight. So I suppose what we were paying to Chris was probably very much less than that. And in those days we used to have a price structure which in fact wasn't nearly, had not nearly a big enough spread actually, I think we used to only work on a four-times mark-up, sometimes even on a three-times mark-up, from cost to retail, which actually doesn't, it sounds awfully greedy but it doesn't actually leave you enough room to give discounts to the trade and actually, and do all the marketing and promotional work, and still make a profit. I mean now if you ask most print publishers, I guess they would say that they would never think of doing anything unless you can mark it up at least five times from cost, and hopefully ten times from cost, and of course in the reproduction world it is always at least that, at least ten times from cost, because they have a much more sophisticated and developed marketing platform to go to. I mean there's the retail and then there's the gallery price and then there's the wholesaler's price and there's the publisher's price, everybody sort of doubling up all the way up.

I mean, there's continuing discussion from the artist's point of view of, in a sense, what do they get at the end of this kind of, once you dissect the price, the selling price. What do you think, yes, how did you...?

Well what we did, we used to pay a plate fee, we used to agree a fee for the actual image, and then give each artist a number of artist's proofs, and actually that was a very straightforward way to do it, and sometimes we negotiated, you know, paying a fee over a period, but it was a finite amount, so that we didn't get involved... I mean we took all the risk, we didn't ask the artist to share in the risk of, you know, getting sales or getting paid on results, but at least it meant we knew exactly where we were, we knew what our base costs were, and so, you know, in theory it meant that one was much freer to be able to assess the market or the saleability of a particular print, you know, pretty quick actually, whether something is going to sell very well or not, and if it's not, you know, as you had already, you hadn't...the only person you were having

to convince was yourself, you could cut your losses and, you know, give enormous discounts just to get out of that edition.

I mean how quick do you know if something's going to sell well?

Well, it's not an easy question to answer, that. I think that, you know, you reckoned that you probably wanted, hoped that you're going to sell in eighteen months, two years, and if it sticks around, longer than that. You need to...it's very simple my trade actually, really simple, I mean, limited edition prints, you do it on the premise that you are publishing an edition of seventy-five examples, and there are seventy-six people out there who want it, and you know, that's the deal, and you have to be very confident about it, and you have to get this across to people, you know, that, you know, unless you buy now you've missed it. So if eighteen months later you're still saying, I've got them, you know, people aren't so enthusiastic.

Yes. Well you put it very simply in a way. Was that the formula that you...how would you describe the Editions Alecto formula, would that be...? At this time, in the early Sixties, mid Sixties, obviously you need energy to do that selling.

Yes.

Or was there a formula that set you apart from other people, in London for example?

Well, I dare say, you know, in the early days there really wasn't anyone else doing it, so we had nothing much to judge it on. I mean looking back at it, we were wildly unscientific I think, and we thought we were being terribly professional and scientific but I don't think we really were. And you know, from the earliest days we, you know, we were led in our publishing policy, you can call it that, much more by, you know, here is Allen Jones who had a terrifically good idea, wouldn't it be fun to work with him, rather than thinking, you know, what the market wants most now is this, and we will produce something which will satisfy that need. I mean all my clever friends who went to Harvard Business School always look at me in absolute despair and say, 'The trouble with you, Joe, is you're product-led, not market-led,' which I think has always been my trouble actually, both in the contemporary work and indeed

in what I'm doing now in the historical world, and I've been trying very very hard in the last few years to rectify that, and actually to think rather harder about what people would actually want to buy rather than what I want to publish. But again, it sounds awfully arrogant to say so, but you know, we always boasting, when we were publishing contemporary work, and certainly when we were publishing historical work, we worked on the basis that, you know, if you were lucky enough to have access to very good material, whether it's a very good artist or whether it's a marvellous historical thing, and you did it extremely well, you will probably come out all right in the end; it's only when you start compromising and saying, well you can't quite afford to do that so we'll cut some corners. And I think that in our sort of heyday of publishing prints at Kelso Place there were some pretty exciting things coming out because we really didn't compromise at all, we just did things because we all thought it was very worthwhile doing it, and the end results would be jolly good. And of course sometimes they weren't jolly good at all, they were disastrous, but of that type, you know, of their, whatever they were, they were good, you know, they, we never did any shabby stuff.

I mean, how much is risk-taking?

Everything is risk-taking, extremely, it's very risk-taking. Really and truly, it's very risk-taking.

And you have to be a person that's prepared to take that on board, to be in this business, to be a print publisher?

Well I...no, I don't think, I don't probably you do. I mean I think you could be much more sensible than we've been, and you know, weigh up the risk and decide what the market is and then publish for that market. And financially you're probably much more successful; whether you would have more fun I'm not sure.

And what about the artists, thinking, what do you think? I mean one can't generalise, but, what were they wanting, at this time, what was their...from you?

I don't know, you'll have to ask them, I've never really asked them about it. I think...I mean I think they were pretty excited to find some people who were prepared to back them, and as always in the art world, or any world actually, there's a certain amount of sort of back-biting and...

Back-biting in what, like what?

Jealousy and, you know, that... And I think we definitely had to bear in mind that, you know, it would be a mistake to work with an artist who was very out of sympathy with other people you are working with, you know, but there was...I don't know how conscious it was, but it was certainly subconscious, that the sort of group of people we were working with, at least all respected each other's work, you know, that it was a feeling that this was a stable which you would want to be involved in.

I was going to mention this, you know, the stable idea. Do you think you worked with that, or...?

Well I think we did, I think we did really, yes. And you know, I think the way that...the way that one sort of moved from one artist to another was never done in at all a scientific way; it came about because you are working with artist X, who is very friendly with artist Y, who happens to be having a rather good idea, and you know, slightly by osmosis you get together and decide that that would be a good idea to publish. And as far as the American side of our function came about, it was really, that was much more pragmatic. It was because we had discovered very early on that the sort of newness of going round America selling English artists sort of wore off, you know, and when you first went you were terribly keen, this guy's really interesting, but then the actual client in the gallery saying, 'Who are these fellows? Never heard of them,' you know, and so, it became pretty clear that if we wanted to take it seriously, really develop an American market, we would need to publish in America, add some American artists to our stable. And that was a sensible business decision, but it was also very exciting, a philosophical decision, because it actually rounded the circle of our ideas of being able to take the ideas of English artists and spread them around the world, to be able to bring American artists back to England and, you know, expose them to the English art scene, and expose them to our

professional printers. And you know, the only things we did with [inaudible] with Jim Dine and George Segal, Bob Graham, all these people, I mean, were very exciting, and really worked actually too, because of Ed Rushay[ph], because you know, it was very exciting for them, very exciting for us too.

Was Jim Dine, was that a major breakthrough as regards an American artist, or, the most well-known case?

Well, again you see, one forgets but we were all pretty young, and we were in our twenties, and so was Jim, Jim is about the same age as me I think, isn't he, or a year or two older, maybe, but I mean you know...

He's older.

When he came over, he certainly wasn't much more than thirty. So, and I mean that's one of the reasons why I haven't gone back into contemporary publishing actually, which I miss really, because you know, having no artistic talent myself, I actually love working with artists, but to be successful, or not to be a complete failure, you really need I think to be on terms with the people you are publishing, probably have to be the same generation I think, and as I say we had started with the same generation of, you know, the Hockney generation coming out of the Royal College.....

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F6493 Side B

.....sense, you kept on Holland Street, but you gradually, is that right, set up Kelso Place?

Kelso Place, we took the decision that if we were going to do this seriously as print publishers, we needed to have our own production facilities, therefore we set about looking for somewhere. And very very quickly we came upon Kelso Place.

How did you come across it?

I think Ianthe Edy[ph] went round, she was sent round to look at it, and she saw it, and we all went and thought, God! this is absolutely wonderful. And then reality sort of clocked in for us, and we said, no, it's absolutely, it's far too big, you know, it's much too big, and anyway it needed terrific lot of work done to it.

What was it?

Well it started off as a non-alcoholic Communion wine factory, and then the rates went up and they moved to Battersea, and I think they're still in business, or they definitely were until some years ago. And then it had a spell as a builder's yard, and that's what it had been before we took it on. But as I say, initially we decided it was no good, and then we went round and looked at all sorts of other places, and there actually were none remotely as interesting as Kelso Place. And we had Kelso Place.

I mean what were you looking for, in a sense?

Well we were looking for space to set up printing studios.

You wanted enough space to do that?

Yes.

Which is not easy in London, presumably?

Well, you know, London's changed so much in the last thirty years.

Well what was it like then, in...?

Well, you know, in those days, for instance people who were my contemporaries who came down from Oxford, you know, without a bean in their pockets and went off to work in John's[??] and being paid, you know, £600 a year and so on, and lived in flats in Cadogan Square, because there were all sorts of, I mean in the sort of heart of Chelsea, most extraordinary. I mean I don't know why it's all changed, because it was possible to get flats there, and Kelso Place was relatively sort of out in the sticks, you know, it was very a poor street actually. I mean I remember all those little houses, which are now incredibly chic, down there. I remember when there were several of them for sale at £20,000 each, and we thought, idiots, people who buy them at £20,000 each, it's really, they're going to come a real cropper, you know. If one had bought the whole street, £20,000, you know, one would be a multi-millionaire. So at that time, to answer your question, at last, I mean the Kelso Place builder's yard, ex-non-alcoholic Communion wine factory, was pretty cheap, and we actually rented it, we didn't buy it. But we did an awful lot to it, we gutted it and we put on this wonderful glass wall, and, dear oh dear oh dear, I simply can't remember the name of the architect.

James Madge, is that right?

James Madge, yes, it was, yes. No it wasn't James Madge. Was it James Madge?

I think it was, yes.

James Madge. I think it was James, who was a friend of Paul's at Cambridge.

So you actually employed an architect to redesign?

Yes, to do it. And he put on this industrial glass façade, which was actually very effective and quite cheap.

But I didn't realise you were renting it. You hadn't actually bought the site?

No, we didn't have any money to buy the site, and we bought it – I mean we... No, the story about that actually is quite interesting. We rented it, and we had a deal with the landlord, who were a small private property company... Oh yes we tried to buy it and they didn't want to sell, that's right, they didn't want to sell, they only wanted to let, which actually in point of fact suited us pretty well. But we had a deal with them that if they ever did want to sell, they would give us first refusal. And you know, years later, when we had this frightful fire in 1978, we had quite a lot of insurance money, and went to the landlords and said we would like to buy, only to find, without telling us, they had sold it to some other firm, we didn't know about it at all, who said, no, we're not going to honour this agreement at all, you know, nothing to do with us, we know nothing about it. And so we were very cast down, and anyway used the money from the insurance to re-build it, and having re-built it... And actually the new firm said that they didn't want to know anything about it because they were just rationalising this property portfolio, which was very very mixed, and they didn't want to make any move at that time. And so we said, well bear us in mind, because we're still interested. And then we re-built the thing so it looked absolutely spanking new, and spent a lot of the insurance money doing it. And we went back to them, slightly with our tongue in our cheek, and said, 'Look, you know, have you changed your mind now?' And, 'Would you sell it?' And they said, yes they would, and they sold it to us with a valuation, pre-valuation, to our re-building, and that was our first big property coup actually, because we bought it for some really quite small sum of money.

Quite late in the day, '79 then?

Yes, quite late in the day.

Right. I was wondering, in choosing Kelso Place, did it link up with, if you like that Kensington scene and Biba and Kensington High Street? I mean did you feel at home in that?

We did actually, yes. Biba was just next door you see, Biba first of all, before they went to Barkers, were in Kensington Church Street, just round the corner from us.

I mean did they buy anything from you, were they...?

I think they did. What was she called? Saloniki[ph] or something.

Yes, I don't...yes, she's died actually recently.

Barbara, yes, no she was the designer. Yes they used to come in, all sorts of...

I mean it was quite a scene in Kensington High Street.

All sorts of exotic people used to come in, looking back at it. I mean, Peter Cook and Robert Robinson and people used to [inaudible].

But I was wondering, could you say that you actually kind of, as a group of young people, you weren't part of that West End so to speak, but there was a younger scene that was perhaps nearer Kensington, and that you fitted in with.

Well here's something very topical for you Tessa. I remember very early on, before I started working there, I mean before I left the City, and used to go down there in the evening, Jonathan Aitken came round when he was writing his book about, whatever it was called, you know, 'Swinging London' or something, to interview us all, and I remember he was frightfully rude and disparaging to me, because I happened to be there lounging about in a pinstripe suit, and I remember him, you know, talking to everyone else who was very sort of trendy and arty. Who is he, you know, what does he do? And I felt furious. So, the answer is, probably we did think we were very much in the forefront of this.

Yes. But of course Kelso Place is near Holland Street, I mean you actually, you were staying in the same road.

Yes, yes. And then we go rid of Holland Street, realised we could set up our offices there.

Yes, why did you? You kept on Holland Street for a short period, and then why did you change your mind over that, or give it up?

Well I think we thought we were not really a gallery, we thought we were publishers, and that that was the way to develop our business.

How...could you say a bit more about that? Because you, it's on record that you made that kind of decision, to give up the retail side.

Well I think we did actually, because again you know, the owner of a retail gallery is a different sort of animal to being a publisher, and I did have a gallery after the fire, when did we do it? No no, when did I do that? We set up a gallery in Albemarle Street, have you got the date? I simply can't remember when it was.

Yes, we're going to come on to that later.

Oh are you? Yes.

Yes.

Yes. But...

Well, you are very clear about the distinction. Could you say a little bit more about that separation of retail and publishing?

Yes. I mean I think if you're a gallery, I suppose it's not quite true, if you're selling unique things, you have a completely different frame of mind than being a publisher. And if you're a publisher you have to think broad, you know, you have to think how to disseminate, you're never going to sell all seventy-five or all hundred of your editions of prints from your gallery, so the only reason for having a gallery is to have, what Robert Erskine would call, you know, a honey-trap, to bring people in, and since

we had space at Kelso Place to do that, we, you know, used the bottom round floor, I think we used to call it a showroom rather than gallery, but it effectively was a gallery, it was a trade gallery really.

And the trade would come to you there, and you...?

And the trade came to us there, yes.

And you had openings?

We used to have parties actually rather than openings. We had the most wonderful parties, and, you know, used to bring people along. Did we ever have exhibitions? I think we used to have sort of exhibitions of things we newly published, that sort of thing, we used to bring down.

And what about the buyer off the street, I mean the idea of disseminating...?

The buyer off the street, we didn't, we hardly dealt with at all actually, I wonder why we didn't. No, we didn't really deal with it at all. Because I think at that time we were concentrating so much on developing our American business, and our English business was very much to the sort of institutional trade, I mean it was to galleries, other galleries.

Who were the main galleries you sold to then? Say from '65 onwards.

Well we had lots and lots of dealings with Robert Fraser, always absolutely disastrous because Robert never had any money. And he was representing Richard Hamilton, and all our nice things from Richard used to go back and forth from Daley[??] Street to Kelso Place, because Robert never paid his bills and we always had to repossess them. And we did a certain amount with Kasmin, we did a certain amount with the Redfern I think. Kasmin and Fraser were really our two main sort of West End gallery outlets.

Right. I mean you mention Robert Fraser, I mean, what was he like?

Oh he was a delightful fellow, Robert, but you never quite knew where you were with him, because early on he was very druggy actually. I was naïve I didn't really realise it at the time, but looking back on it I think he was high as a kite most of the time. He was an extraordinary fellow, Robert. He had a great eye, I mean he did some amazing things. He had a, when Jim Dine was over working on the 'Toolbox', he had the notorious exhibition which was closed down by the police because it showed genitals.

Because 'Toolbox' was on...

Incredibly innocent really, looking back on it.

Wasn't 'Toolbox' on display in that exhibition?

I think it was, yes. I think it really annoyed everybody because the catalogue, have you seen the catalogue of that exhibition?

Not yet, no.

What?

Not yet, no.

No, there was a catalogue. But anyway, on the catalogue was what was actually all too obviously an erect penis wrapped up with a Selfridges wrapping paper, and that was too much for the Metropolitan Police Force, they removed it and closed it down because it was too shocking.

Because, people mention that gallery don't they, at this time, it was obviously, things were happening there.

Yes. And you know, they showed a lot of Americans, I mean that's where I first, you know, got, knew about Ed Rushay[ph] for instance, because Robert showed him.

Do you think that worked, that was a sensible move, to, in a way you were, I suppose re-focussing on commissioning and distributing; do you think that was...it was a kind of second phase if you like, is that right, to see it in those terms?

I think, it was a follow-through of what we had always wanted to do, which was to publish it. I mean we always saw ourselves as publishers rather than as a gallery, and the gallery was a secondary idea just so that one had somewhere where one could show one's wares, and therefore we thought we didn't need to have, in fact it was rather silly to have, you know, two premises a quarter of a mile apart in Kensington; we might as well have the showroom-stroke-gallery in Kelso Place. But it was only, it was after Paul and I had our bust-up, again the awful things is I can't remember the dates, that I decided that we actually probably did need to have a more visible presence in the West End, because it was very difficult for people to come down to Kelso Place. I mean I now realise, having been working the last three years in Sackville Street, I mean I always used to think that Kelso Place was the centre of the world, but actually now it seems like going to outer Mongolia, no wonder people thought it was a long way to go to. And the gallery in Albemarle Street in many ways worked extremely well, upstairs on the first floor, and I can't remember what place it is now but it was wonderful, very central. And we ran it with a, you know, very, I mean extremely intelligent and fortunately extremely good-looking girl who brought in the punters a bit as well. And the reason I closed it was actually for a very pragmatic reason, that at the time we were doing, you know, a large amount of our business selling to foreign galleries and publishers and dealers, and they, not unreasonably, said, well why don't you buy our things, and show them in London? And we just found there was no market for foreign prints in London, or at least I couldn't find the market. And rather than, you know, say, 'Would you buy mine, because they're wonderful, but I'm actually not going to buy yours,' we decided that we would abandon again all ideas of the retail trade. The other thing which is more subjective I suppose is that, you know, I actually don't like galleries, and I got awfully fed up with, you know, the nice ladies with blue rinses who came in to waste one's time, pored through all one's children – I mean you know, when you a publisher you get awfully attached to things – who are frightfully rude about all the things which one rather regretted publishing anyway, and then bought the one thing you knew you could sell to anyone.

Of course a great thing that you set up at Kelso was the whole environment for working.

Yes that was the most exciting thing.

How did that, I mean, was that this idea that you had obviously pursued, can you say, yourself, individually, or was it a group decision? Just before the split with Paul Cornwall-Jones wasn't it. Or is it something you feel that was very much your idea personally?

No I don't think it was. I think it was something which came out earlier on, to set up studios, and, it sort of developed again in a rather haphazard way, but it really worked pretty well, to be able... I mean the idea was to be able to provide painters and sculptors who, you know, weren't necessarily printmakers, with an environment where they could come and work with professional printers to develop their ideas. I mean I think where we were perhaps unusual or ahead of our time is that we, you know, we never said, you've can't, and nor did the printers actually, they were jolly good, you know, that it wasn't a question of, you must do this because everyone's always done it; if people came and said, 'Why don't we try this?' we tried it. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

I think Jim Dine in fact, his 'Toolbox', was one of the first people to stay actually at Kelso Place, is that right?

No he didn't, because actually Jim Dine, we made his 'Toolbox' at Kelpra.

I was just...ah, so in fact the studio, the kind of accommodation side...wasn't working...he wasn't actually working at Kelso Place then?

No.

Right.

We never actually, we always thought we were going to do, we never actually had accommodation as such at Kelso Place.

So, yes I was going to ask, because in fact 'Toolbox' was made at Kelpra wasn't it.

Yes. And all those terrible things stuck on, the absolute despair of most curators I think, safety pins falling off and that sort of thing.

Yes I wonder what the reaction of Chris Prayerer[ph], did he...do you remember anything of it?

No, Chris Prayerer[ph] was very volatile and he was always, he had what you might call a very artistic temperament and he was always throwing little wobblies and saying he was going to give up and he couldn't stand it, and it was too awful, and one spent quite a lot of one's time calming him down and saying it's essential to the whole enterprise and...

Because presumably you didn't have much time, Jim Dine had to get back to America, so Chris Prayerer[ph] had to work quite, to quite a tight schedule?

Oh no I can't remember how long Jim was over here, long enough.

A couple of months I think.

A couple of months, yes. But that, you know, the actual...

But it's different to a year, as...

Yes yes yes, but never mind, I think people work in different ways, and the actual production of the editioning, you know, it didn't involve Dine at all, I mean that was done by Prayerer[ph].

And Dine had gone back to America?

Yes, yes. And, I can't remember whether we brought him back to sign the prints, probably we must have done, or did we...most of the signatures are actually on little bits of paper stuck on. I can't remember what happened. We rather, we also, one of the things I think we slightly overemphasised was our presentation. We were very keen on typography from the very beginning, and Eric Ayres was actually our first graphic designer so he was very influential on it. But we very much took it as part of the whole publishing idea that you weren't just producing, you know, a series of prints, you were producing a portfolio, and in a way an object. I mean I don't know whether you've ever seen 'Toolbox'...

I have indeed.

You know, the red box, it's rather splendid. And you know, the London [inaudible], Claes Oldenburg and the whole business of having it in a portmanteau.

In fact all your portfolios are very distinctive.

Yes.

And I was going to ask you about this, the portfolio concept.

Well it was very much, again, part of the idea that, you know, one was telling people that they were, you know, buying some complete thing, it just happened to have lots of different elements inside it. And the, I mean 'The Rake's Progress' actually was quite a nice little box we made, and, 'Concerning Marriages', 'Concerning Marriages' was a particularly good presentation, but terribly impractical because it was sort of oatmeal and buckram, well we actually, it might have even been canvas, I can't remember. I know, I remember sort of slightly jibbing at it with Allen and saying, you know, is this really practical, because it's going to get awfully dirty. And Allen saying, typically, you know, 'Anybody who can afford to buy my things has got to have clean hands, or could afford to get it cleaned,' or something like that.

Did you work with any special kind of binders?

Yes, we did, and I can't for the life of me remember who. We used to work with a firm up in Bolton I think, or...I know with Cavafy, because they all went on strike, all the women who were binding it up, because they didn't like the...they were sexual images, and I had to go up as a respectable married man to calm them down and tell them that it was perfectly all right.

Did you calm them down?

Well anyway they did the job I think, you know.

You mentioned Eric Ayres. Because in fact he was a director from quite early on, or he had joined your board.

Yes he was, yes.

And, as the graphic person.

Yes.

Perhaps you might put on record the story of the E.A.

Oh the E.A., yes, well early on we thought we...we wanted to have a company chop, logo, and asked Eric to think about it, and he produced this wonderful E.A., which he presented to us, and only moments later realised that it was frightfully good as Eric Ayres.

Was he invited, I mean, as a graphic person you felt you needed that, and obviously he was a very fine topographer himself.

Yes, yes. Absolutely, I mean he looked after that side of the presentation.

Yes. And in fact, I should mention, I know he's very keen for example, that in 1968 posters came in to the orbit of your work, which is a very interesting area, unlimited editions.

Yes.

I think Bridget Riley did one.

Indeed, yes. Well there again, this was just again an extension of the idea that, you know, prints should be plentiful and cheap, and the whole idea about being a publisher was to get original ideas out, so you know, the idea of having limited editions signed and numbered is anyway a 20th century conceit; in the 18th and 19th century you just, print publishers produced as many as they could sell, you didn't bother about limiting it, and the only reason you would sell limited edition prints, it's an artificial device to get a certain price level actually. I mean some of them.....

[break in recording]

No, all I was going to say was, some techniques are limited physically, like dry-point, that you can't make more than a certain number because the plate breaks down, and some aquatint plates, but of course now you can, or when we were making contemporary work we always used a steel face for prints; for historical things we chrome faced them, which absolutely protects the copper underneath, so in a way you can do very long editions without damaging the plate.

And, obviously these were screen-printed I think, most of the posters were screen-printed, the Riley and...?

Oh yes, [inaudible] posters, yes they were all screen-printed, absolutely, yes. And we did a whole series of poster poems, did you pick that up? That was another idea, that was very much, the inspiration of that was very much Christopher Logue, and he...

How do you spell that?

L-O-G-U-E. He's a very distinguished poet, he's going strong, might be worthwhile you talking to him actually because he would remember about that.

Did he actually come to you with the idea, or you...?

I can't remember in fact, we had, I remember working with a man called Anthony Matthews[ph], who was our production manager, or he had become a director at one time, I can't remember, but he really dealt with that. And that was the time when I invented a wonderful company called Ad Infinitum Limited, do ever come across that in the records?

What was Ad Infinitum? No.

Well it was just to do unlimited things, and Derek Boshier did our letter, did our stationery with a wonderful rainbow. But it was one of the many things which didn't actually work frightfully well, we didn't take it on. I think Ad Infinitum was quite a good name for an unlimited print company.

And how kind of extensive was that company?

Nothing at all, it was just an idea through which we were going to market our posters, and other unlimited things, and we never really did. We might have done a little bit but it certainly never took off.

Why didn't it take off?

I don't know, we got diverted to other things.

I mean talking of text and word, obviously a major breakthrough was the Cavafy series, and I think, am I right in thinking there were kind of five editions for that; there was a portfolio, there was an actual book publication, and there was loose etchings as well, I think it was 8E[ph] they're called in the Hockney catalogue. Could you say a little bit about that, and that complexity if you like of that production?

Yes. That, the blame for that lay wholly at the feet of Paul, because that's exactly the sort of thing he loved doing, and it did subsequently, in his publications for

Petersburgh Press. And it was...I don't think it was an original idea, I think it's the sort of thing which other print publishers had done, on the Continent and elsewhere, that you have a whole series of different editions, and it means that you can do things at, you know, different price levels, to be honest. So I mean I think we did one on vellum, and we did one, as you say, with additional prints and that sort of thing. So you could have a variety of, it's like having, you know, the gold medallion and the silver medallion and a brass medallion, that you have a variety of different things to sell.

Do you feel that's messy, or, you don't...?

I think in a way this was the beginning of our break-up, Paul's and my break-up, because we just had a fundamental difference of opinion about what print-making is about, and you know, neither of us was absolutely right and neither of us was absolutely wrong. But his idea was probably much more commercial and practical in that he set about to really, really control the whole price structure of his artists' work, and you know, make sure that the prices went up and up and up, to such an extent, you know, that the prices rose so that you could actually buy an original drawing probably for as much as you, the same price as you buy a print. And I, that sort of offended me, I don't like that idea at all. I really do believe fundamentally that dealing in prints, you know, prints prints prints, prints are multiple things and they should be on a different... I mean, they're extremely important for an artist's oeuvre, but on a different level to unique work.

So obviously, if we're moving on to discussing what became the kind of parting of the ways, I think it happened actually in January 1967, he finally left, was it...it wasn't so much to do with content, it was actually what you were doing, and it was your publishing method if you like, that...?

Well it was precipitated by, I mean as most of these break-ups are, by financial reasons really, we ran out of money. And Paul had great, grand ideas about, you know, pumping more and more money in it, and working with, as I think I said before, with Frank Stella particularly, who we were negotiating with. And you know, I wasn't prepared to take the risks; anyway I hadn't got the money to do it, it wasn't

his money. And so, you know, his decision on that occasion was to close the thing down.

[break in recording - telephone]

I think we were talking about the split in fact between you and Paul Cornwall-Jones. I mean is it true to say that part of the background to that, that you might have had, for example different tastes in certain artists? I mean he, was he moving towards if you like promoting American artists, and you might not have gone along to the degree that he was moving? I'm talking about the kind of work and that...

Yes. No, I don't think it really was that. It was, I'm afraid, as I said, it was just that we over-traded, and we needed to retrench, and we had a disagreement about that, that his view of retrenchment was to put lots more money in, and my view of retrenchment was to stop spending money and sell what we had. So, we divided.

So, you don't see that you had, I mean, particularly different kind of ideas on the work that you wanted to commission, it wasn't that kind of disagreement; you might not have liked the Stellas and he did, for example? Or you would have lived with that, or...?

Oh I think I would have lived with that actually, yes. I mean I...I mean I, I had a great respect for Paul's eye actually, I think he's very good, and he's an extremely talented fellow. And, you know, at that time, in 1967, you know, I was pretty new to it really, I mean I was much guided by what other people involved wanted to do. I mean it wasn't...it certainly, I was certainly not in the driving seat at that stage, in terms of publishing. I mean I had a voice, but it wasn't necessarily a major voice, in what we published.

Because in fact he some six months before had set up your New York office, he was responsible, the key person behind that, is that right?

Yes, but that was again, that was a board decision, I mean that we decided to do. And, yes, he actually did, because.....

End of F6493 Side B

F6494 Side A

It was the ground floor, which was sort of down a few steps, in a brown stone house on the East Side between Lexington and Third, and it was a very good place. And we had one girl who worked there.

Who was that?

Liz Fenwick, who was terribly young, she was only eighteen, amazing that she took it on, she was a very spunky person, who subsequently married a man called John Fenston[ph]. And we set it up as, you know, sort of as a base I suppose, a base in America, from which we could venture out into the backwoods and sell things.

Was this also to do, I think it's on record, to do with the difficulty of selling work from England, that you needed an American base?

Yes.

And again that was a financial decision.

Well it was a practical, it was a practical decision, to try and make our American operation more successful.

Can you say a bit more about that, how...?

Well, you know, I mean previously we had been going on trips, and going round visiting people, and that has a certain amount of good points because you can move in to somewhere and say, you know, I'm here till the day after tomorrow, so you've got to make up your mind now, and then I'm going back to England. And that in a way works pretty well, but the follow-up is much more difficult, and we felt that we needed some actual foot on the ground in America if we wanted to develop it sensibly, so that we could hold stock there, and so that we could have somebody who was, you know, on that side of the Atlantic following up the leads we had and keeping in touch with our customers and clients in America. So it was just an entirely

practical move, but again it wasn't seen really as a retail outlet, it was very much for the trade.

And so did you see it also as a commissioning centre as well, were you going to concentrate on commissioning in America, or...?

Yes, it obviously helped, because it was, we were able to...I can't remember whether we slept there or not. I don't think we had anywhere, I don't think we did have a bedroom there, although I know that over Christmas one year Hockney and Patrick Proctor both stayed there, you know, when things closed down over the Christmas holiday they had their sleeping bags on the floor, and I know they made great hay of answering the telephone and being outrageous.

And, I mean that, how did that work? Was there particular work out of that period, or was it really too soon, it didn't really, you didn't have enough time?

It worked very well, I mean then... I mean after Paul departed, I kept it on, and I hired a very bright fellow... My mind's going completely...

Is that Timothy Benton?

What?

Is that Timothy Benton?

No no, Terry Benton.

Terry Benton, he, is he of this period?

He is very much of this period, but he's in London.

Ah, right, I think the...

How interesting you've got him. Terry Benton, he's coming to stay at any moment now, how funny. No, Brooke-Alexanders[ph] was the man I'm trying to think of, who has become a very distinguished American dealer, and he came to work for us at Alecto from, having been at the Marlborough, and he ran our American office for a spell.

I see.

Actually I think we had somebody before that.

So how long did you keep that gallery on in fact? I mean this must have been a very difficult time, setting it up with Paul Cornwall-Jones, and in fact, I mean, it was, you had to re-launch when he left, the Editions Alecto, is that correct?

Well no not really, no, not particularly. We didn't re-launch at all, we had... No, I mean it was a hiccup because we had got ourselves into rather a financial muddle, so we very much needed to sell things, which is why I did...I mean I did some very very extensive selling, I mean my God! when the Devil drives you go out and sell things.

Like what? You went out to America, or...?

Yes, absolutely, I went out on two six-week trips, sort of back-to-back, travelling around. It wasn't frightfully well seen by Rachel and the small family back at home.

Using the New York office as a base, but...

Using the New York office as a base, yes. And that worked pretty well, I mean you know, well we survived, you know, we got back on an even keel again. And when...

But you had, just to re-track a bit, because it's I suppose for the record, because you had that 'Financial Times' when they broke the news, the famous bit, they said that you were losing money, it was published, shortly after Paul had left, I mean that was bad publicity wasn't it?

Yes, that, yes that was Roger Matthew[??] did a piece in 'The Times'.

I think and the 'Financial', yes.

Yes, six disparate young men, everyone said six desperate young men.

So you were re, you were re, kind of launching yourself in a sense, financially.

Yes, I forgot the actual time of the break, you've now told me, it was January '67, but you know, it didn't all happen overnight, I mean it was sort of boiling up for about six months, and we, you know, spent quite a lot of time rushing around trying to find backers, you know, finding other people to put money in, without success.

Without success?

Yes.

So what did you do then? What was your strategy then?

My strategy was to retrench, you know, spend less money, sell more things, continue where we left off, which we did very successful actually, and we, you know, followed through with, we dropped a few of the projects we had in hand, but we were able to follow through with most of the things we were doing. And very shortly after, you will have the dates, they're now out of my mind, was when we, you know, launched off into Europe with the exhibition in Milan.

Indeed, I would like to talk to you about that. Perhaps beforehand I have to, well, we can mention, because I think Ron King has gone on record about the Prologue, that was very a unfortunate incident.

Yes.

Which obviously I think, I mean, though in a sense it actually launched the Circle Press, something came out of it.

Yes.

But, it sounds a rather messy kind of time, and difficult obviously.

Well it was very a difficult time indeed. I mean I don't think we, I mean, Ron did make a few rather trenchant remarks. I don't think we particularly let him down actually. As you said, I mean it effectively launched the Circle Press, he was hoping that we would do the Prologue and carry it through. I don't think...I very much hope, I've always had it in my mind and we never broke any contracts anywhere along the line, or let anyone down financially.

Do you feel that was a Paul Cornwall-Jones, that was one of his projects in a sense, he had...?

No, it wasn't particularly, it was an Alecto project. I mean, no, not a bit, it was much more mine than his really because his sights were, you know, star-struck with the glitterati of the American market really, much more than Ron King who was, you know, a very talented and creative and inventive print-maker really and book-maker. When I say book-maker, I mean a maker of books.

Yes. I suppose the bottom line was, you couldn't pay him, there was no money to pay him.

There was no money to pay him. I mean you know, we just had to abandon the project, we couldn't, we sort of gave it back to him.

And he collected the stock, the printed work?

Yes. I mean it was only, it was in progress, I can't remember how, what the position was precisely, but I certainly have no guilty conscience, Tessa, about what we did with Ron, absolutely not. I mean he may have, he may have felt that he had been let down, possibly he was, but you know, it was it was *force majeure* really.

Also, I wondered if, there's quite a lot of mention of Deracier[ph], the master printer, and there's always the reference that he is coming to...

Coming coming coming.

He's coming, coming, and I wondered if he ever came actually.

He never came actually no, he never came. He was going to run our lithographic studio, and we... What happened was, actually, I now remember, he did come over, and he very very nearly made a deal, and he didn't speak much English and our French wasn't frightfully good, and we actually thrashed out the whole deal and we were just about to shake hands on it, and we sat him down and said, Mr Deracier[ph], we'll just go over it just once more, and this is where we're working and this is what you'll do, and this is your salary, and this is the tax you'll pay.' 'Tax? Tax? What is tax?' And the whole thing fell apart. And he thought he was going to get the salary net, and he hadn't realised he was going to pay English tax on it.

I see.

So, we didn't make a deal. Meanwhile we had actually acquired his very beautiful wooden press, as a graphic press, which we had always in our showroom at Kelso Place. Now I come to think of it, I can't remember what happened to it; I think it probably was burnt.

What was his Christian name in fact? I'm not sure...

Marcel Deracier[??].

Marcel. I mean, at this time, slightly later in fact, talking about the printers, I think we hope to work with them on this project in the future, but, for example, James Collyer and John Crossley set up J.C. Editions, etchers with, I mean they were your etchers.

Yes.

I think 1969 to '71. How did that come about?

What, that they set up their own...?

Or, how did you meet them and how did you select them and how did that work, how did the relationship work with them? Before J.C. Editions in fact, wasn't it?

[inaudible], I can't remember at all. I mean we first, our first etching printers were Maurice Payne and Danyon Black, and, who was the third?

There were quite a number of printers around in fact.

Yes, we had a lot of, we had all sorts of printers, but they were the main ones. Somebody with a wonderful 14th century name, who was very militant and wanted to start a print union, so he actually was encouraged to leave, and then became, I noticed later on, a great capitalist tycoon in the art world somewhere else.

An etcher? Is that an etcher, or...?

Yes. What was he called? A nice man actually. I'll remember eventually, sorry, too late in the afternoon.

Because I...I mean how...were they the first printers to come on the scene, actually established at Kelso Place?

Yes I think they were, yes. We had quite a lot of people through the shop, we were doing a lot of printing, and we had all sorts of people. We had Julian Bream's brother, who is a very talented fellow, and we had, oh a whole lot of different people, I'd have to look them all up.

And would they, I mean how would you, with the difficult financial situation, or a tight one, you mentioned, would you...you paid them per project, per edition if you like?

No we paid them a wage actually, we paid them a weekly wage.

Right. Danyon Black is obviously quite well known; I mean what's he like, what do you recall of Danyon Black as a...?

Oh Danyon was a lovely man. I mean he has long since left the art world. I hope he's still alive and well and living in Sussex. But he had a very funny schooling, because his mother... His father was really a blacksmith, but I think he described himself as a metal worker, a very creative chap. I think he did start as a blacksmith but then made metal things, and might or might not have been married to his mother, I can't remember. Anyway she worked as housekeeper, or matron or some capacity, in a very avant-garde school run by a man called Field, where, you know, the ethos was that the children could do exactly what they want, and if they wanted to dig a hole, they dug a hole, and if they wanted to climb a tree, they climbed a tree, and if they wanted to learn Latin verbs, they learnt Latin verbs. And Danyon sort of went in with his mother, and apparently this system worked pretty well and after a bit people got fed up with digging holes and climbing trees and did indeed want to learn Latin verbs, or actually learn how to read and write. And Danyon never made that leap, and he, because his mother left the school when he was still thinking it was absolutely wonderful doing absolutely nothing, so he was illiterate, and actually had a big effect on him and his later development in his life really, that he couldn't read or write. But he had this terrifically talented way with printmaking, and actually all sorts of artistic things. And he and Maurice Payne worked very well as a team together. He married a very nice girl, who I'd love to see again, and had several children. Sue Black.

And did they set up the, was it a separate etching studio, or was etching in with lithography, I mean...?

No no no, they were three separate studios. It was quite a big space. I mean actually there were four big spaces, I mean really big spaces, an etching studio, screen studio, litho studio, and then a stock room.

I mean how big would you say?

How big, how big, how big? I should think the studio was forty foot by thirty foot.

Each of them?

Each of them, yes. And the two upstairs ones were very tall, two were very high, and then we had a gallery which came out of the etching studio and ran along, over the screen-print shop, where all the, I think where all the acid work was done with a fence[??] going out to the outer area[??].

I mean, in a sense this was your design, am I right in saying, you designed it with the architect?

Yes. Well we all designed it, I mean you know, we worked it out. I don't think I did particularly, but I mean I was much involved, it's great fun building things.

And did any particular printers actually help set up the practicalities of the studio, or...?

Yes, they did, they ran it, mm.

Mm. I wonder where the presses came from in particular, is there any press...?

Well we bought all over the place. We bought one or two from the Admiralty in Taunton when they were closing down there, their map-making shop there. And we bought a beautiful press, which I've just sold last week, from Glasgow, a lovely press, a Flanders, London press, 1840, and very elegant legs. I've just sold it to Richard Spare, who is also a printmaker, printer, who worked for me for a long time, and I, when I moved out of 27 Kelso Place, which was a long long time ago, I lent it to him and he's had a free use of it for donkeys' years and I just sold it to him for rather a small amount of money. But I rather liked the idea of it going to a good home.

Indeed. I think some of the other printers, I can just name them, Ian Lawson, who is in lithography.

Ian Lawson was a lithographer, of course he was, he was before Budd Chark[ph], yes, he worked for us for quite a long time. He started off actually in the Essex shop, and then started...and then moved to a lithographic studio. And then he left and set up his own studio, and now has a studio in Hereford, in the West Country.

I think he printed the Howard Hodgkin, some of the lithographs there.

Yes, yes.

And screen-printers, there's Lindon Haywood[ph] and Michael O'Connor?

Yes.

Did they work as a team, or was that...?

Yes, well Lin Haywood[ph] ran the screen-print shop for quite a long time, and he printed at the Ed Rushay[ph] and his bruise[ph] series.

The organic screen-prints?

The organic screen-prints. And Mike O'Connor is the son of a very distinguished typographer, I can't remember his Christian name, he's frightfully famous, a very good family.

Those organic screen-prints must have been rather difficult to produce I would imagine.

Well it was a wonderful sort of Sixties idea really. We did a lot of experiments with different materials, and then, we went out to, when we had got the proofing done we, to get the material for the editioning, we got up extremely early one morning and went off to Covent Garden to buy all the material. I mean there were a lot of daffodils and, crushed daffodils, all sorts of weird things, I'll have to look it up and tell you what they all were. And, we did it, it was another sort of publicity stunt. And Ed and I and

Lin[ph], who was a very strange looking chap and walked around looking rather like an odd-job, wearing black gloves, was slightly behind us, and sort of holding all the things. And then we, I think, I can't believe we, we can't have actually bought all the stuff, we just went round sort of buying some of the stuff, and it was all photographs. And then we went and had a tremendous breakfast at the Connaught, it's was the only time I've ever had breakfast at the Connaught, and then we went back and saw the editions.

So, by '68/69, you actually had these workshops up and running?

Yes.

Was that the kind of period that you...?

Yes, they were up and running, they were up and running before, they were up and running, you know, from '64 onwards I guess, '64/'65. Mainly the etching shop; I think it took some time to get the lithographic studio. The lithographic studio was the last that got going, the screen-print studio got going.

Well, I'm only going by the entry book, so obviously one would have to do further research, but, I mean, in the early period, '64, there was a lot of work being done also abroad.

Oh yes, indeed, we did a lot of things with Maccio[ph] in Zurich, and some etching work we did with Leblanc[ph] and Lecurria[ph] I think, but we did some very good things with Evio Maccia in Zurich. I mean the 'Concerning Marriages' portfolio was printed there, and we sent out Bernard Cohen to work there, and he made his series of lithographs there. And I think...

Alan Davie also you...

Oh Alan Davie, yes Alan Davie was, actually Alan Davie was I think the first person who went out there, and it got terribly out of hand because they got carried away, he did a series called 'Zurich Improvisations', and the idea was, he was going to make a

suite of six prints, maybe a dozen, I don't know, but what happened was in fact, he kept on changing the stones and make I think thirty-six, I mean far too many, we've still got a lot left in fact. They're rather splendid, they're very, very vibrant actually, very splendid prints.

How did you make that contact with Maccia?

Well, Evio Maccia was just, you know, a very well known printer, and...

What was he like?

He was very Germanic, and all his printers were; it was in the German, Zurich must be in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, is it? I think it is. Anyway, I only remember it particularly because when Bernard Cohen went, he was terribly unnerved, because he, the main business of Evio Maccia was printing maps, and they had a little area for fine art printing, and an even smaller area, not much more than sort of a cubby-hole, where the artists could work on their stones. And Bernard I don't think had made anything on that scale before, certainly not worked in that environment before, and he found it rather difficult to get going, and the German, the Swiss printer, the German-Swiss printer, was always coming in and clicking [inaudible], 'Vot have you got for me now Mr Cohen?' And poor old Bernard was terribly put off, wasn't very keen on Germans, I'm sorry to tell you. Anyway...

And why would you choose Zurich and Evio Maccia as opposed to Kirwin[ph] or one of the lithographic printers that, younger lithographic printers?

There weren't any around. I mean there was only the Kirwin[ph], there really was no other. I mean you are going to correct me now. Are there other people?

Well I was thinking of, like Ian Lawson, but...

No...

Slightly younger...

No, Ian hadn't got going.

No.

I mean, that was pre Ian.

Right. So it is slightly, we're talking four or five years earlier, and you had to go abroad?

Yes. And again, I mean, it was pretty clear that, it's not the most efficient way to run a publishing business. It's very difficult, I mean we were talking about it outside, I mean, it's a difficult balance, because when we started, there really were, apart from the Kirwin[ph] there really were no professional print shops. I suppose Birgit Scholl's[ph] shop was one, I mean she was operating in a much more democratic and different way, very much more as a co-operative, but there were really no professional print studios about. So we felt that if we were going to do it seriously we needed to invent our own. But having done that, there is this terrible danger that, a) as I was saying before, you find after a bit that you get a certain sort of studio feel that's very subtle, not, you know, outside people may not notice it, but you tend to produce the same, the same sort of feel of work, I can only put it like that. And the other thing, which is more damaging still, is that if you've got a whole lot of printers eating you out of house and home, you paid a wage every week, it does tend to warp your publishing eye, because you begin to think, gosh, I must keep the presses turning, and you take in work which, or you agree to work, publish work which you mightn't have done otherwise. And we never developed a, we never really developed a sort of bread-and-butter business, and we never took in outside work, so we were all self-generating our own work in the studios. Actually there was a time in the Sixties, Seventies, when we did do quite a lot of, which we kept jolly quiet about, commercial work, design work really. We had a wonderful contract with Intercontinental Hotels, I can't remember how it all came about, I suppose we sold to Intercontinental Hotels because we used to do quite a lot of work with architects and designers, and we got on rightfully well with the chief designer, whose name I can't remember now, and he commissioned us to do a lot of original work for Intercontinental Hotels, and we did it

because we had been developing a screen process of doing things called density slicing, has that ever come your way?

No.

No. I don't know why we called it density slicing, but it was taking an image and then photographing it in different degrees of density, so that you got a sort of abstract, slightly abstract look, and you printed it in different colours and it looked more or less the same. I'm describing it extremely badly. But from the point of view of decoration for hotels, it was absolutely magical, because a designer could give instructions that he wanted, pictures or whatever the subject was, in the particular city the hotel was being built, in all sorts of different colour-ways, to match the décor, [inaudible]. And we did that, it was very good business.

So would they give you the photographs and it was up to the screen-printer to kind of come up...?

Yes, well we gave them ideas actually. I think we produced... I remember we did, we did several in Saudi Arabia, and we did one particular one in Riyadh. I just wonder whether they're still there. And we did a lot of research and got a lot of, you know, Arab type pictures of [inaudible] and desert scenes and so on, and made these pretty awful pictures. And on the way to Riyadh, they as it were fell off a camel, I mean somebody stole them, and it was absolutely wonderful because we had to make the whole lot again, we were delighted; we were rather flattered that anyone should bother to steal them apart from anything else.

It is moving ahead, but in fact, Kelso Lithography was created.

Yes.

What was Kelso Lithography? This is later, in Seventies, I believe, is that right?

Yes, well, we...did we call it Kelso Lithography?

I think that's in the entry book, or something...I've picked that up.

Oh that's right, you're absolutely right. We are called Editions Alecto, and the other two Furies are Megaera and Tisiphone.

Yes.

So we called our screen shop, Megaera Screen-printing, and I thought we called the litho studio Tisiphone Etching.

Well I was doing to, I was then going to ask you about Tisiphone Etching, and Charles Newington, and indeed Megaera.

Oh Tisiphone Etching, that's right.

That's right, and Megaera, yes, Megaera?

By that time we had run out of Furies so we called it Kelso Lithography, that's right, yes.

Does that mean this is your name and it wasn't formalised, it's just a name that...?

Just a name we gave it so that one would have a stamp, and we had, I think we each...

A separate stamp?

Yes, it was a separate shop, different studio.

A separate shop.

And really just to give a stake for the printers, you know, who are actually very key people.

So in fact J.C. Editions, I was under the illusion, I thought that was a separate, was separate.

J.C. Editions was, J.C.... You ought to talk to Jim Collyer about it.

They broke away, did they, actually moved?

They moved away, yes, they decided to set up on their own.

Right.

And, it's very funny, I saw Jim the other day and he was absolutely waxing lyrical about the time he worked at Alecto, as one of the happiest times of his life and all that sort of thing. Actually we used to have the most frightful rows all the time because he was always saying I was mean about money and so on. I think that's why he left, he didn't think I was paying him enough. I remember, but it was a long time ago, I remember we had a terrible argument about putting his salary up to £100 a week, £5,000 a year.

I mean on that front, it must have been very difficult, and I mean, it didn't in a sense last, but I wonder what the key, looking back, what were the strong points and what were the weaknesses of that, it's the ideal isn't it, to have printers on the spot, to be commissioning?

Yes. Well the strong point was that we were able to give artists some jolly good facilities, and I suppose the best example of that, which had an extremely sad ending, was being able to give John Phillips the run of the studios to do Dante's 'Inferno', and he literally, he had the run of all three studios for eighteen months to two years, proofing up the images for Dante's 'Inferno', and that work was all going on when we had this disastrous fire in 1978. So that...

That is really, yes...

Everyone laughed and said, serves you right for being so impertinent as to publish something called the 'Inferno'.

I mean what would be different if you set this up now? And could you set it up now?

I wouldn't set it up now, and there would be no need to set it up now, because time's moved on, and you know, there are plenty of places, you know, small studios where there are very good craftsmen who can work with different artists. I mean it's a cottage industry, print-making, and it works with us all right, it gets us a good inter-relationship. I suppose it is three-way probably, I mean certainly between the printer and the artist, but probably it is the printer and the artist and the publisher. You know, I like to think that the publisher does have quite a significant input, because after all we were directing overall the idea, I mean it was we who made the decision about how many prints there should be in the portfolio for instance, and the sort of size and that sort of thing, and probably the number of colours. And we were pretty well setting down the ground rules, but they were very loose ground rules because we always took the view that you were much more likely to get interesting work if you made it a truly creative experience for the artist to be able to follow through his ideas, using the printers really as his tool, as an extension of his paintbrush. And in fact if you look at all the things that Alecto has published, I think you will probably find that the best things we published have often been the first thing an artist has done, you know, probably, probably 'The Rake's Progress' actually is one of the most significant things which Hockney has done. Certainly I think 'As is When' is the best thing that Paolozzi has ever done. And probably 'Concerning Marriage', is certainly high up in the best things that Allen Jones has ever done. So I mean I think, there was a feeling of sort of excitement and immediacy, and you know, I must do better than the last person, which was very creative and very good, and.....

End of F6494 Side A

F6494 Side B

.....[inaudible] and, you know, it sort of slightly lost its spark in a way. And I certainly got rather disenchanted with it, because I've said endlessly, you know, I don't like thinking of printmaking as a sort of commercial product, I mean it's a crazy thing to say, but I mean I don't...I think the exciting thing about printmaking is being able to give artists the opportunity to develop creative ideas and then get them spread around the world, as widely and as cheaply as possible. And in the Seventies the whole print world exploded and became pretty bogus and pretty awful things were done, and I got very fed up with it, because more and more of the art world was focused on London and it was terribly incestuous, everybody was looking inward, and this absolutely was not what my idea of print publishing was about. And, I'm skipping on a little bit, but the reason we got into historical prints was partly because I was desperately trying to dream up a project where one could take things out of London and have published material which was relevant to people in the provinces. And it was at that time that Ian Baine[ph] found and bought the plates for William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain', and you know, made a slight tactical error in not having the £10,000, the plates got written into his budget, and therefore needed to find some other way to raise the funds, and started doing it with Dorothea White actually at, whatever her studio was called. Now I talked to Ian about it, thought it would be a wonderful idea to use William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain' as a peg to publish a modern series, and commission living artists to do the same sort of journey round the whole coastline of England, Scotland and Wales, as a way of producing material which as I say would be relevant to different places, and to do it absolutely not in the way that Daniels did, making these wonderful topographical aquatint plates. They're very beautiful, I mean it's a very interesting series, it's just pre-Industrial Revolution, pre-camera, pre railways, you know. What I wanted to do was to find, you know, Patrick Heron, say, painting pictures of Cornwall, but, so that, you know, his prints and images might look extremely abstract but one could then explain how he had come to create those particular images. Because at that time, and still very much now, one of the things I've always been trying to do is to match the actual prints with interpretative material. I suppose it's because I'm not an artist myself, I'm always fascinated by the way artists develop their ideas, how they actually arrive at a finished image, and of course in printmaking it's much easier to

follow through this development because, as you have stage proofs you can stop at different stages, and indeed you can cheat and go backwards and see where ideas began to develop and diverge and so on. And I thought, and still think, that this idea of a series of prints, 'A Voyage Round Great Britain', would be a wonderful educational potential package, because you could follow through a development of artist ideas and then produce it as a, whatever you do, a CD-ROM or a book or art lesson. I mean I redeveloped this idea recently, and this is really off the point actually Tessa, but, with the Domesday Book.

Yes.

Because, we've been trying to get the Domesday Book into the educational system, and I wanted to match it with a Millennium project to commission Millennium artists, very much in the way war artists were commissioned, to make a visual record of England in the closing moments of the 20th century, but again to do it in, in this case one would commission them to make a unique piece as well as an edition piece, but the edition piece to be backed up by a record of how the ideas and the finished work was built up.

I mean I hope we'll talk more about that. On the question of, the whole, the sequence that the artist works along in producing a print, could you define yourself, I mean, how much would you intercede in that process, how much would you follow it along and offer your own suggestions, and how much would you draw back from the print studio and what was going on there? How do you see that?

It really depends on one's relationship with the artist.

Well could you give a few examples that you recall?

Well, Patrick Proctor is a man of great talent, in some ways absolutely maddening to work with because he goes off on all sorts of blind alleys, and you think it's going to be absolutely awful, and suddenly it clicks and it's terribly exciting. And he is one of those people who really very much likes working I think in a team.

End of F6494 Side B

F6495 Side A

The third part of our interview today. Should we say where we are and the date?

Yes, we're at the Court House, and it's the 17th of January 1998.

Thank you. Our last session, I think we ended, we were talking about how you might work as a publisher and intercede in the process, and I think you were talking about Patrick Proctor.

Yes, I was beginning to talk about Patrick Proctor, because we worked together for really quite a long time, in fact we were, he made all his early prints with us. And you were asking me how a project began, and actually the first major project we did with Patrick Proctor was 'Invitation to a Voyage'.

How did that, do you recall...?

Well that came about in an entirely oblique way, and Patrick had been, it was, gosh I can't remember the date now but it must have been early Seventies, but it was the sort of height of the...

'68 I think.

Was it '68?

Yes, '68, '69.

No, '68, that's right, '68. And Patrick had been, 'Invitation to the Voyage' was all about a weekend, a pretty druggy weekend I guess, in New York, and showing really the change of perspective in Patrick's relationships with people he was with. But what made it a great success was that we had at that time two extremely good printers in the etching studio, Maurice Payne and Danyon Black, who got on very well with Patrick and worked well, and really taught him, I think he would admit, you know, the intricacies and wonders of aquatint, the making of aquatints. And what was always

very exciting in the studio at Kelso Place, that bringing in artists who, you know, were very excited on the whole to be able to have the opportunity to work with professional printers, they were always pressing the boundaries. And 'Invitation to a Voyage' I think actually stands up as probably the best thing Patrick has ever done, because he was really pushing the idea of making colour aquatints through a crazy way, using several plates and putting different colours on the same plate and so on.

Did you think that the link-up might work, or did Patrick in fact suggest it, or, was it quite informal how that might come about?

I think the answer is, it's always incredibly informal. I'd known Patrick for some time before, I always very much admired his watercolours, I think he's a brilliant watercolorist, rather uneven as an oil painter, but clearly from the work he did in his wonderful, you know, lyrical washes and things, these watercolours, he had the ability to make wonderful prints. And, I can't remember how it all happened, how he came to do it.

Because I think he did some small sketches that were kind of, he might have brought into the studio.

He must have, it must have been based on an idea.

Yes.

And I guess we must have discussed the general sort of feel of it, and he did it. My mind's gone a complete, an absolute blank. He sort of hung it on a series of poems didn't he.

I think there was text attached to it, yes. Maybe subsequently.

No, at the time. Oh dear oh dear, I can't remember what it was.

We can obviously...

We'll have to go back and look it up.

Yes, yes we can ask that. I wonder, I mean how would that process then develop? Were you going to, do you recall coming to the studio and seeing something develop as they were working together, or, in that, in 'Invitation to a Voyage' and in other projects, perhaps you could give an example.

Well another project, Patrick for instance, I mean he, I think the next one he did was 'India Mother', when he went out to India. I think, I don't think we paid for it, or I think it was probably funded by Renton[??], and he kept a diary when he was there, and made lots of wonderful watercolours, and from the watercolours that he produced, the series, of again of aquatints developed. But they were sort of an extension of his watercolours, he drew, when he was out there. And the same thing happened, we did a Chinese suite with him as well, and a Venice suite, I mean he used the, he really used the printmaking side of his work I think as a very neat way to finance wonderful travels around the world, and we liked that idea very much, because he always brought a very fresh eye to what he was doing.

And where would you intercede, where do you think you might have affected something, possibly? I mean, and stimulated that process, if Patrick, someone like Patrick needed to be stimulated, or...?

Well, I mean inevitably when you're developing a print project from, as a result of an expedition or a voyage or a journey, and you are working with existing raw material, so you're always fining the thing down, so I guess there was always an element where one was looking at things and deciding the scope of the thing, there's always a physical scope you have to look out for and see, decide how many prints you're going to have in the portfolio for instance.

I mean do you have a heavy first session then, clearing, making those decisions?

No, you don't really have. Well I suppose you do, you have a sort of general idea about the scope, the number of things, eight or ten or twelve, probably, you probably start with rather more than you actually end up with, and then you can have a

preliminary selection of, you know, the images he's going to work with. And then some work and some don't. I can't remember, with 'Invitation to a Voyage' I think, it sort of went through quite logically, but I know that 'India Mother', there were several plates which we eventually didn't edition, or didn't work, you know, didn't come off. As I think I said at an earlier time, Patrick is a very exciting person to work with because he's always pushing out the boundaries, and sometimes it simply doesn't work at all, and one has agonising days and weeks. It's very tiresome for the publisher of course, because all this time he's using studio time, and the cost is going up and up and up. This is one of the hazards of publishing contemporary, living artists, that neither the artist nor the publisher really knows in advance what's going to come out the other end, and at the time we were publishing contemporary art, you know, we were taking all the risk, you know, it was our studio, our printers, we were publishing it, we were selling it. Nowadays most publishers I think, you know, work with an outside printer and probably buy in at a known price.

It's a kind of neater arrangement.

A neater arrangement, yes. It also involves the, you know, it means that the artist has to be much more careful about what his costs are.

But of course artists don't often choose to work in that way. I mean they are a certain type of person that perhaps needs the freedom that you are suggesting.

Well I think it was very nice. It was slightly self-indulgent but it was actually a very nice way to work. I mean the most wide-ranging freedom we ever gave I think was to Tom Phillips, when he was working on the Dante project, which of course never came to pass because two years into it we succeeded in burning our studios to the ground and the whole project was abandoned. But we had really given him the run of all three studios, etching, lithographic and screen-print, for a couple of years, just proofing, proofing, proofing, getting the images.

Why did you do that, in a sense?

Well because that, first of all, I mean it was a very, it was a very major project, you know, it was a very wide-ranging project. I mean when we had this ghastly fire of course everyone said, you were tempting God, you know, Dante's 'Inferno', but it was enormously... Tom is a polymath, I mean he's an amazing man, and he was illustrating his own translation of the 'Inferno', and so he was developing the ideas all the time, and what we decided we would do is to, you know, give him the freedom really to work through all those ideas, before we finally decided on the format of the final publication.

So that's quite unusual, that...?

It was extremely unusual, and alas it didn't work, because before we had got to the stage of actually being able to publish anything we, the whole thing was lost. Actually the whole thing wasn't lost, because fortunately we gave... Tom always had, you know, a couple of proofs from what he had done, so, the work he had done wasn't lost, but of course for instance all the screens were burnt, and all the transparencies and all the material.

Yes. Who was he working with, who were the printers?

He was working with, in our screen studio with Leslie Hosgood[ph] and Bob Jones, who had a, worked under the input[??] of Megaera Screen-printing, at the time when we invented a separate screen-printing company, Megaera being one of the other Furies, Alecto, Tisiphone and Megaera. And we had an etching company called Tisiphone Etching, and the, at that time Charlie Newington ran that. And, I can't remember whether we did any lithographic work actually with Tom on the 'Inferno'.

Was he interested in using all the studios then?

Yes. I mean he, and not only using all the studios but mixing techniques and mixing medium, and, quite exciting.

But you in fact didn't revive that, it was going to be too complicated to, subsequently, after the fire, to revive it?

Well, he went off and did it himself. I mean we were sort of wiped out for a year really, effectively, to doing any other project, and he went off and did it on his own. I mean he produced this wonderful book in the end, but he, I don't say he thought it was our fault but I mean he certainly wasn't very sympathetic to our fire, I mean it's a strange thing but he never ever came to commiserate with the printers about the fire, and that was rather hurting for everybody, but for them particularly because they had really pushed the boat out for him, and, you know, acted as his tools, and he never came and said, terribly sorry, what a pity, let's do it again.

Because presumably for the printers this was disastrous, I mean in the sense...

An absolute disaster, yes.

What happened to the, subsequently to the sort of...?

Well like the Windmill Theatre, we never closed, and we set up alternative studios around London. I mean it was in the middle of the winter – we're just jumping ahead a little bit now.

Yes.

It was December the 7th 1978 I think. And we set up studios all over London, and we moved our sort of publishing business at a local greengrocer's shop which had just closed down after eighty years, just round the corner in Kensington Close, and rebuilt 27 Kelso Place.

So how long did...were you in temporary accommodation, how long did you have that temporary situation then?

About eighteen months I should think.

Right.

Quite a long time. We were rebuilding all the time, you see we very quickly started, we got all the insurance money luckily so we rebuilt it exactly as we wanted, it was very satisfactory from that point of view. I hasten to tell you that it was a great mistake burning our studios to the ground, it was very very traumatic.

And of course a lot of people lost their livelihood in a sense through you, I mean it was absolutely disastrous, going back to the printers, I mean their situation.

Very much the printers, yes, we did keep the thing going, although...

Did you keep them going, the various studios then, under a name?

We closed down the lithographic studio, I can't...dear oh dear, I should have looked it all up. I can't remember whether Budd Shark[ph], who was our lithographic printer, had already gone back to America, I rather think he had, and the etching studio, intaglio studio, we certainly closed down. But before, just before the fire we had begun proofing some of the plates for Banks' 'Florilegium', and actually it was very alarming because, I think I can say this now because it's not going to go out for ninety-three, but Robert Cross, who was our great supporter and friend at the Natural History Museum, the British Museum of Natural History, who was the publications man, who was very keen for the Banks' 'Florilegium' plates to be printed and published, had actually, in some mysterious way, managed to extract four or five plates for us, that I'm sure was all done with all the right rules, to work at Kelso Place. And when the fire happened we actually had these four incredibly precious plates on the premises, they were actually locked up in my room. And the first thing I did, because I arrived when the fire was raging, and this is not a story of bravery and courage because it wasn't anywhere near my room, but I, you know, the first thing I did was to extract those plates, make sure they were safe. But, having had this terrible fire, in fact we, you know, really had no facilities for going on working with artists; I can't remember what we had in hand, probably one or two little things. But we did have the possibility of working on Banks' 'Florilegium', and we had this amazing printer, Edward Egerton-Williams, who had been actually doing proofing work, and while, we really developed the project for Banks' 'Florilegium' in the interregnum between the fire and the rebuilding of Kelso Place, and he, we must have set him up

in a studio, and he did some proofing, as a result of which we decided we would go ahead with the publication of Banks' 'Florilegium', which in turn prompted the move from modern artists, contemporary work, to historical work, which we're doing now, simply because the Banks' 'Florilegium' project was so big, it really sort of swamped us, we had to concentrate on it, and we found it was very difficult, or I found it very difficult, to combine the ancient and modern, you know, combine two centuries as it were, as we say, you know, my brain wasn't big enough to take in two centuries at once.

Well perhaps, before we talk fully about that period with the Alecto historical editions, I think, we haven't really discussed an area of work which is the whole multiples area, which in fact you talk about a lot for example in the celebratory decade of printmaking, and I've got some visuals here in front of me. Because that was very much you wasn't it, moving into that area.

Yes, well that...

Could you say a bit about that, and your thinking at the time, and how it developed in the context of the early Seventies?

Well I think it was very much a sort of child of the early Seventies, but it also directly grew out of the whole, it sounds awfully grand, but I mean our philosophy at Alecto, as when, I think we had had an earlier talk, we really started seriously moving into sort of general publishing working with painters and sculptors, away from the specifically doing topographical things, which is how we started, making pictures of schools and colleges, really because we all got very intrigued with the thought of being able to provide a channel of communications for living artists, and being able to make original work in multiple form, so that they could disseminate it round the world and people could extend their scope from their own pond where they're beginning to make a splash to the world stage, rather a grand thing to say, but that's really what it was about. And the extension from that logically was, you know, why stop at two dimensions, which is the traditional thing, because we were constantly pushing the boundary of printmaking in fact. I mean, we were talking last night about the Ed Rushays[ph] screen-prints which were made from organic substances; I mean

really we did some pretty funny, crazy things, but it was an extension of that sort of thought process, that if one was doing two-dimensional things, why not do three-dimensional things? And, I don't think we were an instigator of that, there were people on the Continent, as we used to call the Continent, in Germany and Switzerland, who were making multiple things, and there was a firm in New York which was actually called Multiples, working with artists doing three-dimensional objects.

Did you go and talk to them?

We knew them quite well and talked to them, yes. And we began developing some things, and we had a lot of fun with it. Financially it was a complete and utter disaster, because what we hadn't realised was that there was no existing, again, channel of communications to get it out. I mean our thought was that this would be a very exciting thing for the galleries to handle, and we were working with a lot of galleries with our prints and it worked pretty well. So that was all right because they're all flat, and it's in the drawer and easy to handle. But when you start having three-dimensional things, they get bulky and in boxes, and dusty, and people didn't, you know, didn't like handling them. And people didn't quite understand them either, and for galleries, they weren't expensive enough, funnily enough. I mean we were still pushing this very democratic idea that art should be plentiful and cheap, I mean prints should be plentiful and cheap, and therefore multiples on the whole we thought should be plentiful and cheap, and we tried to, I think we, unfortunately we were probably ten or even fifteen years ahead of the time, because we tried to develop another market at a sort of lower level than the galleries, through museum shops and department stores, and the market simply wasn't ready for it, you know, at that time museum shops were not nearly as sophisticated as they are now. I mean, in a tiny way maybe we sort of pushed people to think about having three-dimensional things, and now the, you know, particularly in America, MOMA's shop and the Met. shop are absolutely amazing, you look at it wide-eyed. But we tried very hard to interest the smarter departmental stores particularly in America, and I guess we must have some encouragement from them, and we did all sorts of experiments, but there was never really the right department to work in, we were always shifted from the fancy

goods department to the stationery, to novelties or something like that. And to make it work, it was a totally different sort of business, and we weren't ready to do it.

Do you think it worked in America, but, you think it didn't work in this country? I mean, why was that, if that's the case?

It didn't work, I mean I think it's just a straightforward retailing problem, just, really and truly, both retailing and promotional, and we had got a certain amount of publicity for it. I think, I told you, I can't remember, you've seen the cutting, I haven't looked at it for ages and ages, but...

When did you launch this idea, or...?

We did launch it, we launched it in fact, we had, you know, four or five colour pages in the 'Sunday Times' colour magazine, it was the early 'Times' colour magazine, and, I don't know, we may have talked about this already but it was terrific, we had, you know, real puff, and lots of lovely pictures. And we came in very early on Monday morning, you know, to fight off the hoards, and there was absolutely nothing happened at all, and eleven o'clock in the morning somebody rang up and said he was a remainder merchant and he had seen our large spread in the 'Sunday Times' and it was obvious we had an awful lot of stock and could he come and help us. [laughs] So, sometimes the most wonderful publicity takes some time to pay off. But we got a lot of *succès d'estime* I think, to use my famous French terminology.

Who were the, I wonder who were the first artists that you approached in the multiple area, because in fact quite a number worked with you, Derek Boshier and Alice Hutchins and, I mean David Pelham and Michael, Mike Kolides[ph].

Yes, and Phil Pie[ph] and...

So who were the first kind of group of artists you worked with, or...?

Well those were some of the first groups. We also did a very, I mean we did some silly things, we did a whole series of flicker-books, have you ever come across flicker-books?

Indeed.

And that was rather fun, because we got a lot of, we got, I should think about twenty different artists doing those, making little things you flick through and you would have a little cinematograph.

With working with someone like Derek Boshier, did you link up with, obviously, a firm in the making of those?

No, at the time I had a very wayward but charming and ingenious man working with me called Anthony Matthews[ph], Tony Matthews[ph], who had been working with a design firm, whose name I will remember in a moment, who is very well known in the late Sixties, and he really was the, he was the production manager, and he sourced and worked with all these funny little workshops, where we made the things. But...

Do you recall any in particular that you worked with?

Well I'm just trying to think. One of our most flamboyant multiples, which really was a sort of half-way house between a multiple and a print, was, Peter Sedge's[ph] video disks, which were screen-prints on great big aluminium disk attached to a motor, so they spun round with ultraviolet lights so they changed...they were very very dramatic. But of course it was a pretty good nightmare because the motor was always breaking down, or the lights didn't work. But they were splendid kinetic art.

So how did he conceive that?

He conceived that because that's, he was, you know, a front-runner in Op art, it was called in those days.

Op kinetic art, yes.

Yes. We made a series of prints with him, screen-prints, and he, we I suppose developed the idea, if one's going to, why not actually take it a stage further and make it a mobile, a motorised thing? And he at the time was experimenting with his paintings, with strobe lighting and ultraviolet lighting and things.

It looks ingenious.

Bill Culbert[ph], we did some wonderful things with Bill Culbert[ph], with light, thinking about that, light sculptures, which were extremely ingenious, wonderful things, but again terribly difficult to market. I mean he made one thing which may possibly be illustrated in that book, an enormous ball with a light source inside and poles which sort of rolled about and made patterns on the wall, it was very exciting, really sort of, sort of early installation, and if one had the right room, it looked wonderful.

And, coming from a museum point of view, it seems such a loss really that museums have got stuck into, presumably they were worried about it being an original or not, or, how many you were producing.

Yes, I don't think that was the problem. It was honestly very largely a physical problem to actually, how to show them. I mean it's the same problem of course with unique[??] sculpture, I always think it's very bad luck on sculptors that so often their work is so badly displayed because it doesn't have the space or the situation. And sculpture is all about space round the object.

Yes, and museums aren't necessarily good at it today for example, in a gallery situation. Did...I mean, I was...who bought, I mean, these works? Did you find some private collectors?

We did, yes, a few, some. And, yes we must have found a few. I mean we sold quite a lot but I can't pretend it was a commercial success. But on the other hand, the one, I think we did come to the conclusion fairly early on that this was really, we were sort of ahead of the game. We went through an elaborate process working actually with

Conran, the early days of Terry Conran, or his firm, making a sort of customised presentation, sort of kiosk, was one of our ideas, and we developed a whole lot of sort of corporate identity and logos, they were very trendy at that time, the multiples, so that we had a sort of display area, and the idea was, you had a display area which you could actually set up within museum shops, or indeed department stores, where all these multiples could be displayed. It was really an attempt to overcome the problem, where on earth are these people going to show their things, and differentiate them from the fluffy toys and the gimmicks and googaws[ph], which one found in the fancy goods department of department stores, so that one could say, this is work by artists, I don't say art work, work by, multiple art work by artists, which is what we were trying to promote. But, as I say, we were just a bit ahead of the day and it didn't really work very well. But it didn't put us off making multiples by the way, I mean the one really successful multiple we made was 'A Girl on a Chair' by George Segal, and that paradoxically came about my mistake in fact, because, I had a great admiration for his work, still have, I think he's a marvellous sculptor, artist, and thought that the sort of things he was doing, he made wonderful drawings actually, very little is known about his drawings, but I thought he could make wonderful deep white etchings and those chunky things. And he sort of wasn't ready to do it, he didn't want to do that. And we, I can't remember how it evolved but it evolved that, why didn't we then make a multiple, make a three-dimensional piece? And in fact the 'Girl on a Chair' was a prototype for a whole series of work which he developed in the years following of, you know, glimpses of people through doorways, and very much more contained sculptures rather than his big sort of set piece environmental sculptures. And the 'Girl on a Chair' is, you've probably seen it, is a black box inside of which is a red kitchen chair, just the back and the seat and the legs cut off, on which is planted this beautiful girl, a white plaster girl looking...the chair is looking, you are looking at the chair, she is looking back into the box, and her head is just cut off by the top of the box. It's a glimpse of this very fine moment when she is just either lowering herself onto the chair or just the dynamic of getting up. And I must tell you that that idea of the dynamic, of this movement, which actually makes the thing extremely good by the way, came about slightly by mistake, because, as you know George Segal makes his sculptures from living people, I mean he actually wraps the.....

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.....young lady, and had a very beautiful bottom. And when the whole thing was actually positioned we looked at it and we suddenly realised that it wasn't as he originally had intended, the girl sitting on a chair, because her bottom still had this wonderful curve, and there was an awful moment when he said, 'I am not going to flatten it off, it's going to have this dynamic, that she's just going to be there just about to get off', so...

Did you make that in England, or America?

It was very interesting. I mean we made it in England, and so it was a...it was a very elaborate thing to do. I mean he made the original cast in America, and then I brought it back to England, and, did several trips back and forth across the Atlantic with the prototype, and, have I told you this story? It's quite a funny story actually, because we, it was big, it was, you know, the size of this desk which I'm measuring now, which is, I think must be what, sort of three-and-a-half feet high by three feet wide, and two feet deep, quite a hefty thing, and to transport it we made rather practical wooden crates with screw-on lids, and on the lid we stencilled what it was, George Segal, 'Girl on a Chair', 1970, Editions Alecto. And when I first took it out to America, actually coming back from America, I knew I was going to have awful trouble with the Customs, they didn't like that sort of thing, so I just decided I wouldn't tell them anything, I would just, you know, put it on the baggage and wait for it to come out. And I put it on a trolley and wheeled it out, and... Of course it was going to America, that's right, when I arrived in New York, I just put it on a trolley and wheeled it through, sort of looking all innocent and waiting to be challenged by the Customs man, and the Customs man looked up and said, 'Gee, that sure is a great way to advertise a movie,' and thought it was George Segal the movie star. So I said, 'Just an idea I had,' and went on. [laughs] And got away with it. Always after that I pretended it was George Segal the movie star.

Why was that one so successful?

Well it was partly successful because it was a big enough piece to, I mean it was a real work of art, you know, it wasn't, compared to the sort of other things that you were looking at in the book, they were rather sort of, you know, nice gimmicky things, plus the artist's ideas made in three-dimensional form. But this was a proper sculpture, and Sidney Jairness[ph] was his, George Segal's dealer, who is a very good dealer, and he, they sold quite a few for us. And we did a lot of advertising in fact, at the time we used to advertise pretty widely in all the art journals, and it looked rather splendid, and we had some quite nice reviews about it. And we sold it, we made 150 and, I think we sold them all out.

Did you sell more in America than in England?

Yes, we sold a lot. Although we had quite a lot in Europe, and quite a lot to private people. There was a famous time when Laurie Hoffmann[ph], who I must bring into this story because he was such an integral part of the team at Kelso Place, that he and I had a famous sales tour round Europe with all our things in an enormous estate car, and the triumph of the whole trip was that we sold somebody, actually it was a gallery not a private individual, one of George Segal's 'Girl on a Chair', in a car park in Munich, sitting on the tailgate of the estate car, lit up by somebody else's headlights. And we always thought that was the pinnacle of great, you know, good salesmanship.

Yes. How much did they sell for?

They sold for about \$2,000 I think, quite a lot of money in those days.

Yes. You have mentioned Laurie Hoffmann[ph]. What actually was his role?

He, Laurie joined us very very very early on, having had a, you know, sort of chequered career doing all sorts of things; he worked for the United Nations in New York as a messenger I think, and then, his wonderful idea this, and he was very early on in the sort of health food game, and he worked in some frightful health food shop, and I can't remember when he came to us but he came to us, and ran the stock room, and was a tremendous asset, except that he was frightfully muddly and not a very good stock room manager. But he had tremendous flare, artistic flare actually, he was

a maddening man because he was usually right, and he used to argue with me a lot, and I used to overrule him constantly and then afterwards I discovered he actually had the right idea after all.

So you worked quite closely together then, at certain times?

Well we did work quite, we were quite a good foil for each other really. And then he, after, he emerged from the stock room, and became really our principal salesman in Europe. He had many, I mean various disadvantages, one of which is, he couldn't drive, so it was absolutely hopeless sending him out anywhere, and he didn't really like driving very much. But he was very, he was a very key figure in Alecto, I mean for a long long time, being the sort of person who was always there, and all the artists liked him enormously, he had a tremendous wit, and also all our clients liked him very much. But his selling technique was low-key to the ultimate extreme; I mean somebody once said, who has actually bought a lot of things from us, that he felt it was always a challenge to get Laurie to actually sell something, which, you know, worked rather well with some American dealers, they couldn't believe that this sort of totally laid-back person was actually selling them. And he worked with us for a long long long long time, and I mean sadly, in the last, three years ago he had the most frightful stroke and is now totally incapacitated in that he can't speak, and is physically rather crippled, but now lives, you know, on his own in a flat in Chiswick. But it is really sad, because he is somebody who had this wonderful...he lived on his wits really, lived on his repartee. In the days when we were working with Hockney and Proctor and Norman Stevens[ph], and Laurie together as a quartet, they were actually down there really, they were very quick-witted.

So Laurie must have come quite early on then?

Oh he did, he came very early on indeed, yes. Yes.

Can I ask also, I think as part of the multiples, was Alecto International, and that label if you like extending presumably into America, but also Europe.

Yes, perhaps being grand really. And you know, the same sort of era, we're always talking about corporate image and so on, and we wanted to have an entity which differentiated, separate from the serious print publishing in two dimensions on paper, and, yes, we called it Alecto International, because that was the idea, we were trying to move things into the international arena.

So Alecto International embraced multiples, or...?

Yes, it was entirely multiples, it was set up, Alecto International was the sort of multiples arm. And it was very largely financed, not by me but by a man called Michael Spend[ph], who was an architect, and a contemporary of mine at school actually, but a bit younger than me perhaps, and he was really the money behind Alecto International. And he latterly bought 'Studio International', the journal, and worked with, when Peter Townsend was editor, and then that actually didn't work, that relationship didn't work very well, and he went back to being an architect and writing books and things.

So you obviously needed a backer, I mean to create something like that, you...

Yes. We needed a backer. I mean, the labour, the sort of horrors of making multiples, and one of the problems is that there are different types of multiple, I mean the ones which an artist can actually make himself, and makes them one by one, and of course very quickly we discovered that if one wanted to do it seriously and to provide, you know, what we would now call a product line to go into museum shops and institutions and so on, one had to be able, of course, it's the point of multiples, to make a lot of identical things, and very quickly you found that you were involved in making moulds, and that's when the cost really clicks in, because you know, you are suddenly into development costs of making a mould, to make the original thing, and having done it of course then the unit price of what you are making is probably quite good, but in order to allertise[ph] the cost of the mould you have to sell an awful lot, and it was a very steep learning curve to decide, you know, whether you would price the thing at a level that, you know, you hopefully have a mass market, but you really did have to have a mass market, or whether you kept to an idea of just an extension of the fine art business and the print business, doing limited editions at a higher price.

And on the whole we were trying very hard to go away from the limited edition; I mean again back to the idea really and truly, the whole concept of limited editions and, you know, high prices, is, which we've all now gone back to by the way, is really anathema to the idea that what one ought to be doing is just making original material by artists available as widely as possible. And the whole idea of making, of limiting editions, is a 20th century one, probably late 20th century; before that, in the 19th century, you know, when printmaking was a way of making copies of things, you just made as many as you could sell, the idea of limiting the number, or until the plates break down.

Does Dubuffet's, the 'Playing Cards', they're...

Yes.

Tell me a bit about them, because they fall into this area of unlimited if you like, is that right?

They absolutely do. I mean that was a very early one, I suppose that was one of the areas where, it would be wonderful to pretend that the whole thing was the result of fearfully logical thought doing it. I mean the thing just evolved as ideas, and we talked about it and talked about it, and said, why don't we do this, why don't we do that? The [inaudible] of the Dubuffet cards developed, the person who actually really developed it was Paul Cornwall-Jones with Leslie Waddington, and it was a series of unique pieces which Waddington showed, and I think...I think, I mean they were actually conceived from the start as a multiple, because they were a game, and he wrote this rather, we'll look at it afterwards, because I've got a box here, he wrote the rules of the game, that you lay out the [inaudible] on the carpet of your mind and... But it was I suppose really a way of getting into Dubuffet's art, that, because there were all these big cards, of the different objects and people and pictures.

So they were print size?

They were the size of your tape recorder there. And on the back, on the back it had the title of what it was, so that when you had it up, lying about on the table, on the floor, you had to guess what the image was.

Well, he was right in a sense, I mean it does provide the opportunity to have contact with his work, and to work with it.

Yes. Now I come to think of it, I suppose another reason why, one of the reasons why we got into multiples was through publications we did with Eduardo Paolozzi of the [inaudible] Empire News and general dynamic fund[??], which was a box of masses of different images, and so really again you began talking about an object, I know...have they got any here, but, you know, we made these wonderful Perspex boxes. So you were talking about a sort of hybrid, you know, so you had something which looked rather intriguing sitting on your table in your gallery, but it contained all these other images which you could then play with.

That was a massive project.

It was a huge project really, another ridiculous project.

And you mentioned the flicker-books, which, I've never seen a flicker-book yet, so...

I wonder whether, I haven't got any left actually at all, it's hopeless.

Does it...they were very expensive to buy?

No, they were terribly terribly...they were really cheap, they were little tiny things, the size of this, I mean two inches by three, and it's like a child, it's exactly like a child's flicker-book, and it has a stiffish card cover and stiffish paper and you flick it like that so that all the pages went bzz-bzz-bzz-bzz-bzz, and you got a movement, a movement of the thing inside.

So how many did you produce in that area, and who did you work with?

We worked with a lot of, a lot of different people, I mean Paolozzi did one, Proctor did one, I can't remember who they all were actually, I ought to remember. Derek Boshier did one I think, Patrick Caulfield did one. Lots of different people. And we made a little box in which they all fitted in.

They each had their own box?

No they had, we had a box like a slipcase into which all the flicker-books fitted in. You would either buy them, somebody must have a complete set somewhere, and there must be single ones about.

So that would have been editions in a sense, the boxes?

Oh yes, oh yes they were editions.

To what...?

We made quantities of them.

How...I wonder what the edition level was.

Probably, I should think we probably made a couple of thousand or something like that, maybe not as many.

Yes, they might not be in museums, that's again, that's not necessarily a problem, because...

Yes, somebody must have got them somewhere.

Do you feel they were successful?

They were, they were a sort joke really, they were sort of funny things. But again I don't think they were quite sort of ahead of the game, I don't think anyone else was doing it really. I think a lot of people learnt from our efforts and mistakes.

Perhaps they weren't considered at the time serious enough, perhaps ironically.

Well a lot of our things weren't very serious, that was the whole idea, we were quite light-hearted, we were making things that you would now call, what do you call them? I mean sort of, you know, grown-up toys, the sort of things you put on your desk to play with.

The Collectors' Club certainly was another concept that you worked behind.

Absolutely, the Collectors' Club, the Collectors' Club was another attempt to break out of the sort of straightjacket which, of you know, a few artists being, you know, widely promoted, and very much connected with the gallery set-up in London. I mean, in the Seventies particularly the English art market was pretty incestuous really, it was all based in London, there was very little opportunity to extend it, and the idea of the Collectors' Club was to get a group, a club, who would support a publishing programme, to allow us each year to publish a group of younger artists, it was just a way of financing a publishing programme. And we had a very distinguished editorial board, who didn't do a tremendous lot but gave it a sort of credibility. Actually they did do quite a lot, I mean you know, we used to have meetings to discuss who we were going to work with. And we, the Editions Alecto Collectors' Club lasted about two years, and started off, again wonderfully well, but really to work it needed to develop in America, and we had a very good link-up with the 'New York Times', I can't remember again the person who I worked with there. Roger Jellyneck[ph], I remember Roger Jellyneck[ph], who was very supportive and very keen about it, and we had a whole marketing programme set up to promote it in America, and just at the moment when we should have done it the whole Nixon Watergate débâcle happened, and it just got sidelined. I mean you know, one can...they abandoned it. And that really was sort of the beginning of the end of the Collectors' Club. But the Collectors' Club, there are still, we still get letters from people who were members of the Editions Alecto Collectors' Club, and we did some quite good things.

Because it was an American idea wasn't it, originally?

No, it was an English idea, it was an English idea to do it. I really should write a book about how not to be a print publisher actually, because we've tried all sorts of different things. And another thing we did, an extension of that, again I can't quite remember the dates, but we, one of our very best clients was the Government Picture Collection, who bought, I mean really a lot of, lots of things from us, for embassies and offices and so on, and they operated from a house in Southwark Bridge, and we used to work with the controller, various controllers, who commissioned the things, and in the early Seventies there was a wonderful controller of the Government Picture...and it wasn't, it was called the P.S.A., the Property Services Agency, called Howell Leadbeater, he was a very Welshman, Howell Light-tower[ph] we used to say. And he was very imaginative, I mean a very unusual civil servant, and very much taken with the art world, he liked it very much, but his brief was very wide indeed, I mean he used to buy all the, you know, deep frying machines for the Army, and everything, anything, and beds and furniture and so on. But he got very intrigued with the idea of extending Government patronage to artists, and we jointly with the P.S.A. did a programme, again for two or three years, of publishing two groups of work, first of all publishing, it was after the Collector's Club sort of floundered because of the disaster in America, we were resuscitated in a way by getting the P.S.A. to underwrite the publication of a group of original prints by young artists. And we matched it with another group of unlimited prints, they were sort of posters really, by much more established artists, and some of those were very good. We did one with Hockney and Caulfield and Allen, no, not Allen Jones, Tom Phillips, Robyn Denny, William Scott, and a lot of people. And we made them in large quantities, I should think quite a lot of them are still sitting in a pile in, wherever the Government Picture Department now is. Howell Leadbeater, I meant to tell you, really he got very enthusiastic about doing it, because somebody wrote a profile article about him and described him as the Medici of Southwark Bridge. And it really went to his head actually. He left rather suddenly. I mustn't malign him at all, probably because he retired anyway, but I think he was a little bit too controversial for some of the senior civil servants. And after that, I mean unfortunately when he left the commission rather languished as well.

Who were some of the younger artists then, might have been?

I simply cannot...they've gone out of my head who they were.

Was that, you needed that mixing of older and younger, or...it wasn't done for commercial reasons, was it, in this instance?

What?

That matching wasn't done for commercial reasons in this instance?

No, it was done, it was done for sort of ideological reasons really, I mean, who did we make? We worked with...God! I simply cannot think who they were. Bert[??]
Kitchen did we do? [inaudible] I'd have to look it up, I'm sorry, terribly sorry, I can't remember.

Another reference, just, perhaps before we move on, is, you do mention for example the area of video cassettes, toys and furniture. Was this something in fact that wasn't in the end realised?

It was not realised, we didn't do it. We had the grandest ideas, we never quite got around to it.

No. Well, you have mentioned this kind of, the move into what became Alecto Historical Editions; could you describe that a bit further, that period, and indeed the first, it was the first commission wasn't it, 'A voyage Round Great Britain'? The William Daniel plates.

It absolutely was.

But perhaps if we could put in context, because a lot of people I think, you know, would like to have your, on record that move and how you perceive it. There you are, a leading publisher of contemporary prints, and then there is this development.

Well it's one of the few things which actually are very clear-cut and easy to explain. I have been involved in the print business, I mean have always been very intrigued, not

just with contemporary printmaking but with 18th and 19th century printmaking, and all the time we had an intaglio studio, OK, we tended to have the occasional 18th or 19th century plate which somebody brought in or we found or something, and we did, you know, just proofed it up and did it. So we were sort of aware of the possibilities of doing that, and incidentally in the very very earliest days, when we published David Hockney's 'The Rake's Progress', we actually had it printed by a dear old man whose name again has clean gone out of my head, who was a professional printer from 18th century plates, and I must say was very out of sympathy with Hockney's work. So you know, it wasn't such a gap really between what we were doing, working with living artists making original prints, particularly in the intaglio department, working on copper, and what people had been doing for three hundred years. And what moved us on to making historical things was, you know, a very definite move, because it again developed out of my wish to stop the whole publishing thrust being so narrow, and centred on London, and I was always trying to find some peg which would give one an excuse to get out into the regions, get out into the countryside, where there were lots of galleries, but we never seemed to make any headway with them. And it was very difficult to develop that whole market, and in my sort of idealistic way I thought it would be a wonderful thing to be able to have the best living artists being available all round the country. And just while we were thinking about this, Ian Baine[ph], who was then publications manager of the Tate, off his own bat, bought this marvellous collection of autocratic aquatint plates by William Daniels for his great series, William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain', which was a twelve-year project between 1812 and 1824, when he spent the summers travelling round the coast of England, Scotland and Wales, making very beautiful drawings, and spent the winters actually creating these beautiful aquatint plates. So, as examples of autocratic plate-making, they're very important, and it was a marvellous time also to record the coastline of England, Scotland and Wales, because it was just pre-Industrial Revolution, just pre railway, just pre camera. So it was a rather sort of snapshot of a particular period in history, particular actually in Wales and Scotland, I mean it was very, very very much off the beaten track. And as I say, Ian discovered that this whole collection had been unearthed from a studio; it might have been at Thomas Ross, but I simply can't remember. And anyway, the danger was that they were going to be broken up and sold piecemeal, and he realised the importance of them from an art point of view, an historic point of view, and bought

them, without taking the elementary precaution of having the purchase price, which I think I think was about £10,000, written into his budget, so there was a slight *frisson* as to, you know, how this little obstacle was going to be overcome. And he came up with the idea that it would be a smart idea to take an edition from the plates before they disappeared into the archive of the Tate, which could be used to sell them to recoup the cost. And I thought it would be a very neat idea to use William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain' as a peg to develop a contemporary series by commissioning not one artists but a lot of artists to do more or less the same travels as William Daniels, so that one would have a modern voyage round Great Britain, where you could commission an artist to, you know, make a print of a particular area so you, you know, get it in locally, but definitely not to embark upon it on the idea that you were just doing lyrical, rural themes with waving cornfields and things like that; we would actually, you know, commission artists who had some link with a particular area, whether they were totally abstract artists or whatever they were, just to use as I say that as a peg to develop an idea. And I thought at the time, and still do, that actually it's potentially an extremely exciting concept. But unfortunately, while we were developing it, we had this ghastly fire, and in fact.....

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.....from the 19th century plates.

When the fire took place.

Yes. But hadn't started on the modern series. And that was one of the central projects which, you know, got sidelined, and we've never done it. But I mean somebody ought to do it, because it's a nice idea I think. And in fact, I mustn't sweep on but one of the...it sounds as if all my projects never come to pass, but it was really the inspiration of an idea which I don't think will happen because we've more or less run out of time, to celebrate the Millennium by commissioning a group of Millennium artists really very much on the model of war artists, but really a development of this theme which we have, William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain', to encourage a group of artists to look at different areas of the British Isles, and make a, you know, to have a sort of snapshot of their ideas as much as their imagery in the closing moments of the 20th century.

Because print of course will be, is a fantastic medium to actually send these artists out.

Well it would be wonderful actually.

Or from the...yes.

It really would be very nice to do it. It's still just time, one could just about do it. But one of the thoughts were, we would give them a very specific brief to make one unique piece, capable of being shown in a gallery context, and one edition piece capable of being shown in a domestic context. But one of the ideas would be that, during the development of the ideas, we would supply the artist with, you know, a video camera and teach him how to use it and say well...as a diary footage, to show the way all these ideas developed, so that one had something which could straight into the education system. Because I still think that there's great scope for actually, or people are very fascinated by how artists' ideas develop, and of course in the print

media, it's a wonderful way of showing it, because you can artificially, you know, stop the clock and show the development ideas by having stage proofs and so on, and you can extend that if you of course follow it through with a video footage. But what you asked was, how we got into the historical things, and that is actually the reason, that's how we did it, why we did it absolutely with William Daniels' 'A Voyage Round Great Britain'.

Do you look back, there's obviously some regret that you might have had a vision of the historical running alongside the contemporary, together, that's the area that Editions Alecto would have moved into, but in fact, in a sense the contemporary had to go, or there was...

Yes. I do, I mean it still would be possible. In fact the, you know, we've made several attempts to sort of creep back into the 20th century, and the project which I just described to you, the Millennium artists, would have been, could be, another way of doing it.

Yes, do you feel, I mean, the historical feeding into the contemporary, and the other way round as well, is that a concept you like?

Well I do, I think it's a very good concept. What happened after, again, the fire was a great catalyst actually, because you know, it made one sit up and think; it was quite good for us in away, I mean we, you know, we survived. Lost a lot of things but you know, it made one think what one was doing. And from, in the sort of, in the interregnum, when we had no studios, I mean we had these potty little studios but we had sort of no, we hadn't got the same set-up as we had at Kelso Place, we got involved with one or two other historical things. We published some of the engravings, the Holbein drawings in the Royal Collection, which makes it really very nice, we did quite well, and then we also, having as I said just begun to think about Banks' 'Florilegium' before the fire, we developed that idea and it became clear very quickly that Banks' 'Florilegium', you know, 763 plates, was such an absolutely massive project that it would be crazy to try and run it alongside a contemporary programme as well. The decision was easier made because it was right at the end of the Seventies, the beginning of the Eighties, when the contemporary art market was

doing jolly badly anyway, and... But it was largely because, you know, there are only so many hours in a day, and if you're trying, as we were, trying to do something pretty new with Banks' 'Florilegium', I mean, Banks' 'Florilegium' plates were engraved in the 18th century from the watercolours that were drawn on the voyage, or developed from the field sketches on the voyage by other artists, and were completed in the early 1770s... No.

[break in recording - telephone]

No, Banks' 'Florilegium' plates, they were completed in the 18th century, in 1784, and then languished, never printed, and when we came upon them in this cupboard in the botany library in the Natural History Museum they were still wrapped up in their 18th century paper and had never been printed. So what we were trying to do, 200 years late, was complete this very grand vision of Sir Joseph Banks, who was an extremely rich man, so it was quite an arrogant and an arbitrary and ambitious thing to do, to finally bring this great florilegium, this great botanical record, into the public domain. And of course it was a very very major project, we set up a studio, it was set up actually by a man I've mentioned already, Edward Egerton-Williams, and we found that it was, you know, all-consuming, and in fact in the end it lasted ten years, that project, and we thought at the beginning it was going to on for six years. So over a ten-year period we had, you know, twenty or twenty-two people working in the studio, printers and colourists, and other technicians.

Where did you set up the studio?

We did it at, in number 15 Appold Street, which is just, it's in the City, just opposite the railway lines going out of Old Broad Street Station, before all that was developed, which is now, it's now the Broadgate development. And we found it, we walked through it trying to find a suitable studio, because we knew we needed, you know, a good space, there was about 3,000 square feet in the studio, and 15 Appold Street was a wonderful 19th century warehouse building, and it was absolutely ideal for us, it suited us fine. And we had the studios on one floor and our warehouse on the floor above, and it was frightfully cheap, it cost us £2.50 a square foot, something like that. And looked out onto this open space of the railway, we were on the third floor, and it

was the arches on top of which the railway lines went out of Old Broad Street. It was awfully nice, and lots of buddleias in the summer, very sort of overgrown and rather grotty. And...

Did you move actually, your address then, to that address?

No, the Appold Street studio in fact was, we had our own Alecto warehouse there, but the studio was in the name of Edward Egerton-Williams, because, what happened, when we took the deep breath and decided we would actually publish the 'Florilegium', at the time, my initial idea was that we would set up a branch studio. It was pretty obvious early on that it would be impossible to do it at Kelso Place, because at that time we were still publishing contemporary stuff, and it was obvious they wouldn't mix, we had to have what we would now call a dedicated studio to do it. And Edward Egerton-Williams, who was then extremely young, I think he was 23, and a very, you know, cocky, bolshie young man who was always having rows with the other printers, because he was, you know, extremely right-wing, I mean he used to make a feature of it, he used to read the 'Daily Telegraph', and he was quite well off, he came from a sort of, you know, fairly well off, middle-class family, his father was a naval officer, his mother came from a very, rather distinguished academic family and he had uncles who were, you know, dean of hospitals in London, that sort of thing. And he had an enormous, I remember he had an enormous Vauxhall motorcar, just really to annoy all the other printers who were on the whole extremely left-wing, and Marxists and Communists. Anyway, when he...he had many excellent qualities, one of which was a dogged determination, and he was one of the people who really stuck by us after the fire, and you know...

In what way?

Well, I mean there was an awful lot of work to be done, just clearing up the mess and sorting it all out, and there was, I mean I was showing off, saying we never close; we didn't actually ever close because we did move right away the screen-print studio into other accommodation because we happened to be in the middle of a series of work, so we needed to keep it going. But the, in the intaglio studio, the etching studio we had just finished the 'Voyage Round Great Britain' series, and you know, were beginning

to do the 'Florilegium', I guess we must have had one or two other things but nothing sort of serious, so we really closed it down. And Edward was one of a couple, I can't...somebody else stayed with us, really to sort of sort out the mess and get us going again, and also sort of as a sideline, continued to experiment with the Banks' 'Florilegium' plates. And it was, he is really the genius behind the actual final publication two hundred years late.

[break in recording]

This is really a very very tiresome interview for you, you're going to have to do a lot of editing somewhere, because I must go right back and just explain to you, keep it on actually, of the, of how Banks' 'Florilegium' started, because it is very integral to our history. Because in fact Banks' 'Florilegium' came into our lives right at the very very beginning of Alecto, in the very early Sixties, because at that time William Stir[ph], who is still alive, is a very distinguished professor of botany at the Natural History Museum, had taken, who was the man who actually saved the Banks' 'Florilegium' plates from being sent away in the war for their copper content, and in 1963 had taken some of the plates down to the Royal College of Art to have some proofs taken, because he was thinking of resuscitating an idea which had come up, you know, from time to time since 1784 about, shouldn't they be printed? And at the time Nick Rand was the printing technician at the Royal College who had actually come from our studio. So we discovered this, and went down and looked at these plates, which are wonderful, and the whole idea of being able to, you know, print this glorious record from this amazing voyage of discovery, Captain Cook's first voyage, was so exiting, we got very tickled by the idea, and thought how wonderful, we'll print and publish them and make our name and fortune, and it will be wonderful. And...

When you say we?

Alecto.

Yes, but I wondered, obviously you...

Well, it was the time when Paul Cornwall-Jones and I were working together. And unfortunately, Paul's a very aggressive chap, had many admirable qualities, but he didn't get on with people very well, and he had a blazing row with Robin Darwin, who was the Rector at the Royal College of Art, who, by just being too sort of pushy I think about publishing these plates, and Robin Darwin not unreasonably, you know, rejected the whole idea and said, you know, 'Don't be so damned impertinent, go away and learn your business, and leave it to us'. And so we, you know, forgot about the whole thing, and in fact the Royal College of Art then did produce a very beautiful, elegant book of thirty of the plates, printed in black, and with a text, really as an exercise in typography and bookmaking for that department, in the Printmaking Department in the Royal College of Art. And it took a tremendously long time, it took them ten years to do, in the course of which incidentally five of the plates were lost, which was a major scandal which we're only now allowed to talk about. But as I say we forgot all about it, and it resurfaced, the whole idea of doing Banks' 'Florilegium', as a direct result of what I'm constantly talking about, 'A Voyage Round Great Britain' and the Holbein plates, because having found that this was a rather intriguing area to be involved with, we were looking around for other things to do. And one of the people who were working with me then, and still is, Nigel Frith, was a neighbour in Chiswick of Chris Humphreys, who is working in the botany department at the Natural History Museum, and it was he who said, 'Well you know, have you ever thought of looking at the plates from Cook's first voyage?' And there they still were, wrapped up in their 18th century paper, sitting in the cupboard in a corner of the botany library. And we went and looked at them and thought, wonderful, we'll do them, and started off on a completely different and much less elaborate basis, because over the years anyone who had looked at them had sort of tacitly assumed that had Banks published in the 18th century he would have published them in monochrome, in one colour, really on the basis of the black proofs taken from the plates in the 18th century, because when the engraver finished each plate, he took a few proofs and [inaudible] and see what it looks like. And so, and we have those, those exist. And we started off with a much less ambitious idea, thinking that we would choose fifty or sixty of the most impressive plates, and do an edition in black. And as we got into it, we began sort of researching the project and reading around it, and there's a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, nothing absolutely concrete, circumstantial evidence, to show that Banks was probably thinking about printing

them in colour, and the technique of printing *à la poupée*[ph], which is a 17th century technique of working all the individual colours into a single plate, which was developed by a man called Johannes Tyler[ph] in the 17th century, was a technique which was being used particularly in Paris at the time, and we know he was in touch with the French colour printers, and to be honest a certain amount of wishful thinking, how nice they would be in colour. And Edward began experimenting with taking colour impressions from the plates without really any idea doing them for botanical correctness, so some of the early proofs are actually most unusual.

When you mean Edward experimented, do you mean, he wasn't actually taking proofs himself?

Yes he was, he was...he...

He was trained as a, or he..?

Oh Edward's a trained printer, yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, yes.

But he began...

Just to be clear about that, his...he was the main printer behind the project?

He was the printer who had been in our etching department, etching studio, who stayed with us after the fire, and who continued to experiment with the four or five Banks' 'Florilegium' plates which we had been given, you know, to proof, and began experimenting, we all, you know, we did it together, working on whether it was going to be feasible to print them in colour. And we did all sorts of experiments. We published, we printed them in a, you know, very light green for instance, or you

know, two or three colours of greens and browns and things, and then hand-coloured them, and you can get the most wonderful results actually, they're frightfully good, but of course it takes an enormous amount of time, and also it tends to obliterate some of the finer details. Why Banks' 'Florilegium' plates are so wonderful is, they're the pinnacle of 18th century copper plate line engraving, because they get every single detail, I mean unlike etching where you've got a wiggly line, you know, I mean these are fine engravings, so you just cut directly into the copper. I'm going to get some coffee.

[break in recording]

....botanically you can get it completely accurate. And Banks arranged this, because he was a great perfectionist, and fortunately, you know, rich enough to indulge his perfection, and what he wanted to do was to make a record of these plants, which were all either new to European botany, it was very very exciting the whole Banks' 'Florilegium' series, because they were selected from a much wider collection, but they were the plants which were either important from a horticultural or medicinal point of view, or as I say new to European botany. And he wanted to make sure that the engraved plates contained all the scientific detail, so that when they were printed, even if they were printed in one colour, any scientist could use them for study, and they would not be subject to the whim of the colourist, another hand. I mean there are, as you certainly know, lots and lots of botanical engravings in this period, and earlier, where they tend to be much less detail, much fewer lines, and rely for the detail on the hand-colouring put in subsequently. So there was very logical thought that Banks probably, you know, might have published in one colour. So as I say, we got the idea, I mean I certainly...if they were in full colour, and having found that the idea of printing them in, you know, pale[??] then hand-colouring really wasn't going to be practical to do it. Edward then began experimenting with the *à la poupée*[ph] process, working all the single colours into the one plate, and we found that the results were absolutely wonderful, because what you would get is complete clarity, because the technique of printing *à la poupée*[ph] is really like a very sophisticated exercise in printing by numbers, you look at the watercolour and you decide on all the colours you are going to put in the plate, and then you mix up all the different inks and you go through a very elaborate proofing period, just getting the colours right. And it's very

complicated because the colour you want to end up with is relatively easy to establish, because you've got the original watercolours which are all completely fresh because they've never seen the light of day, or have been bound up in great books, from the 18th century to the present day. So that's not a problem. What is a problem is that the ink you have to mix to get the right colour in the print is always different, it's darker, because the image from the plate is made up of a series of lines, so you always have between each line filled with ink, you have a white space between that and the next line, but where there's just naked copper, so the colour you have to mix is darker to compensate for that. And also you have another additional problem, is that you have to get the right viscosity of ink, because if you've got a deeply engraved area, you know, you have to have a stickier ink than the very light areas where you just might have the sort of hairs on a stamen or a little, the fronds of a root. So you had a very complicated business of mixing the right coloured ink and the right viscosity, and in the end I think we had a whole enormous sort of swatch of colours. We worked initially, to get the initial colours we bought up all the remaining colour, swatches is the wrong word, I mean the colour things from the Royal Horticultural Society which had been produced, I can't remember when, but a wonderful range of colours, the same idea as the colour range you choose your, you know, bathroom paint, but an incredibly sophisticated range of...

Dated to a particular year or period, those swatches?

Well it's just, it was produced, I think it was actually produced in the 19th century, as I say, we bought[??] the last one, so... Then we developed our own colour swatches, because very quickly, you know, we found that you would use the same colours, so that if you had, you know, this particular green, you knew that you had to mix that particular shade of ink to achieve it when you print it. And my word, I mean there were an enormous number of greens, I think in the end there were, you know, a thousand different colours we did, lots and lots. We've got all the proofing material, I mean at some stage it ought to end up in some collection somewhere.

And why wasn't the series originally produced? What happened about that?

Nobody absolutely knows. It was a combination of reasons. First of all it took a long time to complete the plates, thirteen years.

Was that various artists doing that?

Yes, it was eighteen different engravers working over thirteen years. It was a very elaborate project. I mean it cost Banks, you know, a million pounds, a lot of money, to do it, but he was luckily a very rich man, and also it took a long time because Sydney Parkinson, who was the artist on the Endeavour, died on the voyage home, and he had a very precise method, when they made a landfall, they went ashore and collected plants, and came back and went through them in the great cabin in the Endeavour, which was about half the size of this room, and anything new to European botany or particularly interesting they passed over to Parkinson and he made a field sketch while the specimen was still fresh, in pencil and watercolour, and with a lot of colour notes. And then worked up the field sketch while they were at sea into a finished portrait. And by the time he died on the voyage home he had done about a third of the, no more, of the field sketches, but he was tremendously overworked, they were collecting at a great rate, and the topographic artist who had gone out with them had died on the way, earlier on, so he was doing a lot of extra work. So when they got back to London, Banks employed eventually five other artists to take Parkinson's field sketch...

Sorry, Parkinson's first name is?

Sydney. Sidney Parkinson. To take the field sketches, and work them up into finished portraits. And so all that took a long time. And the other reason was that the text for this publication was to be done by Daniel Solander, Dr Daniel Solander, who was Banks' fellow botanist on the voyage, and who as a very genial egg, and a Swedish botanist, was a great protégé of Carl Linnaeus, and he was not only a very good scientist and botanist, but he was also obviously extremely lazy, and was tremendously lionised, like saying, oh well, when they came...as Banks was, when they came back from a voyage, was always going off on long visits to people, and so that by the time he died, he died in 1782, without having completed the text, so that was another reason. And also of course the impetus to do it had slightly waned,

because when Banks came back from the first voyage he was still a very young man, keen to make his name, and by the time all the work was published he was extremely established, already President of the Royal Society, and a great name, he had no real reason to publish, to make himself grander. And to be fair he was terribly generous with his collections, he kept open house in Soho Square, and I guess the scientific community was fairly small, and he gave groups[??] to people. And in a way one gets the feeling that he, you know, in a way thought he probably had published it. But the most compelling reason, as is so often the case I think, was economic, because by the time the thing was finished, the French war had started and then the Napoleonic War was going on after that, and we were cut off from the Continent, and Banks certainly was a great internationalist, he was certainly looking, and indeed the whole scientific world was very international, looking for subscriptions overseas, and he kept on delaying. And the other reason was that, even he, rich though he was, had a sharp fall in income after the American War of Independence, because he had large estates in Lincolnshire and most of the funds came apparently from exporting the long wool, which I've never discovered what long wool is, to the American market, but that collapsed after the American War of Independence. So, I always blame the Americans for the fact that Banks' 'Florilegium' wasn't printed at the time.

Is all the documentation at the Natural History Museum, or is it...is it assembled in one place?

Yes, it's all there, it's very exciting because you can, you ought to do it, you can go to the Natural History Museum and you can look at Sydney Parkinson's field sketches and the finished portraits and the finished watercolours done in London, and then you can go and look at the actual copper plates, and then you can look at the black proofs which were taken in the 18th century, and you can look at our finished two hundred years late colour proofs, and then you can go to Banks' own cabinets in the herbarium and look at the dried specimens of the plants which were the originals for the watercolours, which actually is a real *frisson*. And you can then go and look at Banks' journals, and indeed Cook's journals, and you can read about what they were doing at the time, because being scientists of course they were very accurate about where and when each specimen was collected. I mean sometimes it was over a three-month period; very often, when they were sailing up the coast of Australia for

instance, they were stopping, you know, a day at a time, so you could find actually to the day what they were doing when this particular plant was gathered, and absolutely pinpoint it. It's very exciting, it's a very immediate connection with this extraordinary voyage, which, looking back on it, was such an amazingly brave thing to do. The Endeavour barque was a miserable little East Coast collier, you know, a hundred tons, three hundred tons, a hundred foot long, with ninety-eight people on board, it makes one absolutely itch to even think about it, it must have been so uncomfortable. And they set off into the blue, nobody really thought they would come back. And Banks inserted himself on the voyage at his own request, there's a wonderful story that he heard that Captain Cook had been commissioned to go off to the South Seas and round the world; I think he was actually commissioned to go off to observe the transit of Venus from Tahiti but had secret orders to find the great southern continent which at that time must exist to balance the land mass at the top of the world. And Banks, the story goes, heard about this at a dinner party and got up and said, 'I will go on the voyage too,' and everyone said, 'Don't be so stupid, you can't do that, you know, why don't you just go off on a grand tour like everybody else does?' He said, 'Any booby can do that. My grand tour will be to circumnavigate the globe.' And luckily he was frightfully rich and had very good connections, and actually paid for his, the whole expedition. And so he inserted himself on the Endeavour, which was already fully equipped, with Solander and a couple of collectors and servants and two greyhounds, and arrived on board the Endeavour, moved the wretched Captain Cook from the master's cabin because he was the gent, and they sailed off into the blue, and they were both remarkable people, they remained on extremely good terms. One of the things they did, which I think was very sensible, was, although they both kept very full journals.....

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.....completed the project, done the project, if they had been printed originally? That was the goal.

Yes, the excitement, the excitement was, here was this wonderful record of, it was incredibly important, the discoveries...

Which hadn't been published.

Which had never been published. So we were doing the first edition two hundred years late. And I mean what was and is extremely exciting is, the quality of the thing is absolutely impeccable, I mean they are real jewels, they are absolutely wonderful examples of art, art and science.

So were your ideas, I mean how would you describe then Alecto Historical Editions? You have described Editions Alecto, but how, what is the ethos behind...?

The ethos was and is to find wonderful treasures, you know, lurking about in institutions, libraries and universities and museums, which for one reason or another haven't seen the light of day, and making them available to a standard so that they can be used for exhibition and study by scholars and collectors and anyone who is interested. And you know, skipping on a bit to 1998, what we found was of course that the number of projects like Banks' 'Florilegium', Banks' 'Florilegium' was completely unique, but a number of projects where you can justify the sort of labour and expense and agony of working from original plates, is fairly limited. I mean we've been very lucky, we've done some lovely projects. We worked in the, while we were still publishing Banks' 'Florilegium' from some of John James Audubon's original copper plates for 'The Birds of America', and subsequently we followed up those two projects with a very nice, exciting project of Bodmer's[ph] 'America', the engravings of the expedition up the Missouri by Prince Maximilian, Neuville[??], the German anthropologist of the 1830s, which is the first eye-witness pictures of the American Indians and the way of life in that part of the world. So I mean there are some wonderful things to do from old plates. But all this, all the time we were doing

it, we were constantly lobbied by institutions saying, why don't we actually make facsimiles of watercolours? Because of course there are wonderful things in collections which really haven't seen the light of day at all. And we were very snooty, I was very snooty at the time, and I wasn't at all interested in having Editions Alecto, and it produces original work and we're not interested in making reproductions at all. And we, in the midst of all of this business, again it's engraved on my heart, the 4th of January 1984, we got a letter from the keeper of public records to say that he was taking this very bold decision to unbind the Domesday Book, and to do some conservation work, but particularly to have the manuscript studied properly for the first time, and he also thought it would be a wonderful opportunity, again for the first time, to make a really perfect, accurate facsimile of the manuscript, and would we like to do it? And, I have no doubt he asked several other people to do it, who wisely said they didn't, they wouldn't. But I actually knew how to do it; I mean the brief was very tough, it was to make a facsimile of a standard, as I was saying before, that scholars could use it, in lieu of the original thing, and that really ruled out any idea of the conventional printing processes where you print through a screen and the image is made up of a series of dots, because the first thing any mediaeval scholar will do when he finds an ambiguous bit in the text is to get his glass out and magnify it to see it clearer, and if you use a conventional screen process eventually it's going to disintegrate into a scatter of speckles. And I have always been fascinated by printing techniques, and have been talking with John Parfitt, who actually finally published, printed the Domesday facsimile for us, about this new technique which he was using called continuous tone lithography, where you have such sensitive photo-lithographic plates that you can do away with the screen, and really effectively use it like a photographic plate, and print in solid colours. And so we said yes, we would be interested in publishing the facsimile, and we, the idea developed that we would not only publish a perfect facsimile of the manuscript, but this would be coupled with the scholarly apparatus, they would say, all the translations and maps and indices and commentaries, which would arrive, you know, free and on a plate from the University of California at Santa Barbara, where a team of scholars, or particularly two young women scholars, had been analysing Domesday and putting it on a database. And so the whole concept of being able to produce the perfect facsimile and the interpretative material was actually a very strong one, and we embarked on it because part of the brief was to make the facsimile, complete the

facsimile, in time for the 900th anniversary of Domesday. This again was the reason that people were doing this, to celebrate the 900th anniversary of Domesday, which was written in 1086, so that the first copy could be presented in glorious ceremony to Her Majesty the Queen. So we embarked on this great project, you know, as always at Alecto as a matter of fact, you know, on the basis that this was, you know, something of incomparable value, and very important and therefore there was no point in doing it in any other way but absolutely to the very best. So we took elaborate trouble and, you know, had a special paper made, and really went into it in the biggest possible way. And we launched the publication in 1986 in three separate editions. We decided early on that we would limit the print run to two thousand copies, which was a sort of combination of a totally practical decision and also a pragmatic publishing decision. The practical one was that nobody had actually used this process of continuous tone lithography for anything even approaching this very grand project; it had been used for, you know, individual prints and nobody quite knew whether the plates would stand up or not, and so we had to be careful about it because we didn't want to, you know, announce a five thousand edition and find the plates broke down. And we hit on this two thousand edition, two thousand print run, which actually was adequate, and the plates were perfectly good, and we divided the two thousand sets into three separate editions, one very grand, sort of *Edition de Tête*[ph], of 250, which we bound in mediaeval oak and put a William I silver penny in, inside the covers, matched with an Elizabeth II bronze penny so that we could call this very very expensive publication 'the penny edition' indulge in a stupid little schoolboy joke. And then 750 we set aside for the academic market, the libraries. And then the other 1,000 we divided up, county by county, so that we could offer people just the record for their county, because Domesday was, the information was gathered on a county basis, and the county boundaries in 1086, which is rather reassuring, were more or less the same as they are in 1998.

Did the Domesday project kind of question how you felt about facsimiles and the idea of reproduction and original?

You're going to have to do a lot of editing in this because I really [inaudible], but this is exactly the point I was making. So, you know, having successfully made a facsimile of...

Are you less precious about, I mean your ideas, yes?

Yes, absolutely, I mean it actually became quite clear that one was being rather silly about being so sniffy about facsimiles. And by the way, the reason I'm sniffy about facsimiles, because it sort of offends my ideas of making things widely available, that I think an awful lot of facsimiles are very pretentious and not very good, and you know, you pretty well know that the length of the print run and the price depends on the whim and greed of the publisher, what he thinks he can get away with. And also, I mean it's quite interesting, it is a point worth making, that most facsimile makers, people who make facsimiles, and by the way there are some very good ones, there are some wonderful...I wouldn't want to knock the competition in any way, but they start from a different base to our approach, because they tend to be the sort of top end of people who basically are making books. So you know, normally making trade books but then think they'll do a very grand edition of things. Our approach is exactly the other way round, it's from the sort of top downwards. We had always been making original prints, and so we were looking on making a facsimile of the Domesday Book as really making a work of art, making as near as possible to the original thing, which is sort of, a different sort of approach, because our feeling is that you can always, you know, produce something less glorious, make a, you know, a trade edition or something like that, but it's very difficult to start with something which is only fairly good and then try and make some fancy thing from that origination. And anyway, back to...

So, but, the idea of being not precious about working in this facsimile area, that...in fact, one might argue that it extends out of the Editions Alecto area of unlimited editions, and free, multiple imagery. I mean you talk about that all the time, and certainly I've been thinking, I mean, about the idea of access, you're obviously accessing material that you've been doing in the area of Alecto Historical Editions.

Absolutely. I mean that's exactly what it's about, it's about access to wonderful things, and our experience with Domesday, you know, convinced me anyway that it clearly was possible to make facsimiles of works in another medium to a standard where they would be useful, I mean they could be, as I say, could be used for

exhibition, and study. And of course, you know, it's a very virtuous circle, because there are wonderful things in libraries and collections which really never see the light of day, and curators, as you will confirm, are increasingly reluctant to let people handle them for obvious reasons. Also the cut-down in budgets and funds and things means that it's more and more difficult for scholars to get the ticket to go to Los Angeles to look at the Huntington Library Collection. So from that point of view, you know, that thing is narrowed. And also the whole development is extraordinarily exciting, the electronic record of things is developing at a pace, and so a lot of people now actually study things from the screen, which is wonderful, you can do marvellous things, and you can magnify, you can go backwards and forwards and so on. But what has always worried me is that, you know, one's more and more moving away from actually seeing the real thing, or if not the real thing, something very close to it, and so our philosophy has been to, as I say, identify marvellous treasures which don't for one reason or another see the light of day and making them to a standard where they can be actually used and studied by scholars and collectors around the world, in lieu of the original. Where did I get on to this, because I was...?

Well we were discussing the projects, the Domesday project, yes.

But from doing Domesday, there, sorry, yes, there we realised that it obviously was possible to do this, and we began monitoring, you know, the development. The other thing was that the continuous tone lithographic process was a sort of flash in the pan, it was a sort of blip in printing technology, which is now abandoned, nobody uses it now, because it actually developed because the firm who made the plates, called House and Elgraphy[ph]...

Where are they based?

Well I can't remember where they're based. The factory which made the content plates was actually in South Africa. And it was a complete sort of fluke. What happened was that they made these very high quality photo-litho plates for conventional photo-litho printing, and one of their clients I think, one of their customers, discovered that some of the plates were of such sensitive quality that they could be used without a screen, and that's how the continuous tone process

developed. But, the only reason it developed was because the plates you would use for the con-tone process were the sort of top twenty per cent of the quality of the regular photo-litho plates, so you know, you used the twenty per cent and then the other eighty per cent could be used in the normal printing process. And then they produced a refinement to these plates, and abandoned the previous making of the plates, and therefore it became totally uneconomic to use con-tone plates, because you would have to absorb the eighty per cent wastage which you couldn't use. So that whole process really just evaporated and nobody used it any more. But meanwhile of course all the digital processes were being developed and it was quite clear that eventually the digital processes would reach a degree of sophistication where they could be used for making facsimiles, and the process we have been using for our two current projects...

Which are, what are your current projects?

Well, another project with the Natural History Museum, of Ferdinand Bauer's[ph] watercolours of the zoological specimens collected on Captain Matthew Flinders' circumnavigation of Australia in 1801 to 1803, first circumnavigation of Australia. And the other one is, for the Royal Library at Windsor, is Mark Catesby's 'Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands', which is the first illustrated natural history of North America.

And unpublished again?

Well, in the case of the Bowers[ph], they have never been published; in the case of the Catesbys, they are the original watercolours from which he published a very famous and distinguished edition of etchings which he engraved, which he etched himself from these watercolours. But the watercolours have never seen the light of day, they were bought by George III in 1768 and had been locked up in the Royal Library at Windsor ever since. And so for Americans it's extremely exciting for them to see these original watercolours, many of them, you know, drawn in the wild, drawn from nature.

So you're not producing plates actually from those? No. Could you say how this digital process is working?

Yes, I could, but I'm going to abandon you for a second.

[break in recording]

Right-ho. Now the stakasti[ph] processing. As I have said before, most, all conventional reproduction processes, you print through a screen, and so if you look at it under a glass you'll find the image is made up of an absolutely regular pattern of dots, and it's very sophisticated now, you have a very very fine screen, so with the naked eye it's extremely difficult to tell how the image is actually developed. It's only when, as I say, you put a glass on it that you can see how it comes to be. And the effect of making reproductions of works in another media, particular watercolours incidentally, using a screen, is that you inevitably artificially stop the flow of the image, because you're breaking it down into dots, and that is the reason why so many reproductions look very dead, because they're artificially controlled and regimented and put in a different format. As of course is always the way when you're interpreting any image in another medium, and it's one of the things which has always put me off in a rather sort of highfalutin way from making facsimiles of reproductions, because the basis of Alecto's philosophy has always been original material, it's the whole idea, that you know, you are actually making original work with painters and sculptors, that they were creating something in a media which they knew from the moment they start what the final thing was going to be. It wasn't taking a watercolour and transferring it into a screen-pint; it was actually straight away making an image which they knew was going to be an original work in fact on a sheet. And why the stakasti[ph] lithography is so good is that it abandons the screen. And don't please question me on the actually the mechanics of it because as far as I'm concerned it's completely magical, but the process is this, that you take the original watercolour in this case, and you digitise it, you break it down into numbers, and ideally you would do that on a, directly from the original, on a flat-bed scanner, but at the moment, in 1998, the flat-bed scanners are neither big enough nor sophisticated enough to do this adequately. So what we do in fact is to take a very high quality colour transparency of the original, and that in turn demands great concentration to

detail and making sure that the photographer and the printer really are working closely together and knowing what they're doing, so that the photographer for instance will make sure that he relays to the printer exactly the light and the stops and how he's doing it, and indeed can take note of what the printer wants for making the plates. And then having digitised the image, it's then subjected to some absolutely magical software, which as I say I have no idea how it works, where instead of printing through a screen, a man-made screen, the computer generates its own screen by picking up the tonal values in the original image and just laying down a random scatter of pictures[??], micro-dots, speckles, on the, to create the plates. And you then go through the normal process of separations and plate making. But when you print, because there's no regular screen pattern, because it's all random, you retain all the liquidity and flow and looseness of the original, and as I'll show you before we part, if you look at the, if you look at the facsimile under a glass, it actually is extremely difficult to tell how it's made up. Of course, you know, I must say at once that you are not re-creating the watercolour, you are producing something in another medium, but it is, you know, in the present technology, and no doubt technology is going to go on improving, but the present technology, it's about as near as you can get. And it's a process which was developed for, as a commercial process, for doing very high quality printing for company reports and glossy mags and that sort of thing, where people can afford to spend a bit more money and take a lot of trouble, and of course normally done on specially coated glossy papers and so on where it looks absolutely wonderful. So, you know, you see it in glossy magazines, it looks as if you can pick up the diamond necklace from the advertisement on the page. But completely useless as far as we're concerned for making facsimiles, because really the beginning and end of making a good facsimile is to get the substance right, to get the actual, the paper the same, weight and texture and substance, and you can't do that off a commercial press, because it just would be too outrageously expensive, you're using wonderful paper, and you could soon be out of sight to do it, and anyway you don't really want to do a long run. And what we discovered was that if you take this marvellous process and pretend that you've actually created a hand-drawn lithograph, you can do the most wonderful things, because you can take the plates and print them on a flat-bed proofing press, in single colours, and printing one colour at a time, wet on dry, and you can really control the flow of the ink and you can build up the image, so that you can produce really very very faithful facsimiles. And the limitation of this of

course is that you can't do an enormously long run, first of all because you are having to rack and dry the sheets between each printing, so you can't clutter up your studios with masses of sheets of paper; but also because you are asking your printer to use this very sophisticated process manually, by hand, and we really found by trial and error, that fifty or sixty impressions is about the maximum where you can guarantee to keep his or her concentration to produce a perfect image. And that therefore has allowed us to develop or go forwards at the moment with a formula for making these very small editions, and both the Ferdinand Bowers[ph] watercolours from the Flinders voyage, and Mark Catesby's watercolours for his natural history, we published in a numbered edition of fifty sets with ten sets [inaudible], ten extras outside the commercial edition. And we've limited it to that. And one must immediately say, admit, that you know, this is to an extent arbitrary, because, you know, the next day one could do the same thing again, but it is a way of making an economic run, and also one has to balance this, this goes rather against what I was saying about making this plentiful and cheap, but you know, to make it worthwhile you do have to take an awful lot of trouble, and the actual proofing process and printing process is much much more elaborate than one would normally do just for making reproductions, I mean one goes back and forth, back and forth, back and forth to the original. So inevitably the price is, you know, the cost is fairly hefty, and inevitably therefore you have to sell it for quite a reasonable, for quite an expensive price, not dramatically actually, I mean we are, for the Catesbys, the individual subscription price works out at \$200 a plate, which actually is very cheap if you're thinking of only fifty, an edition of fifty. So you know, the economics of that match up. But having done it, what excites me about it, that having made your perfect edition of fifty facsimiles, you then, because it's all digitalised, you have the origination to format it in other ways, you can do it electronically, you can make a CD-ROM, you can put it on the Internet, or you can use it for making *catalogue raisonnés* or trade books or posters and postcards and duvet covers, anything you want, you can use the imagery in different ways. And therefore you can match the, not of course the original but a very very faithful and accurate interpretation of the original, as I say, good enough in most cases for scholars to study, and certainly for exhibition purposes. And then have all the accompanying apparatus, the interpretation, available on a disk.

I mean, it seems that throughout your career you've always been interested, and fired, by graphic processes, and that, and indeed graphic material, and you've applied it in, whether it's the late Sixties or the early Seventies, and you've renegotiated in a sense for a different time, which is in the 1990s. Do you feel that? I mean you've always been so involved in some form of this distribution of graphic imagery, and excited by new processes, in whatever area, and you're not tied up with possibly hard and fast categories around art and, high art in a sense, and...

Well no, absolutely not, I don't...that's right.

Is that a kind of, in a sense...

That's the sort of pulse, that's what we're about, as you were, disseminating information. I mean it comes back to the original point, when we were working exclusively with the living painters and sculptors, to make a channel of communication for their original ideas.

You still say, I mean you sound so fired up in a sense by what you are doing now, as much as I'm sure you were, in a different way, but it's different with...

In way I think it's very exciting, because, and as I say, I think it is, it's a really virtuous circle, because you know, if one can find... I mean, all institutions are short of money, you know, they never have enough funds for conservation and acquisition and things, as I was saying before, curators are increasingly diffident about letting anyone handle their wonderful treasures, and people can't travel to look at them, and if you can make things of a standard which we're doing, it's absolutely wonderful, because you're enabling other people to study things which they wouldn't be able to do, but you are also providing for the institution sets of things which they can use for exhibition and study, so they can keep their originals pristine, and providing funds for them, because we always work very closely obviously with the owning institution, and normally we pay a royalty, we pay all the costs, it doesn't cost them anything at all, and as I say we pay them a royalty.

And in a sense you've set a standard all the way along, whether it was in the 1960s or now.

Well I think it's an exciting time really, I think there are all sorts of things which one could do, and I would like to get back to the position where, I think we talked about it a bit earlier on, for instance with the Millennium artists idea, so that one can actually combine all these things so that one could actually go back and still work with making original things as well as making facsimiles or making historical editions from whole plates. But I have always been interested in the interpretative side of it, in not having any background at all as an artist, never been to an art school, though I was chairman of an art school for a long time, I love the idea of being able to explain to people how things come about, I feel a mission to explain to the uninitiated what fun it is, and what enjoyment, what pleasure one can get at looking at images.

Joe, thank you very much.

End of F6496 Side B

End of Interview