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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET **Title Page**

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Interviewee's forenames: Bruce

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[F8072 Side A]

This is Gillian Whiteley interviewing Bruce Lacey on Tuesday the 16th of May 2000.

Well Bruce...

Oh it's working, OK.

Right, we're on. It would be good if we could start perhaps then with your family history.

Yes.

What can you remember about your maternal grandparents and your paternal grandparents?

Well, I was born in 1927, at Catford in...no, Lewisham Hospital, but I lived in Catford, which is south-east London. And, my father was a house painter, but he collected things. They weren't like your high class antiques, they were like, poor man's antiques I suppose. And my mother had been a milliner. And they had met at the Catford roller-skating fancy dress ball one year, where my mother went as a red Indian, because she had played a walk-on part in a production of *Hiawatha* at the Albert Hall, so she had this costume from there. And my father decided to go as a circular dinner table, with hoops around him, and he cut a hole in one of his mother's best sheets, and he disguised himself in the middle of the table behind a potted plant, well an imitation one. I imagine[???] he was on roller skates. But he found he couldn't dance with anyone, so he was sitting in the corner looking all miserable, and my mother went over, and she fell in love with his smile, you know.

Mm.

So, there was that influence. And as a child, we lived near, well Lewisham Hippodrome, which was a great variety theatre, and we used to go to the Lewisham Hippodrome every Saturday night. And we used to sit up in the gods, and watch all

these different jugglers, comedians, singers, magicians and things like that. But whenever there was a conjuror on the bill, my father would pay for us to sit in the front row. And always the conjuror would say, 'Can I have a volunteer from the audience?' and my father would be up there, you know, participating. And they, they'd like, pull an egg out of his mouth and smash on the head, and he'd get into a balloon basket and go up into the flies, and you think, oh my gosh, what's happening to my father? And then he'd come running out from behind. And so... And then we used to have great parties, and all the family would come, and my father would roll up the carpet, paint the floor, covered it in talc and stuff, and we, my sister and I would then do little performances and acts. And at the age of nine I joined a tap-dancing troupe with my sister, so I started tap-dancing. Well my mother's father, my mother had come from Plymouth, and her father was a sea captain, master mariner, on windjammers. And he won...there was an award called the Blue Ribbon, it might have been a tea-clipper, but he won it from Lisbon to Newfoundland. And the sad thing is that I don't know very much about him, but...

This is your maternal grand, your mother's father.

Maternal, that's right.

Right.

From Plymouth.

From Plymouth.

And she came to London to work as a milliner near, well, I can't remember now, anyway, near Lewisham. Now my father's family, they were fishermen and sailors from Yarmouth, and his father had come to London as a compositor, working for a printing firm. And, he stayed with us for a number of years until he, he died. But then my mother's brother had been in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War, and he was also an amateur photographer. So I was brought up with photograph albums of all these aeroplanes. And so I had this aeroplane, and also this sea influence in my life. Well, when the war came, the Second World War came, I joined

the Air Training Corps, and started to learn gliding, because I wanted to be a pilot. And, the big dilemma was, did I go, well, into the Navy or into the Air Force? I didn't went to go into the Air Force or the Navy, but because of the sea and the air thing, I then wanted to go into the Fleet Air Arm, take off from an aircraft carrier on the sea, but in an aeroplane. And I went up for my air crew selection, and like I'm doing now, I was leaning on the table, all these admirals in front of me, and they were asking me questions about, 'What sort of plane would you like to fly?' And I said, 'Well I'd really like to fly a twin-engine bomber.' And they said, 'Well we haven't got twin-engine planes in the Fleet Air Arm.' And then they asked me a question on trigonometry, but because when the war came, and all my fellow students all evacuated, I stayed home, and had odd bits of teaching from odd schools where a few students were left behind, and then went down to Wales where my father was working camouflaging explosives factories, I'd missed out on trigonometry. And in the waiting room a guy said, 'They may ask you questions on trigonometry, which is it do with navigation.' So he said, 'If they do, there's a little rhyme you can say, which tells you what the sign and the co-sign and the tangent.' And so I suddenly thought of this rhyme, when they asked me this question, and I started saying it to myself but also out loud. Got half-way through and forgot, and one of the admirals carried on with the rest of it. Obviously they knew I knew nothing. So I went out, and when I came in again they said, 'Well we don't think you're quite officer pilot material. We'll offer you a job as a telegraphist air gunner.' And so I then got a little badge, I was able to go back to my fellow Air Training Corps people with what was then, you could put a white flash in your hat to say you were accepted for air crew. And then, the war was coming to an end, so they said, we've stopped all training, which was just as well, because the Japanese used to go for the telegraphist air gunner first, so I wouldn't have lived long. And so I decided to go into the Navy.

Right.

Well, going back to when my father went down to Wales, I did have some private tuition, and then my father was working in this explosives factory, camouflaging it...

This is... Just take me back. You mentioned he went back to Wales. When was that then, what sort of time was it?

This was about, three years after the war started.

Right. OK.

And so, we as a family all moved down and lived in this...

You all moved to Wales?

We all moved to Wales. Except my sister, who stayed behind.

Right. Was she older than you?

Pardon?

Was she older than you?

She's two years older. But she stayed behind and had one or two illegitimate babies and things like that, you know. Eventually she came down. But, my education was all rather mixed up. And so I went to work in the explosives factory for a firm of engineers as the timekeeper. Now, it made cordite, this factory did, which is made by getting cotton, soaking it in sulphuric and nitric acid, washing it all out and drying it, and then you're faced with this, what they call a propellant. It's not like dynamite which just explodes. It goes slowly and it pushes the shell out of the gun. So that was like a naval propellant factory, although I was a civilian. And, so... What was I going to say? Oh that's right. So, this firm were building these huge tanks to hold sulphuric and nitric acid. And if you walked across the factory one day, when they were pumping in fresh sulphuric acid, the exhaust gases would come out of the pipe and you'd see all this coming towards you, this... And you'd run, because if it hit you, you'd have all like needles in your face. So, when, when all the men left, they left an engineer doing odd repairs, and I became a fitter's mate, you know. So I had a little bit of engineering experience working with him. So when they said, 'We've stopped training for air crew,' I decided to go into the Navy. And they gave me at Skegness in a Butlin's holiday camp, they gave me various IQ tests, and when I discovered that I

wasn't going to wear bell-bottoms, you know, like the traditional sailor, I was in my little chalet crying my eyes out, and this psychologist came along and she was comforting me and saying, 'There's no need to cry. You're going to have a peak cap and a collar and tie and look like an officer,' you know. So I decided to go for a trainee electrical mechanic, and in doing so, I learnt all about electrical things and engineering things, all about making threads and, all sorts of mechanical things. And I finished up on a battleship in Portsmouth Harbour, which was, had been used in the D-Day landings, HMS Ramillies. It had been turned into a training ship, they'd taken all the small guns out and turned them into classrooms. And, I remember once, we had to sleep three decks below sea level, in our hammocks, in a very tiny space, about thirty of us, and the air-conditioning had broken down, and the lavatories were all blocked up, and it was really terrible. And I decided to go up and swing my hammock between the big fourteen-inch guns you get on battleships. And I wake up in the morning and all my friends... Because before you started lessons you had to swab the decks, and they would be swabbing the decks, they didn't notice me up in the air, you know. And because I've always, I've always been a bit of a, I suppose dare-devil or adventurer, although I didn't smoke, I decided to smuggle cigarettes out, you were allowed a ration of free cigarettes. So I went into the ship's library and saw this very thick volume called *The War Over Japan*, and that had finished, so I thought, well nobody's going to bother to read that. And I cut a compartment inside, cutting all holes, stuffed it with cigarettes. And then tied it up with lots of books. And went out through the gate and said to the security policeman, 'Is it all right if I smuggle some cigarettes out tomorrow night?' So he let me go. And then when I went out with more books the following night, I was stopped and searched. Because I'd taken them out the night before you see. I didn't smoke, I gave them to my father. So... But one thing before I joined the Navy, I... One of my great things was, playing toy soldiers, dressing up, make-believe. If I went to see a film with Charles Laughton called *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, I would put cotton wool on my eye and Plasticine, mould an eye down here, walk about with a hunchback, frightening all my parents. And, then I went to see a film called *Beau Geste*.

Mm.

Do you know the story of Beau Geste?

Vaguely, mm.

Oh it's a tragic, tragic story.

What was the film, when was that then, 1930s are we talking about?

In the Thirties, that's right. But I was attracted towards films that had heroes in, you know. And part of the story in *Beau Geste*, he's got this troop of Foreign Legionnaires, all are trapped in this fort, being besieged by the Arabs, the Touaregs. And when the relief column arrive, they see all the soldiers with their guns at the, on the parapet, and when they get inside the find they're all dead, because as they've died, their friends have propped them up with a gun and they're running around firing. So I went out and bought those Foreign Legionnaire soldiers, and I would re-enact the whole story of *Beau Geste*. And there was another heroic film called *Gunga Din*, and there was another one even more tragic, and noble, which was called *The Four Feathers*, about these three friends that volunteer to fight in the, not the Boer War, when they were fighting in the, with all the, the Arabs in Egypt, they volunteered to go, but one was a pacifist and he was given a feather. And they went out. And he went out in disguise as a native, and he, when they were, his friends were caught at different times, he helped to save their lives. So I'm nearly crying because it was such a tragic story.

Mm.

And one guy, Ralph Harrison, he gets lost from his troop, and he loses his hat, and in the sun, he goes blind, and his friends save him of course and they all get back together. And then, at one point they find out that it was their friend that saved him. So anyway, so I had this image of myself also of being like sort of a hero, you know. And in my bedroom in the Air Training Corps, I actually built an aeroplane cockpit, and I used to pretend I was bombing Germany every night. They were mainly out of tea-chests, and there were no tape recorders, so I had to go, [makes engine sound] like an aeroplane. And I'd be the pilot. And I made an intercom, so I could speak into a microphone, hear my voice amplified in the earpiece, and then on a long roll of paper,

a foot wide, driven by gramophone motors, one roll to the other, through a hole in the cockpit floor, he saw me take off from Biggin Hill, fly across England, then the English Channel would go by, and then France, all the trees and the houses, looking down on them. And then you'd fly towards Berlin. And then, I would then lay down on the floor and be the bomb aimer, and then, talking to myself, talking back to the pilot, they do, they say, 'Steady steady, left, left, right, right,' and then say, 'Bombs away.' Then I calculated the height and how many seconds it would reach for the bombs to reach the ground, and with a secret button that only I knew I was pressing with my toe, I pressed, little torch bulbs would flash under the paper and I'd go, [makes relevant sound] like bombs exploding. So I had all this fantasy in my bedroom. Which was like a simulator, or you could call it an art installation, or performance art, or what, you know. Anyway, so, in the Navy, studying hard, burning the candle at both ends, going back to London at weekends, living three decks below sea level, I was home one weekend, I'd been training for a year, mathematics, electronics, everything, and I was home, and I collapsed. I was taken to hospital, X-rayed. They wheeled me out to a hospital balcony, didn't tell me what was wrong. The nurses were crying. I thought, what on earth is wrong? My mother and father were crying. And in the end my sister, she said, 'You've been diagnosed with tuberculosis.' Now tuberculosis at that time, in, say, 1945, or '46, was known as the white plague or the white death; there was no cure. The only cure was bed rest or, or surgery, you know. So I was then... I was more disappointed, not with having tuberculosis, that I couldn't finish my course and get my, what they call leading seaman's badge, which I'd already bought in gold embroidery, you know, ready to put on. And so, I was then sent off to various hospitals, mainly naval hospitals at first, and I discovered that I only had it very slightly. I had what they call infiltrations. Now if you imagine infiltrations on the lungs as being spots, the worst thing you could have was cavities, which are like boils, and some people have them as big as a saucer. Now the only cure for that was through either, paralyse one half of the diaphragm, which would stop the lung from working, which would rest it; or the other one was to give... That's what they called a phrenic crush. The other one was artificial pneumothorax, where they injected air between the lung and the cavity wall to squeeze that lung up. But the worst one, I think it was called a pneumothorax, where they laid you on the operating table, made a slice down your back through all your ribs, and then, took out an inch of ribs, joined you up together, so you would be

permanently lopsided for the rest of your life. So I'm laying, knowing I haven't got it very badly, but people, there's a guy in a plaster cast because he's got it in the spine, to keep him still; there's a guy next to me that's coughing his lungs out. I'm building up pillows to keep all the germs away. There's another guy comes in with tubercular meningitis. I start developing all his symptoms, I've got headaches. Another guy's got it in his stomach, screaming out with pain. And I've got this stomach ache that lasts for months, all the specialists say, you know, 'We think you're a hypochondriac,' you know. And, I'm still doing...I mean, all in the Navy I was doing performances, and then in hospital I'm doing things like, I used to make things called epidiascopes, where you can put photographs in. And I get a shoe box and my parents bring me in a lens and a bowl. And I'm projecting all the mates, all the sailors, all their photographs of their girlfriends up on the wall. And one guy, he gets his willy out and he sticks his willy into this projector, so there's this about eight foot, glistening, in full colour, willy on the wall. And the nurse comes in, all horrified, you know, 'Stop stop stop stop' all this. And there's one guy in the corner, he's laughing, and he's laughing, he starts coughing. He starts haemorrhaging. And he's taken out and in the morning he's dead of course, and there's just a hospital bed, all the blankets rolled up, you know. And it's a real sock in the stomach, you know. Well, while I was in the Air Training Corps, I'd gone from working in the explosive factory, and then, we were living in Wales, and they started a thing called the Police Messenger Corps, in which young schoolboys, they thought the Germans might parachute into South Wales, cut all the telephone wires, and so schoolboys, on a Sunday this was, schoolboys sat in the police station on a Sunday, and if the Germans landed, we would carry messages on our pushbikes, through the German lines, to other police stations. And I camouflaged my bicycle. But also I had this fantasy, I was very caught up, I had this romantic idea about the Germans, and we didn't know all about Auschwitz and things like that, and so I tried to pretend I was a German spy. And I forged a German identification document, and I used to walk along and drop it, and people used to pick it up and say, 'You dropped this,' and no one actually looked at it, you know. I realised years later, the thing I'd copied in a book was an identification card with a big red 'J' on it. And I found out later that that was the Jewish identification card. So anyway, so, some of our mates that were over sixteen, they had motorbikes, so I thought, well when we went back to London again, I thought, I want to be a motorcycle policeman. So my mother and I went up to Scotland Yard, she said, 'My

son wants to be a motorcycle policeman.' What they used to call courtesy cops, used to drive round with the peak cap and help old ladies across the road. So we went through all the different departments, and in the end they said, 'The only job we can offer you is to change the light bulbs in the traffic lights, go around with the man with the van.' But that wasn't romantic enough for me, so I turned it down. Then I applied to the local employment agency and got a job in this bank. And I started as a junior clerk. That meant I had to make the tea, and sweep up, and do odds and ends of jobs. And they gave me a whole list of jobs, including the last job... You see when the bank closed at three o'clock, they just closed the door, but they didn't lock it in case a late customer came. So the last job I had to do was to close all the windows, and to lock up the door. Well I went home and forgot you see. So, a policeman is walking along trying all the doors, and he finds the door of the bank, there's all the windows open and the door unlocked. So he pushes his way in. And when he gets to the manager's office, he finds this old man wearing dirty old clothes, and not shaved, sitting in the manager's office. So he's arrested and taken to the police station. But he says, 'I'm the manager, I'm the manager.' He said, 'What are you doing there?' He said, 'Well, we take it in turns to do fire-watch duty. I've gone home, I haven't bothered to shave, put on my old clothes, you know.' And they had to get the chief clerk out of bed to identify him as the manager. So, they then decided to keep me, they promoted me to junior ledger clerk and brought in someone else to be the, to be the junior clerk. And, the manager was this crazy man who was a member of the Magic Circle, he used to come round and be doing conjuring tricks all day long when you're trying to balance all the books. Now there were no adding machines, no computers, it all had to be done by hand, and adding up all pounds, shillings and pence in ledgers. And I eventually reached, before I joined the Navy, I'd reached the post of chief ledger clerk, at the age of eighteen. Well, when the, when the bank used to close, myself and this other junior clerk used to get up to all sorts of fun and games. And one night we decided to pull the curtains, and in the dark play games, like, he's got three darts, I've got three darts, and if you hear a noise you throw the dart at the noise, you know. We didn't hit each other. But we hit the manager's office window and we, we cracked it, you know, and we were called in, and... Anyway nothing happened about it. And then, we had to take money to local banks, and I'd sit there with toy pistols in my pocket in case I was challenged. And one day I had to take ten bags of copper to a local bank on a trolley, £100 in each bag, and I had these toy

pistols in my pocket in case I was robbed. And on the way to the other bank, one of the bags burst its seal, all these pennies went over the floor. And I'm picking all this money up, everyone's helping me, and I get back to the trolley, there's only nine bags, someone's nicked a bag. So I wheel the trolley back into the bank foyer, go into the cloakroom, put on my coat, go into the strong-room, get another bag, put it under my coat, and walk out. And they were £100 out at the end of the day; they never found out what happened to it. And then another time... At the end of the day, all the money, the coin was in paper bags, and during the day the chief cashiers would throw it into the wastepaper baskets, and at the end of the day they'd up end, picking out all the good ones. And during the day, we got lots of bits of blotting paper, cut the same size as like, I don't know, £20 notes, pack them in a bank wrapper, folded, put the seal on and forged the, the chief, or the bank manager's signature; dropped it in his wastepaper basket, secretly, all got covered up. End of the day, he suddenly found there's £500 extra. And we were there till midnight, until the manager discovered through the little holes they had, air holes, he could see it was blotting paper, you know. And of course, we weren't sacked, but it was terrible.

Mm.

And then one day I bought this book on amateur science, and it said how you can make this sensitive explosive. And, I went out during the day, and that night in the bank, you get, you get ammonia 88, strong ammonia, and iodine crystals, crush them up, steep them in ammonia, filter off, and you got a piece of mud about the size of your fingernail, and while it's still wet, you put it onto door handles. And when someone touches it, it explodes you see. And I put them in a cupboard in little bits of cotton wool, you know. And in the morning while the bank was fill of people, I went out as I lifted the box up, the whole went off, and the whole bank exploded. Oh he was terribly annoyed. So, anyway, I wasn't sacked. And so I then left to, to join the Navy, and then I talked about that. And of course being a hypochondriac, and all these worries, when I was at the bank, I'd, I'd done a...the manager said, 'Can you do a sign saying, "To economise, switch off the lights."' So I did this all in Gothic. And, I had no art training at all, not interested in art. And one day sitting in hospital out of my wallet I took out this 'Please Switch Off The Light'. So I did pages and pages of, all lettering and lettering. And then I started copying cartoons in magazines,

arms and legs and heads, making things in Plasticine. And then, I started expressing, starting drawing, and expressing fears I had about all the people dying, and that I might be the next one. And so I started my own form of what I now see as like a psychotherapy. There was no art classes at all. And then gradually did things to do with like, fears about operations, and about the atom bombs and things. And so I then knew I wanted to go to art school. So I then sent in drawings to Hornsey School of Art, applied, and became an art student. And that was about 1949 I suppose. How's the tape going?

We're getting near the end of this one. Actually... Well, there's not too much left on this one.

No.

Actually, before we get too far into that one, perhaps it would be nice if you could perhaps, perhaps go back and say something a bit more about, about... Because obviously, the sort of theatre and film and...

Yes.

There's so many different things that you've just mentioned from your early life.

Yes.

If you could say perhaps a bit more in detail about your games that you played, the toys that you had. Because I know you've got lots of them, haven't you, here.

Yes. Well...

You've talked about the fort that you had.

When we... Yes. When we moved to Wales, we lived in this wooden sort of, bungalow, in which, it was on the side of a hill, and there was land all... No it was like a pathway all round.

Mm.

And I decided to move out from the house in play, extend the fort system. So I got sand and cement, and I started making fortifications, all the same scale as the soldiers. And I made a little city, with all its roads and drains and things. And then, with fireworks, I would then blow it all up. And the mistake I'd made was, I put in street lighting and I ran the cables through the drains that blocked up the drains. Earlier on, my father, he was a great collector of, all junk and antiques, and being a house decorator, one year one room would be Regency, another one would be all mediaeval. And then, he was a lovely, he used to collect and grow flowers, and he gave my sister a plot of land, about the size of a grave actually, about six foot by four foot, and he gave me a plot, expecting me to grow plants. My sister did, but I, I dug holes, put in asbestos pipes and fireworks and blew them all up, you know. So, it was all...it was all taken away from me. So I built... So, all around the caravan, I built these different forts and different things, so I used to move my soldiers all round. And I'd have enemies and blow things up and things like that, you know.

Mm.

So I really had a, had a wonderful time, you know. And, one tragic thing happened to me during that time, is that my father, my father bought a...gosh... [BL (emotional] My father bought us this beautiful little ginger kitten, which we called...oh what did we call it now? Twiddles. Twiddles. And I used to go out walking with it. It used to follow me. And we used to go onto the hills. And there was all this bracken. And I used to run about ten feet away and then lay down with my head close to the ground and I'd, I'd hear her coming towards me, and then like a tiger, and with that scale, come out, you know. And then one Monday, she didn't come home. And then my father found her in the hedge, riddled with gunshot, and we know the local hotel man had been out there shooting. And my father picked up the poor dead animal, took it in, flung it down, he was having dinner, all his guests, and said, 'You shot my bloody cat,' and the man denied it. We sent it off to the vet to have an autopsy; he said he found no gunshot wounds, although you could see all the bullets in it. We found out that the vet was a mate of the hotel man, and so it was all a conspiracy. I know, when

my father brought it in, because it was cold, we put it in the oven to try and warm it up to see, to make it...[emotional]...we thought it was going to come alive, but of course it didn't. It was terrible, you know.

Mm.

Anyway, I was making model aeroplanes, living in South Wales, and my father never drank, but one night someone had left the firm, they all went out drinking, and we heard my father coming in late at night, he was completely drunk, and I stood on the steps of the bungalow with one of my swords and I said, 'You're not coming in this house.' I was only about, say, thirteen or fourteen. Eventually he sobered up and we let him in. There were three rooms in the bungalow, one my parents slept it, which was like the sitting room; my sister slept in the end room; I spelt in the middle room, which was like the kitchen. And we had to fetch water from a waterfall, and under the table we had, we had buckets of water. Well in the middle of the night my father was feeling dry I suppose, you know, from drinking, and I heard him come into the room to get a cup of water, but in the next bucket was where we put all the tea slops. Because he got a bucket of tea, and he screamed out. And I said, 'Serves you right,' you know. But... So that, that was...

Hang on.

That was how I extended play. And I was playing with soldiers till I was sixteen, you know.

[End of F8072 Side A]

[F8072 Side B]

Is it going all right?

Mm. Yes, OK. Yup.

Well, yes, you're beginning to see sort of different patterns arise. So one is all about the sea, and my grandfather being a naval captain, which is all to do with sales and ropes and things like that, and the sea, and the elements; and my uncle, Royal Flying Corps, to do with flying, which led on to interest in space, and to do with the air; and my father gardening, to do with earth, the element of earth. And what's the other one? Earth, air, fire, and me, interested in explosions, working in an explosives factory, fire. And, so these different streams, almost like a warp and a weft in a way, these different streams, all come interwoven. And one is about animals, which, I've always had a love of animals, and I've kept animals and things, and I've done, I've done performances to do with animals, and I've been a vegetarian for thirty-five years. So that's another sort of strand, you know. So you were going to ask me about schooling things.

Mm.

Well it's very funny. You know, when I was a child and you were in the playground, and children talk about, you know, boast about their parents, I used to say if an aeroplane went overhead, 'My father is a pilot,' I used to say, and things like that. Yes, one thing about childhood was that my mother was a very gentle woman. She had been a Sunday School teacher, and she...but she somehow or other, she had learnt certain things about jujitsu, I mean she was a very spirited woman. In the war people queued, and if someone jumped in front of the queue she'd go...only a little woman, get her hand, thumb and finger under his nose, knee in his back, and then lay him on the ground, you know. She was a very spirited woman. And at school, I used to get caned every day for laughing in class. I'd see the funny side of something. And used to get the alternative, hand or seat, caned on your hand or your seat. I told my mother about this, and what she did, she sewed about four thicknesses of blanket material on the seat of my trousers, so when I went back, up to the teacher, he said, 'Hand or

seat?' I'd say, 'Seat.' And of course never felt a thing. But that's where I first learnt acting I suppose. I used to go back and wriggle, and pretend I was in pain, you know. And the other thing she said, is, if you're attacked or bullied at school, and a whole load of boys set onto you, stand with your back to the wall, and move your arms a bit like, well a bit like a helicopter, a double helicopter's rotors, you flail your arms in like a clockwork... And so people can't approach you from any angle. And a few years later, at my secondary school, my sister broke up with her boyfriend in her class, and he was about two years ahead of me, one day he set about fifteen boys on to me, and I stood with my back to the wall, and I flailed them, and they just sort of ran away. So my mother and father were great supports.

Mm.

And of course my father used to go to street markets, and he told me, you go to a street market, don't shave that day, go in your old clothes, and if you go to a street market like Petticoat Lane, or there was one called East Lane near the Elephant & Castle, you see a stall of old bric-a-brac and junk, which wasn't anything like, didn't...people didn't know about collectables, you know.

Mm.

And, it was all junk really. And he said, if you spot something you really want, you don't say, 'How much is that?' But you ask the price of everything else, and then as an afterthought, you say, 'What's the damage on that mate?' And then you'll walk away with it, you know. And all these little tricks he taught me. And whereas he bought, he bought bits of silver like these, the silver candlesticks and things, I tended to buy guns and swords, and around here I've got swords and guns I bought. And also things like, Buddhas and things like that. So we collected different things. And so I started collecting things.

Mm.

So, we may skip on a bit. So later on when I started doing assemblage, I was really only putting together things around me. And after a while you had a head and you

had, like an old water heater with a pipe coming out, that seemed like a willy and a body and a head you see. And so things came together in an inevitable way like that.

Mm.

Anyway, I enjoyed my childhood tremendously. And, one thing...

Was it in the East End then?

Pardon?

This is in Catford in the East End. Can you describe the house where you lived?

South east end. Oh well then, then we moved to north London, to, near Enfield, a place called Bush Hill Park.

So when...how long were you at Catford then?

Till I was about nine years old. So that will have been about 1937, we moved to...

Right, before the war.

...Bush Hill Park.

What can you remember about the house, can you say anything about the house where you lived at Catford, what was it like? What was the area like?

The house we lived in Catford, I... Oh yes I remember. Yes, even in there, we had an old fire range, either side there were cupboards. I used to be in the cupboards playing at being in aeroplanes and flying, you know. And we had a whole, an old tin bath we used to fill with hot water and bath.

Was it a terrace house, was it a sort of terrace type of...?

It was a little terraced house, that's right, yes. And, my grandfather came to live with us, and I know that, he never got over my grandmother dying, and he'd be walking around sleepwalking in the middle of the night, sort of, moaning and calling her name. And then one night he drank some poison, tried to commit suicide. But he didn't succeed, so eventually he went into hospital and died. I know, I know one day, and I think it as when I was about four years old, my parents went off to my grandmother's cemetery, and I decided not to go, and then I decided to go, and I was only four years old, I crossed this very busy road, and eventually met up with them, they were really, really horrified. But the tap-dancing finished, because, we were going to do a performance, waiting for a tram, with all our things, tap-dancing shoes, costumes, in a suitcase, got on the tram, left them behind in a shop doorway, went back, they'd all gone. And we couldn't afford to buy more, so, I never did tap-dancing again. But when I joined, my sister and I joined, I was the only boy in about thirty girls, and when they did pantomimes they, they wrote a special part in for me, which was the Devil. And we didn't have any zip fasteners or, or things, so my mother sewed me in this like, catsuit of the Devil, including the headpiece with the horns. And we get down to the bus stop and I have sudden diarrhoea, so I'd got to be rushed home, taken out of this, cut out of it, washed, dried, and then get the bus or the tram on to do the performance, you know.

Mm.

So it's interesting that I played the part of the Devil, you know.

Mm.

Which is, which is interesting really, because, later on at Hornsey School of Art, they did a ballet called *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and they asked me to be the Sorcerer. And then, at Hornsey School of Art we did a story from *The Arabian Nights*, in which I designed all the costumes and did the sets, they also asked me to be the part of a shaman, like a holy man, that brought someone back to life. And these different things were interesting, you know. Yes, so I had this great... So, I...so...

We were just talking about...

This thing also... Yes, performance and art.

Catford, about the house, where you lived at Catford, and... You left... So you...you definitely...

Yes, before we...we left Catford and went to a place called Lee.

Lea, that's...

Lee Green or somewhere. That was not far from Catford.

Why did you move then? Was it your dad's work?

I don't now. I think... Yes, we only had a flat; I think we had a whole, a whole place then, you know.

Right.

We had a whole house then.

And your dad worked... Did he work for a firm, or something?

He worked for a firm, yes. He...he worked for a big firm called F G Minter. And although he was a foreman, he liked to work alongside the men. He could just, sat back and supervised. But he was like one of the lads. And one day he stopped work, was looking out of the window to listen to someone playing a trumpet in the street; one of the bosses came along and said, 'You're not working,' and sacked him on the spot. He came home and he burst into tears. Well then one of, one of his old bosses had left, called Brooker, and started his own firm, so he offered my father a job. So my father, my father went to work for him, you know.

Is that when you moved house do you think then?

Pardon?

Is that when you moved house, do you think?

That's when we moved house. We bought a dog, which was a Norfolk lurcher. And it went round trying to kill the local cats. And then, one day it stole the joint out of the oven, so... I've still got the little label round the neck. But one thing, at the weekends also we used to go out into the countryside, make trips.

Oh right, mm.

Walking for miles in the countryside, into all the woods and...

Mm. Where did you used to go, can you remember the places you used to go?

Chislehurst, south London, and out beyond Bromley, that way, you know.

Mm.

And we also used to go to the Crystal Place, that had moved from, you know, the Great Exhibition, 1851, it moved to Sydenham. And, the whole Crystal Palace was moved, and they put two towers on the end, you know. And they used to have Ideal Home Exhibitions and things there, and we used to go to those, you know. I remember as child, when it burnt down, well we could see the red glow in the sky and we were all crying, you know, because it was a really, it was a really beautiful place.

Mm.

And there was a joke in the playground at the time that a Scotsman had burnt it down. Why? Because, he wanted to see Glasgow. Glass glow, you know. That was a terribly corny joke at the time.

So did you have, did you have a lot of friends around Catford then? I mean do you remember any particular...?

I can't really remember. I can't really remember...

Did you play a lot on your own perhaps then did you, do you think?

Yes. I was very much self-absorbed, you know.

Mm. Mm.

Very much, like I would play in my bedroom, or play with my toys.

Mm.

Like before I moved into the garden, I used to... My father used to bring home all sorts of blocks of wood, left over by carpenters and things, and I used to put them under the carpet to make the carpet uneven, which would give me uneven terrain. And my parents were walking all over this. So, I was very much a loner I suppose.

Mm.

Then, then, near where my uncle lived, a friend of his was selling his house, so my parents moved to this house in Bush Hill Park, which was bought for £700, had a long garden, and, we lived there...

Is this north London?

Pardon?

Did you say it's north London, this, Bush Hill Park?

Yes, a place called Bush Hill Park near Enfield, Middlesex.

Right, OK. Mm.

My father was still working as a house decorator. And there'd be all sort posh houses in Mayfair and things, you know.

Mm.

At one point later on, I think while I was at art school, he was working at this house... Because this is also one of the stories of my life, is that, quite innocently, I get involved in these terrible situations where I cause this terrible controversy. And, people really get upset and scream and shout, and all things appear in the newspapers, it's really... But I don't do them to cause controversy. And this was one of the occasions. He was painting this posh house in Mayfair, No. 22, a particular street. The occupants had left, but the cook's mother was living in a room upstairs as the caretaker. Now we were working for my son-in-law's brother, whose father was an ex-policeman, who took it upon himself to be the timekeeper. So when my father, all in the family, we had arrived at eight o'clock in the morning, he'd be there with a watch checking us in. Now the cook's mother had said, because of this, she said, 'You can always come and look at the clock in my bedroom when you get here, to see if you've arrived on time.' Because I was up at six o'clock in the morning. So that morning, we were five minutes late, and I rushed in the door, look at the clock. But she was oversleeping. She sat up in bed, screaming, 'Rape! Rape! Rape! Get out of my bedroom, what are you trying to do to me?' And of course there's terrible scandal. I was told to go home and let it cool for a few days. And then my cards and money arrived the following day, you know. And it was done quite sort of innocently, you know.

Mm.

Terrible, terrible. So these are the things that crop up from time to time, you know.

So you were saying about your father was, he worked on quite a lot of sort of, quite high class properties, did he?

Yes. And then, of course when the... He had...

Up until the war presumably then?

Pardon?

Up until the war breaking out.

Up until the war. In the First World War, because he was born in 1900...

Right.

...so he was eighteen in... My mother was ten years older, so she was born in 1890.

Mm. What was your mother's and father's name?

Well my mother was...my mother had a strange name. Lily Grace Ching, c-h-i-n-g, which is like a Chinese name.

Yes.

And my father was called Alfred Donald Lacey, but everyone called him Alf.

Alfred what was it?

Alfred Donald.

Right. Yes.

Alfred Donald Lacey.

Mm.

I was called William because my, my father, my grandfather on my mother's side, he was called William. And I was called Bruce because my father was decorating a hotel at the time, or a pub, and the publican, he said, 'I've just a baby son, I don't know

what to call him,' he said, 'Well call him Bruce.' So I was called Bruce. Now my mother who had called me William, she used to call me Bruce, and my father who had called me Bruce used to call me Willy. Until some time or other they stopped, you know.

So you were saying your father was born in 1900.

That's right.

What about the war then, was he in the war?

Well when the First World War came, he was just old enough to join up.

Yes.

And, he, the first gun he fired exploded, the barrel got blocked up and all the wood blew off, so he was made a gardener to the camp. And of course when the Second War came, he was, he was thirty-nine, he was too old. And so he was, his firm went to camouflage these huge explosive factories in Wales, you know.

Oh right, that's why you went to Wales then, right, yes.

Yes, that's right.

It wasn't an evacuation thing. You went for his job.

Well you see, all my school went, and I was persuaded to go.

Right.

And, it was interesting that the night before... We'd all been issued with gas masks. And the night before I went there was a funny sunset, a funny colour in the sky, and it seems it was portent actually. And a man knocked on the door, and he said, 'My parents lived here in the First World War, and they built an air-raid shelter in the back

garden. You can't see it now, it's made of concrete, and it's a foot under the ground.' Well I was evacuated the following day so I never discovered about this. So, we went to Braintree in Essex with my sister, and we were installed in this sort of house with these elderly people who've never had children, and I think I could have coped, but before we'd been there two hours, my sister was moved to another house. So I'm there on my own, crying my eyes out, been separated from my parents for the first time. So I phone up my parents, that's on a Saturday; they came on the Sunday to persuade me to stay. We're walking round the town, a policeman says, 'What's he crying for?' And they told him. He said, 'Well try and persuade him to stay for at least another week.' So I stayed for another week, couldn't stand it, so they came, they came and took me home, you know. So, you know, they were very good, very good support.

So you went back to your parents in London?

Went back to my parents.

And your sister stayed in Essex, did she?

She stayed there for a time. And then eventually she came back. Well... So I'm working, I'm working as a bank clerk, towards the end of the war, and they start sending over these doodlebugs.

Mm.

These rocket-propelled V-1s, that go zh-zh-zh-zh-zh-zh-zh. And you come...I'm coming home from a party one night and suddenly, one goes overhead, and the engine stops. I fling myself on the floor. But of course, they used to glide for about five miles, so, it explodes about five miles away. And I made model aeroplanes, so in my, in my window in my bedroom I'd got this little balsawood model of a Mosquito aeroplane. And then they started sending over V-2s, the rockets, that just go straight up, and they come straight down without any warning. Now the V-2s glided and landed on the ground, and that was all ground blast; but the V-2s went into the ground, blasted mainly through vibration, shock. So I get up in the morning, and I go

downstairs, and I've still got my pyjama top on. No I think I've taken my pyjama top off, that's right, and my bottom top off[ph], when suddenly behind the houses opposite, like, it's only about fifty yards up the road, a German V-2 lands. Crash. All the ceiling comes down, and all the soot blows out of the chimney. So [inaudible] all white from the plaster, and [inaudible] like the Black and White Minstrels, you know. And of course every, all the plaster's off all the windows and it's chaos, you know, and we're cut slightly, you know. I stagger through. And all the windows are out and everything, you know, and I get up from my bedroom, and all the windows, all the glass is blown out. And the glass is blown out, and there's plaster on the other side, and it's all sticking like daggers. If I'd been in the bedroom I would have been lacerated. And through all the rubble is my little aeroplane made out of balsawood. And I picked up the pieces, and I've still got it now. And I say, it's probably the only modern aeroplane destroyed by enemy action in the Second World War, that's still hanging around, you know. I ought to let it go to the Imperial War Museum, you know. So, that was on my way, on my way to the bank, you know.

And that was a near miss then presumably.

Yes. And then of course, there was this beautiful girl. So, what was I now then? I was probably about, sixteen, sixteen, seventeen. She was about nineteen, this beautiful blonde girl who lived opposite. I used to have fantasies about her you see.

Mm.

But, all their houses had all been blasted from the back, so my parents said, 'Well you and your parents come and stay in our place,' you see. So, the men have been from the Civil Defence and they, they've put...didn't have plastic, but they put some sort of weatherproofing over the windows and things. So we have all these beds and mattresses in the front room you see. So I'm laying on the bed there, and she's laying on the mattress beside me. And I had one of these, these falling dreams in the night, I was falling. And I wake up and I find I'm laying next to her in bed. You know, ever so... So dreams do come true you know. Anyway, so yes, at art school, at art school, I'm performing all the time at art school, you know.

Mm.

So...

So you finish off at art school. You had this long sort of tortuous journey to get there in a sense didn't you.

Mm.

All these different things that you've done.

True.

But what about, just to go back again, to perhaps, to think about what you did when you were at school. You were saying you had lots of sort of interesting things in your life outside your school, but, I mean what, what sort of part or role did art play when you were perhaps, you know, at school, anything? Can you remember anything at all about...?

I've still got a drawing... I did a drawing of a castle once, a front view of like a castle, very childish drawing.

Mm.

But because I...I suppose I'd looked at castles, I didn't draw all like, the cracks of the stones, like you would all the brickwork; I just did a line here like...and I was told off for that, you know, no, you know, I should have drawn every stone separately, you know. But... So I didn't have any interest in art at all, you know.

No.

And that, that will be one of the main threads, that art as psychotherapy, which follows all the way through. Of course you don't realise that at the time.

Mm.

So, so I then applied to go to the Royal College of Art.

Mm.

And, they weren't happy at Hornsey School of Art, the principal wasn't happy, because I hadn't taken my, one of my diplomas, and he thought I was... And his son had got in the previous year, and he didn't like the idea of people that really, you know, he was going to get other people going because it would take some of the kudos away from his son. So three of us applied, and they were very good mates. There was a guy called Ted Dicks, and what became my best friend...[BL emotional]...who committed suicide later, John Sewell. We became mates, and, so we started making films together, and we did one about a blind man called *Head in Shadow*, which I played the part of the blind man. We then applied for the Royal College of Art. 600 apply, there's a shortlist of ninety, and then, you go in and then... So I was one of thirty students that went in, and John Sewell got into graphic design, and Ted Dicks got into painting, you know. So, that started my great hate of art schools really.

Not Hornsey?

Pardon?

What was your experience at Hornsey like then? Were you just there for a year?

I was there for two years, that's right, and then three years at the Royal College of Art. It wasn't too bad. One thing that was fantastic, there was this...he's forgotten now, but this incredible artist called John Minton. He was a graphic designer, and he...but he did, he did do what you might call fine art things. Because he was looked upon by the snooty art world as an illustrator, his work was never taken seriously, but he was a... He committed suicide too.

Mm. Mm.

He was an incredible bloke. Homosexual, gay, but so dynamic and incredible; when he used to give lectures and talks, he was like a sort of a hero of mine, you know.

Mm.

And when I went to the Royal College of Art, he became my tutor. And so, but you know, you would show him your work, and he was a tremendous, tremendous support. But the rest of the staff, well you know, they were really, real bastards. They were.

What, at the Royal College do you mean, or at Hornsey?

No, I didn't have any problems at Hornsey.

Right.

I did notice, I did begin to notice that some of the tutors taught from the perspective of either Devil's advocate, or from the point of bitter sarcasm. They would love to destroy your work, or criticise it to bits. At the Royal College of Art, it was enhanced. And most of the time the staff would be in the senior common room getting drunk. And in your first year, they'd come out, because although you had a tutor, they all felt free and easy to come round and tear your work to bits. And so in the first year, they would come out, slightly pissed, and tear your work to bits. So, what I did, in art school studios you had these huge screens on wheels, and I used to build all the barricades up to keep them out, you know. But they'd still come. And in your first year, you would be attacked on a one-to-one basis; in the second year, you began to learn some of the art, art...art speak, what I call double talk, aesthetics, you know, relationships and form, colour and all this, balance, all that sort of shit. And so you could fight back. But then they would fight back, because they'd come in pairs, or in threes, you know. And so what I did, it's also very significant that I had a, a pass to visit the zoo, and I used to love going to the zoo, but I was horrified that the tigers and the lions were all in these small cages. And the feeding of the lions was, was revolting. They'd all be in... They had outside cages, but they could go through to

inside cages. These huge things being built in Victorian times, called the Lion House, hundreds of people would go in at lion feeding time, stand on these terraces, and the keepers would go along, [growling] and feed all the lions. Great entertainment. But the things that really got me were the vultures. Vultures... Animals in our society, well it's not a bad press, they're all given this terrible human analogy, like a sly fox, you know. What's it now, vultures, these horrible things. But vultures are scavengers, they clean up nature, you know. They're doing a wonderful job. And I love, I love vultures. These huge birds. Wings clipped, living in tiny sort of, like huge parrot cages, you know.

Mm.

And, I... Because they're flying, they're settling not for very long, I had an old Brownie camera, I would stick my camera through and I'd photograph them. So I started doing paintings of these birds. And of course later on you can see the analogy. I felt trapped myself, you know, by the staff, and I was identifying with birds. And at one point at the Royal College of Art, they had a huge seminar with students from the Royal College of Art and students from the Slade. And up on the stage, we're in the great assembly hall, they had a painting from the Slade, and they had a painting of my vultures on the other side, and all these art critics, Andrew Forge I think and other people, talking about the aesthetics. And they got on to my painting. 'Oh the aesthetics' and things, 'this bar, this bar here is, is like that. And this other bar is like that, it's twice as wide, and the relationship...' I said, 'Can the artist speak who did the painting?' And they'd say, 'What have you got to say?' I said, 'Well look, I took this painting with a camera.' 'Oh, a camera,' you see. 'You're painting from photographs?' I said, 'Yes, and the reason why that bar is wider than that bar, as anyone knows, if you take a photograph, anything nearer the camera is going to be bigger, like you photograph my hand, near the lens, it's going to be bigger. That is the simple explanation,' you know. And, we had this terrible man called, what's his name, oh God, this critic, he's big, fat, he's got fatter. David Sylvester. David Sylvester. And he was a great mate of all that crowd with, the drinking crowd with John Minton which I wasn't a part of, because I was a family man, didn't go out. And he once gave, he once gave a, he was like a leech in a way, he gave this talk on, on French Impressionism, and then he had a seminar on French Impressionism, inviting

us to make all our comments. A month later he's on the radio talking about French Impressionism, which, he's got bits of his lecture and bits of all our suggestions all mixed in, you know. Oh! And as I said earlier, well I said earlier, not on tape, but you were out in the garden, that my history of art only went up as far as the French Impressionists, and also as far as, yes, French Impressionists. Anyway, at the Royal College of Art, the three mates, myself, Ted Dicks, John Sewell and myself, we formed the Film Society. So we used to hire all the films and run film shows. And so, we used to get all the old classics, like *Metropolis*, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, and all... Yes I suppose so, yes, and we got some of those, Bunuel films, the Surrealist films as well.

Bunuel, mm.

That's right, yes. And, that famous one where the eye's cut and the...

Oh yes, Un Chien andalou.

Un Chien... That's right, yes.

Yes.

But I didn't know it was Surrealism or anything like that.

Right.

And, we used to design posters for the Film Society, you know. And then I used to do little performances like, advertising the films, and... And then, I found... You see, I was never into the Goons on the radio, because it was all quick-fired verbal humour, and I was more into visual humour. So, used to get Laurel and Hardy. But because everyone was into, like the Bob Hope, snappy quick, Goon humour, quick...they couldn't take the slow pace of the Laurel and Hardy side of films. So I used to run them at sound speed to quicken them up slightly you see. Well then, we did productions like, we decided to do a circus. And so for weeks I was, I wanted to do tightrope walking, and trapeze, and, that's right. So I used to practice every day on a

scaffold pole, painted white, which is not like a rope but it's still, you know... And I practised in Japanese outfit with a Japanese parasol. And of course when it came to the... And also trapeze. The trapeze act was where I swung out on a trapeze, and then, moved in such a way that I was hanging by my legs, and then another person swung out on another trapeze, hanging by their legs. I catch hold of their arms, they break free, give them a double summersault and they crash on the stage. Because it's a dummy, hanging on hooks made of lead, so quickly dragged off, they think it's a real person. And then it swings out again, this time hanging on butcher's hooks, and I let go of my trapeze and hang on to it. So they all thought... And I'm saved, you know. Well when it came to the trapeze, the act in front of me was doing a balancing act, and the person on top had a safety rope. So when I come on to do my trapeze, my trapeze all gets tangled up with the... And so I'm hanging upside-down. And it's a complete disaster, but it's hilariously funny, because they see, I'm trying to get out of all of this, you know. And then when I come on to do the tightrope walking right, to think about tightroping, you need to see the tightrope, but you need to see the, you need to see the goal you're aiming for. But they just put the spotlight on me, and I kept falling off. And trying to climb up again. Is it coming to the end?

Mm.

[End of F8072 Side B]

[F8073 Side A]

OK, it's on now, so if you talk...

Yes.

About the RCA.

Just slightly going back to when we were in Wales...

Yes, mm, mm.

...and my mother being supportive. Coming home from school one day, to the bungalow, and past the house, and there was a man standing at, in his open front doorway, and he says, 'Oh your name's Bruce. I'd like to come in, I'd like to have a word with you.' And we sat down on the settee in his front room. He started talking about wanting to start a youth club. And I was only wearing short trousers, and suddenly his hand strayed onto my knee, and he gave me a squeeze and said, 'Oh you are a chubby lad aren't you.' And I didn't know anything about homosexuals or anything, but I knew somehow it was wrong.

Mm.

And I just pushed him aside, ran out of the house, and told my mother. And she went round and she said, 'If ever you start a youth club in this village, I am going straight to the police.' And of course he never started a youth club.

Mm.

So... Yes. Well, that was talking about the knife...no, not the knifing. Well then we did, then we did a musical.

This is at the RCA now?

At the RCA, yes, that's right. And... Oh yes, well, how I met my first wife, this is going back to 1948 I suppose. I'd always been very shy with women, and the nearest I'd got to, to touching a woman's body was when, in the Air Training Corps we used to go gliding, and then, on the bus going there you know, you're all in your uniform and you know, and started talking to this girl, and after gliding I met her and we went into the churchyard at St Albans Abbey or something like that, and we're kissing and cuddling. And then, somehow I get a bit more adventurous and my hand finds a zip, and I undo her skirt and my hand goes inside. And I think I just get around to her crotch area, and that really, that knocks me out really I suppose. So there's only really that, apart from odd, odd, very very, odd girlfriends. There was a girlfriend I had when I first went to Hornsey whose father had designed the label of Gordon's Gin, he'd done like, scriptwriting or something. And we used to meet every day. And we used to kiss and cuddle, and I remember she used to wear a corset, you know. And one day... Then she said, well... I was teaching her art, and we'd be in the front room and we'd put the lights out and her mother discovered. And we were kissing, and she was horrified. Now if we were at her place, and I had to go upstairs to the lavatory, I wasn't allowed to go upstairs to the lavatory if she was up in her bedroom. Or if I was in the lavatory upstairs, she wasn't allowed to go upstairs either, you know. And yet, you know, we could have all sorts of kiss and cuddles elsewhere. But then, she went with her parents to visit her brother's grave at Arnhem, and, Arnhem's in, is it in Holland?

Yes.

I think, yes, that's right. And I'd stayed behind dutifully watering all the plants. She came back, and she opened her suitcase, all presents for this and presents for that. She hadn't brought me a present. She brought a Dutch sailor's hat and talked about the great time. And I thought, that's it. So I, I walked out, and I never went back.

Mm.

That was it. But she was very flirtatious. And when we used to go to school dances, there was a boy that she used to fancy at school, and, he kept dancing with her, and I kept excusing him. He was going round putting off the lights in the hall, making it

romantic, and I was going round putting all the lights on. And I did get very jealous, because she started writing to him, showing me his letters, and then one day she stopped showing me his letters. But the final straw, I thought, well I can't take this any more, this terrible jealous feeling, and she's only playing with me. So I had nothing more to do with her. And then, a friend of mine said, 'I'm going out with a girlfriend tonight to a dance, a blind date. She's bringing a girlfriend. Would you like to come along?' Well I'd seen a French film that afternoon, in which this French man all full of confidence went out rowing with his girlfriend, and he was laying in the boat, and she was doing all the rowing you see. And so I was full of all this male competence. And we went to this dance, and, there was a... A funny little thing happened at the dance. We had to kneel down on a bended knee and propose to whoever you were dancing with, so we'd done that, and laughed about it. Went back to her parents' house. They were away on holiday. So we put the lights out, he was kissing with his girlfriend and I was kissing with Pat. And then we were kissing on the floor, and I said, 'Oh it's a bit hard down there, can we get a pillow?' So she got a pillow. And I said, 'Well it's a bit cold down here.' So she got blankets to cover us up. And I said, 'Well we're laying on the floor, downstairs, with a pillow under our heads and a blanket; why don't we go up and lay on the bed?' So we laid on the bed. And I said, 'Well look, we're laying on the bed; we might as well lay in the bed.' So we laid in the bed, and she put on a nightdress and I put on a pair of her father's pyjamas. And we were just kissing and cuddling all night long. I don't now whether I was touching her breasts or what, I don't think so. And I went home the following day, and it was such an emotional draining, I was flaked out in an armchair, as though we'd had intercourse about ten times, you know. And then... So we started this amazing courtship. Her father was a senior civil servant and her mother was a terribly snobbish woman. I'd come from working-class origins. Her... They were very upper middle class. And, I used to call round for an afternoon Sunday walk with a rucksack on my back and a tent, and all tent poles sticking out the back, because we'd find the nearest bit of waste ground and sort of go in there and make love and things, you know. And anyway, we find ourselves one night about one o'clock in the morning sitting on a bench by a reservoir, and I go down on my bended knee and say, 'Will you marry me and have six children?' I think it started almost as an accident, because, I think I started by asking her what her feelings about marriage were. And suddenly all stars came in her eyes. And, I hadn't really thought, and I suddenly

blurted it out. And we got back about one o'clock in the morning, her parents were waiting up. 'What are you doing, what are you doing? You've kept my daughter out late. You've kept my daughter out. What were you doing?' And I said, 'We were out late Mrs Busque[ph] because I have been asking your daughter to marry me.' She said, 'You should ask her father first.' I said, 'Well I'm not marrying him,' you know. Anyway, so we, we got married, and, full wedding in a church, bridesmaids. Someone said, 'When you get married and photographed, say "cheese".' What's that meant to mean, I don't know, because all my wedding photographs I am saying, like that, 'cheese', like, 'cheese', you know. I mean, cheese isn't really smiling is it, you know?

Mm.

And we got back to the reception, and for some reason or other I shoved a cream meringue in her face. But... Yes, and so, we got married, and then I left my parents. So I went on one final holiday to the Isle of White with my parents, then that fall[???] we got married. I'm walking round this house. Cried my eyes out, because, you know, I don't want to leave my mother and father, I'd been so happy there, and to go off into the unknown. So, the lady I married I'm very much in love with, Pat. She, very conservative, worked for an accountant who was a member of a Masonic Lodge, he's the secretary of Highgate School, well Highgate School Friends Society, of ex-parents and things. Well not...well, parents of ex-students, to raise money for a charity for the school. And so she got into this thing that she wanted our children to go to Highgate School. Not only that, she wanted us to live in Highgate. Now Highgate in London is about the most expensive place in England I suppose, except for around Dulwich area, you know, or, even, more than Hampstead. So I'm a penniless art student, and I've got to go up to Highgate, you know, and try and find somewhere to live. So, I start knocking on doors. Not, 'I'm going to get married, I'm looking for somewhere to live,' but, 'I'm going to get married, I'm an art student, but, do you know of anywhere that is going?' you know. And, there was nothing at all. And then they said, 'Well, the man that owns all these flats is a man called Mr Jones. He lives in that huge house,' No 1 North Road or something in Highgate. And I went round there, and knocked on the door, and this bearded one-legged man came to the door, and, called Mr Jones. And I said, 'Look, I'm a penniless art student, I've just

got married, or getting married, and I would like somewhere to live.' And he says, 'Well I'll put you on the list if I find anywhere.' Two days later, a letter comes from him saying, 'I have this flat, with a kitchen, my own bedroom, a spare sitting room, my own sitting room, and the bedroom that was my mother's but she's just died. You can come and live with me. We won't clash, because, I get up about ten o'clock, I walk over Hampstead Heath all night long with my spare leg, and then, I'm getting up in the morning, or going to bed in the morning, while you're getting up.' So we lived there for a couple of years, on the understanding, no parties, no children. So... And we couldn't call him Mr Jones, that was too formal; we couldn't call him by his Christian name, that was too informal; so we had to call him J, just the letter J, which became like j-a-y, like a name you see, we called him Mr J. And that was quite happy. I think he was quite interested in art and things like that, you know. And the woman upstairs, this little woman called Miss Pintoleet[ph], she was a friend of the zoo, and of course I was going to the zoo, I had a student pass, and I saw her at the zoo one day, and she was looking after animals in the Small Mammal House, and she called me in, and she was feeding this wonderful baby gorilla called Guy the Gorilla, a very famous gorilla. And so I sat Guy as a baby on my lap, and was feeding it with a milk bottle. Of course later on Guy died and they were talking about stuffing it and putting it in the Natural History Museum, and I was going up to protest, it seemed a terrible thing for Guy to finish up like that, you know.

Mm.

But, I used to go into the Monkey House, and there were these things called Lar Gibbons. Well I can't do it now really, but they used to go, wa wa wa, or go, wwwwwwwwwwww. And I used to go in there and start...and they'd all start going, all the monkeys would start going. They really loved it all, you know. And I used to collect, I used to love the, the macaws, the coloured parrots, and collect their feathers and things that had dropped in the bottom of the cage, you know. So... And then, and then, later on, when I started doing props for television, Dr Desmond Morris, he was doing *Zoo Time*, so I used to go and make chimpanzee testing machines for him. It was like a sort of, a block of wood with a groove cut in it, zigzag, on a slope, and if the chimpanzee knocked it, it would go that way or that way, and a grape would run down getting nearer so it would get a reward. So I got to know Desmond Morris

through doing things for that, you know. So anyway, so... So Pat and I got married, and then...

Did Pat work then, was she not working or...?

Yes she was still, she was still working...

What was she doing?

She was a secretary to an accountant.

Right.

Later on she became a qualified accountant, and she still is.

So she got quite a good job whilst you were a student then?

Yes, and somehow...you know, we hadn't got children.

No. No.

So we then, we had to move.

Right.

So we found this house, mock Tudor, at a place called Bounds Green, not far from Muswell Hill and Wood Green. And we found this house. We went to look at it at night, and the garden was full of all these exotic plants, and of course when we moved in they'd taken all the plants with them. And then, the people buying the house said, 'Well, my son-in-law is a solicitor; if you deal with him we'll cut down on legal expenses.' We found out later, it was only £3,000, that they didn't own the house, they were given first offer to buy, and they bought it for about £1,000, and so they bought and sold it, and we bought and sold it all on the same deal without realising, and we put two and two together, you know. Anyway, so we lived in this house.

This is while you were still a student?

Yes. At the Royal College of Art by this time, you know.

Right, mhm.

And, then we used to have incredible parties. We had parties with local friends, because I'd got to know a local drama group and I did odd little bits then, and doing my performance at the Royal College of Art, and we were making films at the Royal College of Art. And, then... But we knew the only way we could buy this house on an endowment mortgage was to let rooms, so we advertised in the paper, and the day we moved in, all the furniture came, all these men with newspapers and carrier bags, and looking in all the rooms, and this room, that room, that, picking all the rooms. So we lived with all these different lodgers for a while, you know.

So it was a big place presumably?

Pardon?

It was quite a big house then, presumably?

Yes. It probably had, one, two, three or four bedrooms, and upstairs and downstairs lavatory, and bathroom. And, a huge hallway, huge square hall you went into, and you went off into a lounge and a kitchen.

Did you have lots of your things there, lots of the things that you'd collected?

Oh yes, yes.

Everything went with you, did it, from when you left...?

Yes, that's right. They were all on shelves, all over the place, you know. And then, I... Yes, because then we go back to the Royal College of Art really, because... Well,

there's lots of things at the Royal College of Art, my goodness me. We did a circus at the Royal College of Art, which, I decided to do knife-throwing and sawing wood in half. And I decided on a trick thing whereby you have this board with the grain of the wood going that way, and I used to practise knife-throwing, throwing the knives like that and they stick in. But, I used to ask for a volunteer from the audience come up, and this girl would stand in front of a painted black, one-inch line of a woman on the board. Then I'd cover her up with the Union Jack. And while I was covering up, this shape of a woman covered, it was the shape of a door, so you couldn't see the black crack, because it was in the middle of the black line. So she went through; the door was closed; a trapdoor was opened up, and she put her head through. A dummy was hung with a big block of balsawood, and the Union Jack was pulled down so you could see her head. And then I'd fire a toy pistol, and someone around the back would pull out a big cork, so a hole would appear. And then I'd go, bang, and they wouldn't pull out the cork; I'd say, 'Pull out the cork you deaf idiot,' or something. And then I'd fire, I'd fire another gun, and they'd look round the back with all blood coming out their head. And then I'd throw the knives. I'm sort f expert. One, two, and the last one would stick in the stomach. Uuuurgh! And then the Union Jack would fall away and you see it was all a trick. Well, I wanted to fire a gun, so I wanted to fire a...that's right, a .45 Webley...

[inaudible].

And I hired a revolver. I had to get a licence, I had to get Robin Darwin from the Royal College of Art to sign something saying I was a responsible person. So he said, 'I don't like the idea of you throwing knives.' And he said, 'Show me how good you are.' And on the wall, there was a map of South Kensington, and he said, 'See if you can hit the Albert Hall,' [inaudible]. And I flung a knife, and it went right through the roof of the Albert Hall. So he said, 'Oh well I'll sign your form then.' So, I got this gun, all the bullets and things. And then of course I asked for a volunteer from the audience. No rehearsal at all you see, and this...sometimes it worked. And one time a girl came up. Because I heard a whisper[???] as they're getting into the box. It's like two tea-chests, and they've got to get their feet in one and their bottom...their head out the other, and then support themselves, like you can, with your shoulders and your ankles, and you support your body. And the trapdoor is spring-loaded so the, the

bottom of the tea-chest can go down, there's a bit of the Union Jack, so you don't see them doing that you see. And right at the end I trip over the Union Jack and you see it's all a trick. Because I found that mistakes happened, and you see it was good to keep it in. And of course once this girl came up, she got in the box, and I forgot... Because I'm sawing through with a real double-handed saw, but I've slipped in a tea tray made of metal, and so the saw is sawing through some flimsy bits of wood and it meets...it doesn't meet up. Well I forget to put in the bit of tray[???]. So on one occasion, all this sort of underwear and dress came out, and I thought, well, that's it, you know. So all these hilarious things. Another act I used to do was an act with a harp. I used to come on with a harp, and be like, playing it. It was strung with strings, and they were elastic strings. At one point I'd say, 'Oh I feel a bit hungry,' and I'd open up a trapdoor, pull out a sandwich, two slices of bread, and the boiled egg, peel the egg and pass the egg through the wires, it all come up sliced, then have an egg sandwich. It's very corny. And then the phone would ring, I put our phones there[???], 'Who's that?' And they'd say, 'This is the Water Board.' I'd say, 'I paid my water rates, I want my water on, I want my water on.' And then with a big rubber bomb I'd press the bubble and water would come out all over my face and squirt me with...you know. So I did these silly sort of acts and things. And I was doing magic lantern acts too. And as I say, running the Film Society. But getting back to the staff. And of course they thought, and this has become another thing which I proudly believe I am, this was the thing about this girl writing about me, silly buggers. So all the things I love doing was called by the staff, 'Oh that's Bruce Lacey playing silly buggers.' But they were things later on, I was to realise, were the most important things. Anyway.

Mm.

So, I was a very good painter – well I thought I was, and...

Is that the school that you were in there?

Mm?

You were actually painting in the Painting School were you?

In the Painting School.

Right.

In the Painting School, that's right. And, so in the third year the staff knew they could only take on a student like me if they came out in sixes, all pissed. Robert Buhler was the worst, sarcastic bastard. Carel Weight was quite mild.

Mm.

The worst one I think was Ruskin Spear.

Mm.

Ruskin Spear would love to reduce a female student to tears, you know, and say, 'You shouldn't be here, you should be a secretary, out of the place.' Now, there was a very male culture at art school where women it was believed, no matter what they did and the marks they got, would leave, become married, have babies, and give it all up. And weak male students would fall by the wayside. The true artist was like this hero, this creative person, even more creative than a sculptor, because a sculptor was like a craftsman working with his hammer and stone, but you were like, you were like poets.

Mm.

And this was a sort of, culture in which we somehow picked up on, you know. And this is why there was a great fall when I left art school, and I gave up painting. So they would attack you, and they'd come round in droves, and you'd build up all the barricades and things. And so identifying with vultures and birds. I found there was a ladder, a twenty-foot ladder, that went vertically up the wall, either in the V&A or, because you had a secret passage in to the V&A from the Royal College of Art, in the old school...

Did it? Ah.

...opposite the Geological Museum. And you could get up this ladder into the loft, and then onto the roof.

Of the V&A?

Birds and things.

Oh right.

Freedom. And the staff... Because, just before the trapdoor, this huge splat of black paint where a workman had gone up years ago, had a heart attack, spilt all his paint, and crashed to the floor and killed himself. And the staff were too scared to come up, you know. The only person that came up was this guy called John Bratby.

Oh.

Now we'd all...we'd all gone through, 500, 600, going in, ninety, and then down to, whittled down to thirty, we'd all gone in through the front door, but John Bratby arrived through the back door, and the story was that he's mad, and he's been picked up by the police living in an old army, one of those concrete bunkers in Cornwall, which he'd been decorating, and picked up and put into a loony asylum, lunatic bin. Turned out he'd only been in for two days while he was being assessed. And he's glaring at everybody. Because he has this fantasy about being Van Gogh, you know, being Van Gogh. And he starts doing all these, what became known as Kitchen Sink paintings, you know, he'd paint pictures of the breakfast table and things, which everyone was horrified at, because, you know, they were all into fine art, nothing to do with real life at all. He'd go and see Kurt Douglas in *The Vikings*, do each page, all the Vikings, heroic. And like Van Gogh had cut off his ear, one day an argument with his [inaudible], he smashed his fist on the mantelpiece, and he had his hand all bandaged up, and he painted himself with this bandage. And he used to glare at people and everyone was scared of him. But I glared back at him one day and he started laughing. He was OK really. And he's the only person that joined me up in the attic, you know. And then of course, then, I went in for the Rome Scholarships.

Usually the Slade had won, I think the Slade, you know, was due to win it that year. And, there was a theme, you could do all the ordinary paintings, but there was a theme set, The Flood. And everyone around me, all these early twenties people, they were all doing Noah's Ark, animals going to the ark, two by two. But I'd seen, there had been floods, at Lindhurst[ph]... No, floods in East Anglia. And I'd seen newsreels, and, oh, animals, like cows, walking along a country lane, to escape...shots from the air, to escape from the flood. Poor animals. Around the corner there's flooded water, they were going to find more flooded water. Human being were up in trees, in boats, on roofs of houses. And I thought, it's the animals, it's The Flood. But, there were no floods on at the time, but I found one or two rivers that were rather swollen, so I did lots of sketches and drawings. But I felt, I've really got to experience animals dying. So I went to a Co-op slaughterhouse on Plumstead Common, wore wellington boots and a thick army sort of raincoat, my demob coat I got, and I sat there all day. Oh, all these animals came in, all the pigs screaming, because they could smell the blood. And they were all just with a humane killer, that's what you can call it, all put to death, their throats cut. And then the cows came in, they stood in this metal box. And this great big thing went, joom! And then, they collapsed onto the floor, like a clap of thunder, not like John Wayne dying you know, or in a Shakespearean play. They crashed, everything went. And then they put a wire rod through the head and twisted, all their muscles twitching. And then they dragged it out, and hung it up on a hook on a conveyor belt, cut its throat, drained all the blood, and then a man came along and skinned it. And they're dropping all the skins down a hole near me, and as the tail goes down I'm all covered in blood. They're laying, all the eyes out in rows for medical students. And then a man comes in with a chainsaw and cuts the whole thing in half, you know. But I've eaten meat all my life. And so, I can't give up sausages, mince meat, steak and kidney pie, but that lodges there, you know. That was a horrendous experience, you know.

Mm.

And then when I'm a student, I go down to Cornwall to see my Aunty Daisy living in Plymouth, and I go out fishing one day and they're catching mackerel, and they're catching all the mackerel, putting them in baskets. And they're all...well they call it... They're asphyxiating, you know, they're drowning in...because they've got no air,

you know, and they're all twitching, they all die slowly. So that lodges in my mind. And later on, gradually I did become a vegetarian, you know.

Mm.

I gradually find alternatives and things. So, I'm doing this painting, I put all these things together. I go to the RSPCA and I get photographs from those floods of animals, and bulls, and bulls, they drown, and then all their stomachs blow up with all the gases. So I had this painting of this bull, painted with... The head was like from the dead animals I'd seen in the slaughterhouse, and the body from all these blown-up carcases. And stuck in a tree, like these trees I'd painted. And of course, the staff came round, and they ridiculed it and tore it to pieces, they said it looks like a big, big currant bun. And they really took the mickey out of it, and tore it to bits. And then it came to the prizes. And the Slade got the first prize, and then someone got an auxiliary prize known as the Abbey Major, and then I got one of the six prizes known as Abbey Minor, which is really for mural painting. But because Bratby, he'd been getting free materials to paint on, which were sheets of hardboard, I found that if I moved up into the Sculpture School, under this lovely man called Kenneth Rowntree, I would get free hardboard. And so I started doing large big paintings you see. He was a lovely man. And of course, then when it came to the degree, I got...the staff that I'd hated and gave me all this bad time, they gave me a first class degree, and a silver medal. You know, it was incredible, you know. And, anyway, they had no big hall for the awarding of the degrees at the Royal College of Art, so we had to...in a huge hall at the Royal College of Music. And a man called David Eccles, I think he was the Minister of Education... The previous year we had all gone in, and we'd all sat up in the gallery, and I had a huge boar skin which I hung on the gallery, like, this is an old bore, you know. And so the year I went, we all had our mortarboards and things, and I wore an admiral's hat when I went up for mine. I'm not going to...I'm not going to be the same as everybody else, so I wore this sort of admiral hat. Yes, so I got a silver medal, and a travelling scholarship. And because I'd made a film with art students at the Royal College of Art – no, Hornsey School of Art, the *Arabian Nights*, and I'd done a lot of research, because I'd done all the costumes and the sets, it wasn't done like a Hollywood epic, it was done like a primitive tribe that lived in Afghanistan, with all simple clothing. And we found this huge building built by

German prisoners of war at Hornsey, which was made of concrete, like, to get from a lower level to an upper level, all overgrown, with like, minarets and things on it. I painted all sorts of primitive designs. So we did the *Arabian Nights* film there. And, I had to go to Arabia. But first of all, I felt obliged, as I won it for mural painting, to go to Italy and to visit every mural painting in the whole of Italy. So I started off in Venice. And my friend Ted Dicks, he'd been picked up by an art lover, he'd had an exhibition in London, an art lover who was gay, and, there was a tendency for students to put on a gay, to be camp. And Ted Dicks, he was a womaniser, but he had this gay camp persona. And he went out and stayed with this man in this Palladian villa in Venice, you know. So when I get to Venice, I've slept on the train, without food, without sleep, and I'm paranoid, I think everyone's following me and all have got radio control, you know. Are we getting near the end?

Mm.

[End of F8073 Side A]

[F8073 Side B]

There you are. So, you've just come off the train.

So, so, I thought, well I'm going to... Yes, so I was a bit paranoid for a few days.

Mm.

I imagined that everyone was following me. If a person wasn't following me continuously, he'd go round the corner and someone else take over, and they all had walkie-talkies, you know.

Mm.

But after a few days I was all right. It was just tiredness I think. And then I thought, I'm going along to see this Palladian villa. Big gates and things, fantastic place. And his name was David Edge, this man was, he took me in. He took me through the house. But there were all these paintings of naked men, I don't know whether, like, whatever, from Renaissance paintings, wrestling with tigers. And then lots of bedrooms, all these young naked men laying in beds that were covered in black sheets, all the rooms, all the rooms are painted black. And I got the same heckles came up, like when this man had called me in as a child, and, I thought, I've got to leave. I've got friends I've got to meet at four o'clock. And I left. Because I was very innocent, you know, I didn't know very much about homosexuals and gays and things, you know.

Mm.

So, and I went to all sorts of places in Italy, looking at all the mural paintings, and people I loved were Giotto, and, Piero della Francesca. And I liked the very early Etruscan things, and also I loved the...I went to Ravenna and saw all the mosaics. And then, I moved south, and as I went south, everyone was saying... You see, in the north, they're very snobbish, and intellectual; they regard anyone south of Milan as being inferior, primitive, and you've got to be scared of them. So, I didn't go to

Milan, but like, in, you know, you're in...you're in Venice, you say you're going to Florence or Pisa, 'Oh yes, be careful of those people.' And then you're in Pisa and they say, you say you're going to Naples, 'Naples, don't go to Naples,' you know, 'terrible, Naples,' you know. So I go to Naples, and I'm living in this wonderful place with this landlady in this huge palace called Palazzo Manoloni[ph], and I've got a sitting room, a bedroom there, you know. And I'm there, all the...there's all people in the streets, and they've got all these Madonnas up on the wall, on all the street corners. There are all these little silver hearts and legs they're putting up, and flowers. And if they have an injury on their leg, they put up a little thing, they go to their local jeweller's and get this little stamped out silver thing of a leg and things. And the churches, some of the churches, got a Madonna there, all lit by candles, and they've got, they've got artificial arms, and they've got crutches and they've got paintings, primitive paintings of people falling through the walls, breaking their legs. All these sort of homages, Or they prayed to the Virgin Mary and things, you know. And then, then I start exploring some of the, the aspects of, I start finding, you know, underground places. There's a skeleton of a figure all covered in, they're supposed to have dissolved all the skin and muscles away and it's all the arteries and things left behind. Then I moved south, and in Naples they say, 'Don't go to Sicily,' because John Bratby's living in Sicily, I've got to see John Bratby. 'Don't go to Sicily,' you know. And I go to Sicily, and I go to, I think it must have been Palermo or something, somewhere, near...or some little town near where John Bratby was living. And I make enquiries in a travel agency, and they say, 'Well go along to the café, they might know.' And the café's filled with all these twenty men, which, I'm not being paranoid, but this is all the Mafia, and they were asking me questions and checking me out. 'What did you come to Sicily for? And who's your friend?' and things like that. But when I say, 'I'm an artist,' and in Italy it was the same, '*You[ph] sólo artista pittóre*', 'You are an artist, 'oh fantastic, *bellissimo*.' And from the, the *Collègio Reale de Belle Arti*, the Royal College of Beautiful Art, you know. And they love artists, you know. And so once the... I thought they were the Mafia. And then this guy, he's a schoolteacher, he drives me around on his scooter, and he says, 'Yes,' he said, 'they were members of the Mafia, checking you out. But once they knew you were an artist, they know you are an innocent, non-political.' And of course, Bratby, we go to Bratby, he's gone back to, back to London for Christmas, so I never see Bratby, you know. So I then, I then come home for Christmas, but I've saved half the

money, so I've got to get out to the Arab world. So I go back to Italy, cross over by boat to Greece, go and see the Acropolis and all that, you know. And then I get a boat down to Crete. And, I want to see Knossos, I've heard about Knossos and the Minoans. But they're very hospitable. Now the Italians, they're all over you, but they're not really hospitable, and although there's all Italian music playing, [singing] '*Oh solo mio'*, they're not singing it in the homes and the cafés.

Mm.

But the Greeks are. They've got all...and they're dancing. They'd give you their last bit of meat, you know, that I was still a meat-eater then, you know. Ever so hospitable, and really wonderful. And then, I hear about Crete, so I land in Crete, and they say to me, there is a convent, encircled city which is all full of nuns, called a monastery, across the mountains, get off a bus, walk cross the hills and the mountains, and get there, and you walk in, they'll see you're a stranger, and they'll put you up. So I'm walking along there. There's all these hundreds of people all going. And when I get there, it's a religious festival. And I think, well I'm going to the church, and I'm not going to be noticed, because there's so many people here. And then suddenly they spot me, and then they, the Mother Superior says, 'Would you like to stay?' I say, 'Too right,' you know. And so I, I'm put up on a mobile bed thing in the Mother Superior's house, and I'm laying there in bed, and somehow or other, I don't know, but all the nuns and the monks are up, they're all dancing and singing and drinking. And suddenly the whole ceiling falls on me, because they're all dancing in their bloody hobnail boots, and the whole ceiling collapses on me, and, oh terrible. Anyway, I'm not allowed to photograph them inside the, inside the, the convent, because of religious purposes, but I can photograph them... I can draw them inside; I can only photograph them when they come out. So I'm out there with my camera, it's only a little box camera which I've adapted to take smaller pictures, but twice the number. And they're coming out, and so, one's on a donkey and one's walking, and they see me, but they both want to...so they start fighting, and one starts knocking the other off the donkey. Because they want to be on the donkey with me photographing them. It was ever so funny. Well anyway, I then went to Knossos. And a friend at the Royal College of Art, he was now working with an archaeologist in the house built by I think Sir James Jeans[ph] there. And so I get caught up in this

archaeological bug. So they're all having breakfast one morning and I set out with lots of carrier bags. And around the base of, you know Knossos where the Minoans lived? Around the part of it, there was a dried-up riverbed which was about forty foot deep, and I thought, well there must have been a riverbed there 3,000 years ago. Probably it wasn't very deep. And if they chucked their pottery out, there'd be...and then about four or five feet, and all this pottery. And I thought, well if I collect enough pieces, I'll be able to make up a broken pot. Because if they throw the pot out... And I'd got all these carrier bags, and I'm digging them out. And then all these archaeologists come along, and they're appalled, you know, because, there's me doing the worst thing of all, you know, which is an amateur archaeologist destroying all the evidence. And, they're very upset with me. And I get back to, back to Athens, and I'm staying in the YMCA, and I realise I can't carry four carrier bags back. So I...I'm throwing them all in the dustbin, and I've only got a few bits and pieces left, you know. Because you see, when I went to, when I went to Italy, I was very interested in Naples, in puppet theatres, and in the other room I've got a very beautiful one called Orlando, and then when I went to Sicily, I met a puppet-master, who took me into his shed and sold me a very old Victorian puppet of his. So I had to come back from Italy with all sort of things.

Loaded up.

And so then, then I, I went back to... I went to Iraklia. Not Iraklia. I went to, I went to this Greek island, oh, what is it called? Mykonos. Mykonos.

Mm.

Which is... And of course doing paintings and drawings and sketches. Because, the Beaux Arts was the leading gallery, like the Marlborough was in the Sixties; in the late Fifties it was the Beaux Arts Gallery, run by Mrs Lassore.

Mm.

And she had taken an interest in my work, because I'd had an exhibition with other students at the Gimpel Fils Gallery, and I'd done a birdcage, ivory and ebony birdcage

in the, in the Victoria & Albert Museum, and Sir Hugh Casson had bought it. And it's interesting, that he was one of the architects of the Festival of Britain, and lo and behold, some, a year later or so, what did he put around Eros to protect it, but a double tier, six-sided birdcage. And I think he's still got the painting. Anyway, so, I was getting all ready for a one-man, she said, 'I'd like to give you a man-one show.' Because that's what you had to aim for, a one-man show. So I've got all these paintings and looking forward to a one-man show. So I then go to Mykonos, and do lots of paintings and things of Mykonos. And, get back to Athens, then get a boat that is going to Beirut, to the Arab world, you know, which is fantastic. Because I'm sleeping on deck, people with goats, and chickens, going all off to Egypt and things, and they're all dancing and things. And they're all doing ballroom dancing in the first class saloon, you know. And we get to, I don't know which is first, there's Port Said or there's Alexandria. We go to one. Everyone gets off. I say, 'Bye bye.' And then we go on to the next one, and they all back on the boat. I said, 'Well where have you been?' They said, 'We we went off to see the Pyramids.' I said, 'Well I wish you'd told me, I'd love to have seen the Pyramids.' So I missed out on the pyramids. So then, we went to Beirut. And I'd got to get to Jerusalem, so I've got to get to Damascus, and so, the easiest way of going from Beirut to Damascus is to get a taxi. And there's taxis driving around Beirut calling out, 'Damas[ph], damas[ph],' Arabic for Damascus. And when it gets full, you go off, you know, and you're stopped at the Syrian border and searched for drugs, and there's a man sitting in the back and they say, 'Do you know, he's a murderer, he's been let out to go to his daughter's wedding,' or something. They're all driving along. Anyway, we get to, we get to Damascus, and I can't think much happened there. Anyway, I get a bus, and I go down to Jerusalem. And this is before, you know, before the war when Israel now has the West Bank. And so it was very much divided. The old city was the old city, you know. There was Arabs, there was people walking through the streets with, six sheep all [inaudible] their heads and things. And it's this ethnic thing I like, but they don't like being photographed, you know. So I've got a, my camera hidden in a cardboard box tied up with string as though it's a parcel taking photographs. And, you know, you can't get through to Israel. I think you can, you can go into Israel, you could go into Israel from that side, but you couldn't get from Israel back. And then, in the souk, you know, bazaars, I get chatting to a quilt-maker, and then he says, because a lot can speak English, he says, 'My daughter lives in Hebron, and she's

marrying...she's marrying a shoemaker; would you like to come down for the wedding?' So I said, 'Yes.' So we tumbled in the in the car, put the mattress all on the roof, and we set out for Hebron. Now Hebron is where Abraham's supposed to have been buried, and he's in a big tomb there. And it was surrounded on three sides by Israel, and they're very paranoid there, you know. And of course, we go into this wonderful Arab home, and I'm going to be there for the wedding. And I show them photographs of my wife and my children. 'Oh fantastic, fantastic,' you know. 'Come into the harem, all the women are...' And, they show me all the babies, all wrapped in swaddling bands, like clay[???]. And at night I'm sleeping, and all the windows and doors open, all the women are looking, they've never seen an Englishman sleeping under these sort of quilts and things, you know. And... And I bought lots of drums, pottery drums, in Jerusalem, which I have with me. And you could hear all the women singing and dancing and playing drums. And the men are all sitting round smoking hookahs and all talking. And I said, 'Let's do some dancing,' you know. So we're all drumming away. They hadn't got drums. And I'm teaching them the veleta dance, and they're teaching me sort of Arab dancing, you know. And then I'm, I found also I could communicate by doing conjuring tricks and things, you know. And then I'm in the town one day, and of course, all the men, there's a tremendous affection between men, they're all holding my hands and giving me cuddles and things. But, one isn't picking up any homosexual vibes at all, you know. And then one day, a man comes up to me and he says, 'You're going to be murdered, you're going to be murdered tonight, because they think you're an Israeli spy. You have been taking photographs and doing drawings. And you've got to escape, you've got to escape.' And so, I think, well look, it doesn't quite ring true. So I find... There wasn't a police force, it was known as the Arab Legion, which had been started by Glubb Pasha, where they wore those lovely, I've got one I brought back, red and white sort of Arab scarves, you know, army uniform. And they had a police post, and I went to see them. And we gradually pieced it all together, and they said, 'Well what has happened, we think is this, and that is, there is an ancient Arab tradition which started with the Bedouins, that if I invite you into my home, and you, I let you grasp the tent pole, you are here for as long as you can stay. I can't ask you to leave. But there is this other conflicting tradition, and that is, no men can sleep in the house the night before the wedding, or if...it can only be the bridegroom. Now, they don't want you to stay, but they can't ask you to leave. So they've concocted this story.' So, I

found some English nurses a few miles away who were part of the Save the Children Fund, so I stayed there the night and went back and everything was fine, you know. So I wasn't murdered. (laughs) I wasn't murdered after all.

Oh bizarre.

But of course when I went, when I stopped off at Port Said, I went into the Arab quarter, they wanted to show me all the flats and the modern shops, but I wanted to go to the Arab quarter.

Mm.

And some Arabs were saying, 'Get out of here, this is Arab people, place, not for you.' But I also met other people that I got on very well with. But of course, an innocent abroad, I went there at the time when the British were hated. There were some English there, British officers were being killed and things.

Mm.

And what am I wearing? I'm wearing an old government surplus army bag on my shoulder with my camera inside, and they're gong to think I've been a soldier off duty, you know. And then there's a man saying, 'Come with me, come and see the black hole.' Well, heavens, I'm not going to see the black hole. So I didn't see the black hole, you know. But, the night I arrived in Jerusalem, this is about ten o'clock at night, I got off the bus, had nowhere to stay, and this Arab boy came back and said, 'You want somewhere to stay mister?' And he led me down these dark alleyways. And we knocked on this door of this courtyard and went in. And there was all these Arabs in Arab costumes laying on these open beds, all smoking hookahs. You know, like going into the Arabian Nights. And of course, I stayed there, you know. And that was really wonderful. And of course lots of the young Arabs, they can all speak English, they all wanted to know if I could give them addresses of girls, they wanted to get married to an English girl and to escape, you know.

Mm.

And then, one day I decided to go to Jericho, and I rented a bike, and I cycled down to the Dead Sea. Dead Sea. The middle of the day, twelve o'clock, on a bicycle without any head gear. So I go down to the Dead Sea. And I'm beginning to suffer from sunstroke, because it's the lowest place on earth, and the hottest place on earth, you know. And I'm cycling back, and I see, I see a man beside a stream offering me glasses of water. And I said, 'Well, this water,' I say, 'where does the water come?' 'It comes from the stream.' And I look up the stream, there's a man washing his feet in the stream. And I said, 'Well look, I might pick up germs in this water.' He said, 'Well....' Because he's washing his feet. And he said, 'Well,' he said, 'I drink this water.' I said, 'Well you might get used to the germs.' He said, 'Well have this bottle of lemonade.' So I bought this bottle of lemonade, and he started laughing. I said, 'Why?' He said, 'Well I made the lemonade from the water from the stream.' (laughs) Anyway, so I carry on the bus back to...I get back to Jericho, and I go back to, I think I go on to, somewhere or other, somewhere in Jordan, like, Amman, the capital of Jordan, and I'm doing conjuring tricks on the bus. Escape from handcuffs with my coat on, and I get out of the handcuffs and I've still got my coat on. And then I get a train to, two days or three days on the train to Istanbul. And I'm sleeping, there's four of us, two are sleeping on the seats, I'm sleeping on the luggage rack, you know. And, the tragedy is that we pass places I didn't know existed. There's a wonderful religious...it's not a religious place, but it's where, where rocks had eroded, all these wonderful sort of domed, volcanic lumps, stop the soil from eroding, and they carved in, and all these homes inside. Anyway, we go to Istanbul. And, Istanbul, it's all very modern. 1927 President Kemal Ataturk had purged the Turkish language of all Arabic words. He'd banned the fez, so no Arab costumes at all. But in all the films, there was always a flashback to when they were sitting on their bed, reflecting on the past, and there'd be a dream sequence with ballet dancers. And he'd be playing on his saz, which is a, I bought one, a beautiful instrument, like a lute, the body carved out of a solid lump of wood about four foot long with a tassel, and it's beautiful music. Right. I found a man that made them and bought it. And then, going across the Bosporus on a ferry, there was a marine, just started saying, 'You want to learn this song called *Uska Dara*?' Which I learnt, and when I came back, Eartha Kitt had made a record of it, [singing] *Uska Dara*, [Turkish words to song]. And I wrote down all the words in my own phonetics, so I can still sing it. And, so I

learnt that. And then, of course when I finally... I was leaving stuff back in Naples, leaving stuff in, in Athens, and then so, buying, I bought a complete Arab costume when I was in Jerusalem. So I'm coming back on the boat from, from, Constantinople... Istanbul, sleeping on the boat, with all the people, and I think, I'm going to go into the first class saloon. But I hadn't got any money. So I dress up as an Arab, with all the costume on, and they all got their lovely moustaches, so I cut my hair, and I stick it on the front of my nose with jam, and I stroll into the first class saloon. They all bow for me. And of course all the dim lights are on there, and I sit there. And of course, I've got no money, so I say, [foreign accept] 'Well I can[???] drink water,' you know, teetotals[???], you know. But then the lights go up at the end, and these English women turn round, and I think my moustache falls off and they say, [upper-class accent] 'Oh he's not really Arab, he's just a fake, an old phoney.' So, I catch up, and I boldly walk out as majestic...I don't sort of slink out, majestically as I walk in, you know. And so, so we've got all the beginnings of performance art in a way. And of course while I was an art student, we had all these amazing fancy dress parties, and I've started collecting shop window dummies. At one point we put a shop window dummy at a bus stop across the road and all these buses would stop, and at one point I put dummies dressed in uniforms at the gate and stood with them, as another uniformed man[???] keep still, and as people went by, it suddenly moved, and they'd be shocked out of their lives. But then, I used to have parties of local friends, and then have parties of students, and then I mixed them together, I found the art students and the local friends could all join together.

Mm.

And then we had wonderful fancy dress parties, that were very environmental, in which you'd have a circus party, and the whole house...walls would all be done like a circus tent, and then people would come and do performances, and I'd do performances, and there'd be a ghost party, people all in fancy dress again, and I would have trapdoors in the floor with ghosts coming up, and, oh, projections of ghosts, and a body hanging from a gibbet, and a woman came by and nearly had a heart attack because she thought it was a real person hanging up, and the police came round, you know. And, there was a Moulin Rouge party, all round... The Arabic party, oh, we had about eight belly dancers, two people came as a camel. Circus

party, to get into the house they had to go through a porch with all the elastic, like bars of a cage, and there was a person in a lion skin sort of mauling them as they went in, you know. And then, and then, then, Sir Robin Darwin, who was the Principal at the Royal College of Art, he used to do all these sort of things that were like, well they were things done, and one realised that he was really trying for a knighthood or to become a peer. A lot of what you might call arse-licking things to, like, be Establishment, you know. And then he had the audacity one day to make a speech in which he said, 'Well before I came to the Royal College of Art, it was going downhill, but since I've been here, it's been like the phoenix rising from the ashes.' And that was our cue. We thought, no no no no no; it's as dead as a dodo now. So we then formed the Dodo Society, which was an adventurous society, and I made a dodo. I made a wire framework. I went to the Natural History Museum, saw a stuffed dodo. Feet from a goose that eventually went mouldy, and the head all out of balsawood, covered in thousands of feathers and a tail and everything. And that was our symbol. And a silversmith in the group, he made these little, little badges you put on a key-ring of a little dodo. And then, we had a... We started... I wanted to do things like explore the London sewers, or have breakfast in that top part of the, of Tower Bridge, and to do all sorts of exploration, adventurous things. But we could never quite decide what to do. And so one night we had a dodo party in my house in Bounds Green where we lived, and I made a hot-air balloon, and, it was only about eight foot by six foot, and we put a bit of red cotton there and we lit it, and it all lit up like a lampshade. And we let it off into the sky. And then we thought, oh, it's about[???] lots of flying saucers in the newspapers. We'll phone up the Met Office. So someone phoned up and said, 'I've just seen this object go over Muswell Hill, which is about thirty foot up, it's about 600 foot long, and travelling at 1,000 miles an hour.' Then someone else would phone up, and they'd say, 'This object was about two miles up, an it was about six feet across and travelling at three miles an hour.' And then, we suddenly realised, we were all phoning from the same phone, and yet we were all giving different descriptions. We should have got our stories the same. Well then the Air Ministry phoned me back and he said, We've had lots more reports of this, and it seems as though it's authentic, because no two people estimate in the same way.' That made it more authentic you see. So then the local police station showed an interest, they phoned. And I thought, well this is my cue. So I had a policeman's uniform upstairs in the dressing room, I went upstairs, because I didn't want them to

see it, and I got it and I threw it out of the bathroom window, it landed in the garden. I stepped out through the kitchen, put it on, and I walked up the side entrance, walked along the road, came up to the front door, to knock on the door, it opened, and they frightened me. But as I'm walking up the door, front door, there's a noise behind me, and I turned around, and there's a real policeman coming up behind me. And as I, I knock on the door, he says, 'Excuse me sir,' and then they open the door. Oh, they all run away and hide and slam the door in my face, and the policeman said, 'What do you want officer?' He said, 'Oh there's someone left a car outside without any lights on.' He said, 'I could really do you for impersonating a policeman, because you did walk on the pavement for about fifteen feet, but,' he said, 'I'll let it go this time.' So I knocked on the door, and I said, 'It's me, it's me, it's me.' I said, 'You don't have to hide you know, it's me dressed as a policeman,' you know. So I then used to go to parties as a policeman.

Mm.

And I'd been to the Royal College of Art. Because one... Yes, one very important thing at the Royal College of Art was that, through going to the musical, the variety theatre as a child, I'd seen *Dance With a Dummy*, where a man has a dummy woman, but his...her feet are fixed onto his feet, so as he moves... So I made my own version with a hole through the back, so I would make her head move like that. And she started off with a dress; her legs were women's stockings stuffed with other stockings, and her arms were stockings stuffed with rubber gloves on. In the end I used to dispose of the dress really. And so I used to do this dance with the dummy, in which, as I danced, I'd let go of the arms and the legs, it would all disintegrate and go to pieces. Well in later years I realised, that lots of my friends at the Royal College of Art were womanisers having all sorts of affairs. I, I suppose I would like to have done that if I'd had more confidence, but certainly not while I was married. And so, while I was at the Royal College of Art, I also had things about, I was always a bit unsure about women. Like a friend of mine who was very cynical, he said, 'If you get...when you're getting married,' he says, 'if your wife says, "Can you put the kettle on for a cup of tea?" don't do that, that's the thin end of the wedge. The next step will be, "Would you mind boiling an egg darling?" And that... Then you're going to get onto cooking, then you're doing all the housework and doing all the nappies.' So he'd

warn me about women. And so, lots of significant performances, sawing a woman in half, knife-throwing, *Dance With a Dummy*. The dance with the dummy was disintegrating in a way. And women from the audience, this sort of, this risk thing, you know. It wasn't till later I saw that all did fit into a sort of, into a sort of pattern, you know. So what stage have I got up to? Now what was I talking about?

[End of F8073 Side B]

[F8074 Side A]

One thing that had remained with me from early childhood, and that was going to see Father Christmas at the local store. Well it wasn't like nowadays, where you go into, in a corner there's maybe a cardboard grotto or something, and then there's Father Christmas there. When I went to the local store in Lewisham called Cheesman's, you would go on a trip. You'd go downstairs into like a submarine, and then the whole thing would gurgle and jurgle, and you'd go down with all bubbles at the windows, and like, fish going by. And you'd feel you were moving forward, and you'd get out. Well you'd come to the surface and you go through like a cave as though you were landing in... It would be a wonderful experience. So, that's what I... I... You don't call it that now, because of the ecology, but that's what I then call 'environments'. So the fancy dress parties, I had to create an environment, like a Chinese party, it was all looking inside like a Chinese house; circus party, Arabian Nights, all covered in like inside a Bedouin hut. It was always, it had to have this environment around me, you know. And, so had the fancy dress parties, with all these environments, all in fancy dress. And, then, then we would do things, some of my lodgers also, we'd have a thing like Hat Week. We'd turn this beautiful big hall into like, all different hats, and little made-up stories about them. Then I went down to a local area that was paved, like a precinct type thing, in my motorbike and sidecar, and do a little lecture all about hats, playing a record, [singing] 'The sun has got his hat on', wind-up gramophone. And then a plant in the crowd, I'd take a woolly hat from him and cut it all up and put it into something and then pull out this beautiful hat, you know. And the audience thought, what the hell is this? He's not selling anything. It was performance art; one didn't know what it was called then, you know. And I wasn't selling anything. And then gradually they started getting excited and started grabbing all the hats, and jumping, and we had to drive to escape, you know. And then we had Sock Week, you know, and we were claiming, these socks were worn by Queen Victoria, and Lord Nelson, charge people sixpence to go in. So, I started doing these different... And then, of course, doing *Dance with a Dummy*, coming back one night with my dummy and my policeman's uniform in this big rucksack, and a policeman stopped me, as policemen used to stop me, and he said, 'Oh, that's rather heavy,' he said. 'I'll put it on the saddle of my bicycle and I'll wheel it home for you,' down the road. And I'd say, 'Don't you want to know what's inside?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Well I've got to

tell you.' And I said, 'I've got a body. And,' I said, 'I've got a policeman's uniform.' He says, 'You haven't killed a policeman?' I said, 'No no, I do this act with a dummy.' And he took me home, and then, either side of the front door there were like, leaded light windows, you could see a shadow on one side, and we went in. And I has a suit of Japanese armour on a dummy. He said, 'Oh that's very interesting.' He said, 'I was in Japan during the war,' he said, 'that's the...this is Japanese Emperor's bodyguard's Samurai uniform.' I said, 'Interesting.' He said, 'I love dummies,' he said, 'I'm an amateur ventriloquist.'

Mm.

And then he said, 'I've got a secret to tell you,' he says, don't tell anybody, but,' he said, 'I do this act. I have this young twelve-year-old dummy girl on my lap. As I'm doing this act, I turn a handle and her legs get longer and longer and longer, until they're about six foot long.' He said, 'If they knew that at the station, they'd all sort of laugh at me, you know.' Oh. So, I then used to carry things in case I was stopped by the police, I used to have a, I've still got it over there, yes that yellow, bunch of bananas, made of papier mâché, and a human skull. So a policeman stopped me, 'Hello hello hello,' at one o'clock in the morning, ' what have you got in your bag sir?' you know. 'I've got a human skull and a bunch of bananas.' And then I used to go to parties as a policeman, and rush in, fire a gun, handcuff couples together, and then sing a comic song or something. And sometimes there'd be a couple snogging on the stairs while the husband was in the lavatory, and I'd handcuff them together, you know. And at one party, I got the wrong house, and rushed in with my head down, looked up and they were all strangers, and they all grabbed me and threw me out of the house. Another one I went to, I rushed in, handcuffed people together, and they were all university students. I got really upset with them all and then they said, 'Oh Lacey, Lacey, sing a song, sing a song.' I thought, yes, I'll sing you a song. So I went up onto the, like a minstrels' gallery, and I sang an Arabic song. [singing Arabic song] And all that sort of thing. And it's like, boo, booing, and throwing up orange peel. And so, as a dramatic gesture, I pick up an empty wine bottle and dropped it over the balcony and it smashed on the floor. But, the hostess's mother was walking out from under the balcony with a glass full of wine, and it smashed in her hand. And they accused me of trying to attack her. So there were all these footsteps up the stairs,

and these six, like, rugby players grabbed me, and they threw me out of the place. And as I went out, I grabbed onto the hostess, and she said, 'That's a silly thing you did.' I said, 'Yes, it was all an accident,' and things like that. And I persuaded her I wasn't sort of a loony, you know. And so I came in and all was forgiven. And then, then I went to another fancy dress, as a policeman, but I used to...they have curtains on the windows in the front room, put it on, you know, by the front door. But it started to rain. And they had the curtains pulled. So I started putting on my policeman's uniform from the suitcase, and a police car pulled up and said, 'What are you doing sir?' I said, 'Well I'm putting on this policeman's uniform to go into this party.' And they said, 'Well it's raining, get in the back of the car and change.' So I got in the back of the car and changed. And I rushed in, fired a gun. Handcuffed people together. And there were, there was a group of about half a dozen dockers from the London docs that had gate-crashed the party. And, during the early hours of the morning, people were telling jokes, and people were taking off their shoes, and I noticed that one of these dockers, someone had put his crepe-soled shoes on the fire burning away. 'My shoes are on the fire.' And then they grabbed everybody, one of them stood by the front door and they guarded all the windows. And then they grilled everybody in the room, and of course, I am the joker, arrived. I am the funny man, I'm the clown, I'm the jester. And it took a long time to explain to them. I wouldn't even do that to my best friend, not your shoes man, not your shoes. You know, your life revolves around your shoes, your suede shoes, you know. And they finally let me go, you know.

Mm.

Oh. So... I had lots of things to do with the... And later on, I mean later on, I mean this is nothing to do with anything really, but, I was in my Dormobile, and I was going down a hill in Highgate, and there was a policeman standing with a group of children on the kerb, and one of the policemen's on the pedestrian crossing, he gives you the authority, but, unless he puts his foot down. And he was dithering. And as I got near, is he going to stop, is he? No he's not. And he put his foot, and I knocked him down.

Oh no.

And he got up, and he apologised. He said, 'It's my fault sir, my fault.' Only a young policeman. And he says, 'I should have told you to be[???] more positive,' you know. So, you know, there have been lots of things with policemen over the years, which is rather interesting, because I did want to be a policeman once, you know.

Really? When was that?

What?

That you wanted to be a policeman.

Well when I... I told you, when my mother took me to Scotland Yard, to get a job as a policeman, then I became a bank clerk.

Oh right, oh initially.

Change the bulbs on the traffic lights.

Initially you were going to be...

This is one of the early things I told you.

Right, right.

That's right. So, that was interesting, how that sort of cropped up.

Right.

So...

There were all these parties that you were involved in. These, these were all around that time when you were, it was sort of Fifties and you were still an art student then?

Oh yes. I mean one night, the night was the foggiest night in London, in the morning, because we knew that hundreds of people had died, it was so foggy that I laid toilet paper on the pavement, all the way from the tube station about a mile and a half to my house, so that people would follow their way, and they saw, that must be Bruce with the toilet paper. And John Minton came, with a lady called Susan Einzig, have you heard of Susan Einzig?

No, no.

And, because he was a homosexual.

Mm.

Well they spent all night kissing and cuddling under the...or, behind the piano. And in the morning she announced, 'John Minton has asked me to marry him,' you know. Which, which shook the art world at the time. They never did get married, you know. But, yes, so, so I then go off, and I come back from... And of course I've got all this luggage and stuff, and I can't afford porters, and I'm carrying suitcases.

When you've been away, to Italy and [inaudible].

Yes, I pick up all my...when I come back...

You came back.

...Istanbul, I picked up all the, all the Greek things, I brought all the Arab things with me, and I pick up Italian things. And I get on the train. And I hadn't got any money for... I've got the ticket back, but I haven't got any money for odd taxis or various things. So I've got a friend, it's going through Basel in Switzerland, I've got a friend who used to be a lodger, lives in Basel. So I get off the train in Basel, and I leave all my things. I mean I've got tea-chests, I've got suitcases and rucksacks. And so, when I walk along the platform, I've got to walk with two, looking back to see they haven't been, those haven't been stolen; leave those, go back for those; look back at those all the time. And keep going backwards and forwards. So when I get to Basel

railway station, I leave them all in the left luggage. I've got no money to get them out, because my friends are going to lend me some money.

Mm.

So, I get there, and my friend's gone off somewhere. So, I then go to the local bureau de change, change, you know, with all my Arabic coins and Greek coins and Italian, piffle really money. And he says, 'Oh, this is peanuts, this is nothing,' he says, 'I can't give you anything for this.' So I think, I don't know what I'm going to do. So I go to the local museum, because it's warm, because I've gone, I've gone from Italy to snow on the ground, Switzerland, you know. And the museum's very warm. But I love it, because I've gone into the ethnic section, and seen all the sculptures by New Guinea artists, you know. Because I've always loved primitive stuff. And I go back to the railway station at ten o'clock at night, and the train's coming about eleven. And this man waiting on the platform, from the money changing office. 'I've been looking for you all day,' he says. He said, 'I felt pity for you, how are you going to get home?' He said, 'Here's French francs and English money,' about twenty, thirty pounds he lent me, you know. And he said, 'You can pay the money back to, a friend of mine has a travel agency.' And so I was able to get back, you know. So it's amazing. There's another thread, is that, when you're in need of something, because I do believe in a sort of magic thing, connections, synchronicity what, but with me, it happens, if I have a need, someone always sort of comes to the rescue, you know. Like, when I worked at the explosives factory, I went after some sort of job, and while I'm waiting for the interview, a man comes in and he says, 'I want to use the telephone but I haven't got...can you lend me a penny for the telephone?' So I lend him a penny. Have the interview. Don't get the job. Come back. The man comes back from the phone, he says, 'You're very honest, lending me a penny to use the phone, no way of knowing you were going to get it back. Did you get the job?' 'No I didn't get the job.' 'Well I've got a job I can give you.' So he gives me a job. You see what I mean, how things all work out, which is absolutely incredible, you know. But that's also the story of my life. I mean friends, my friend John Sewell used to say, 'You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth,' you know. But... So I come back from all these travels, and I start... I've made my romantic studio in the attic with my sort of fan-like window, and I've got all my paintings, and I start painting from my sketches and things of the Arab world and things like that, like landscape or different things. And, and then, then the awful thing starts happening. I then start losing interest in it.

Mm.

I start becoming bored with it, you know. And then, friends phone me up and say, 'How's the painting going?' Well, like I said earlier, in this male culture at the Royal College of Art, women would get married, have babies, fall by the wayside, but men didn't. And if you heard of a friend that had given up painting, you did this gesture which was, hold your nose, right, pull the lavatory chain, flush him down the toilet. And I thought, I was going down the toilet, and I couldn't admit it. So a friend said, 'How's the painting going?' 'Oh very well.' 'What are you doing?' I'd invent a picture. And then they'd say, 'Oh well I'll come round and see it.' And I'd go...I've got to quickly do something on a canvas, to tie up with what I'm doing. And then I'd find, the sun will be coming through, and I'd be playing with lenses, and doing mechanical things, with little old gramophones. And then, because I was doing magic lantern performances, there was a nightclub opening called the Satire Club, which tried to set up as a political satire nightclub, and I got lots of my mates together, and we went out, we wrote a story, or I wrote a story, and, about a Victorian politician called Thomas Rot, and we went out on lantern slide[???] location, photographing scenes and poses from the story, you know, with lots of corny jokes, like, he's made Ministry of Foreign...Minister of Foreign Affairs, and there I am kissing a Red Indian girl, you know. And then he joins, he goes off to war, and he's decorated in the field, and I'm all covered in, in wallpaper and things, you know. And then, he's... And then, rather funny actually, to what happened later, you know. He has this affair, and, he's sitting in bed with a woman, because Victorian times, he's found in bed with Gladstone's bag you see. Then he's sent off to exile, and he's sent off in a hip bath down the River Thames past the Houses of Parliament. And at the end, because he's...he's called Thomas Rot, at the end it says, 'Well, people often talk of him, I've often heard people talk a lot of Tommy Rot.' [inaudible] to have a corny joke. So that was the first bit of political satire that was around really. And then I started doing acts with the exploding piano, where I'd come out and sit in front of a dummy piano, and on a horn gramophone would play *The Flight of the Bumblebee*, and then be miming it on the piano, which is...and then imagine I'm being attacked by bees. So I'd put on a bee-keeper's hat, and a fly-swatter, and I'm keeping all these [inaudible] bees off. And they gradually force me onto the keyboard which will collapse and explode, you know.

Where were you doing this sort of thing then? You mentioned the club, but where else were you doing your performances?

Well this was mainly in this one particular club at the time.

Oh, right. Was this the Establishment Club?

No no no. This was...

That was a different one was it? Oh right.

This was before the Establishment, which became political satire.

Mm.

This was before the Establishment...

Where was it?

Oh, somewhere in Soho, in London.

Soho?

West End or somewhere, I can't quite remember. And then... Yes. And then, then also at the Royal College of Art, and then I, I did the, I did a, a penny-farthing bicycle, I had a penny-farthing bicycle, featured a [inaudible] bike in it.

Mm.

And then I used to sing, 'Show me the way to go home,' and played the melody on the small spokes that produced notes through the thing. And then, then I did another act, which was, I had my horn gramophone in a big cabinet with a tape recorder inside, used to switch it on, and then mime to, [singing] 'I'm forever blowing bubbles'. And then with the foot switch, I'd switch on a bubble machine with bubbles

coming out of the horn of the gramophone as though they were coming off of the record. And then I'd open up a violin case, like the, you know, the gangsters, used to have a machine-gun inside a violin case, and I pulled out a bubble machine-gun, and fire bubbles back at the horn, stop it with my foot. And then it turned round, you know... And then it would start again. So we'd have this battle and this tussle, you know. And then I might do the act, it might only be one person in the audience, and they'd go, and then someone would come in, they said, 'Oh did I miss the cabaret?' I'd say, 'Oh I'll do it again.' And I had to reassemble the piano, and wind all the tapes back and do the whole, the whole thing. And I had started working in television at that time, and...

Oh right.

And I had started making things for Tommy Cooper, and I got his agent to come. And he thought I was too esoteric.

Mm.

Because you see, I didn't fit into the art world, and I didn't fit into the show business world.

So you'd left... You'd left... Right, you'd left the RCA by now then?

Yes, well you see the thing is about the art thing, I felt that, I felt so terrible, it took me several years, because I felt that I'd...I'd gone down the plughole.

Mm.

Because, I was doing all silly bugger activities that the staff laughed at, and not this noble fine thing of painting you see. And it all seemed worthless.

Mm.

And I'd go back to South Kensington, sometimes, they had a book sale of second-hand books, and if I saw my staff coming, I'd hide in the doorway, because I was too ashamed, you know.

Mm.

And...

So what were you doing to make a living then?

Pardon?

What were you doing to make a living?

Ah, well...

Or...

Through having a, a lodger...

Oh your lodger was there.

...who then started to work for ITV...

Ah this is where...

Well what happened, was that, *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* phoned me up and they said, 'We hear you do an act with a harp, and we're three minutes short of an act.' And I thought, this is it. And they said, 'We've got a man that wants to do an act with a harp, he hasn't got a harp, can we hire your harp?'

Oh! (laughs)

So that was awful. So I hired the harp. And then one of my lodgers started working with ITV, and he started working with a director called Dick Lester, now called Richard Lester who's a film director now, or was. And started working when Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers started doing television, not recreations of the *Goon Show* but sort of *Goon Show* things you see.

Mm.

And then, through him I started making trick props and things. And.....

[break in recording]

OK. Yup.

[break in recording]

That was for a company called Associated Rediffusion at Wembley I think. And it was called *Idiots Weekly, Price Twopence*. *Idiots Weekley, Price Twopence*. And although... And then we did a follow-up series which was called, a show called *Fred*, and then another series called *Son of Fred*. And although, they knew I was a performer, because I was still doing cabaret, you know, the only time I really appeared with them was when Peter Sellers wanted to make his own sort of, film, which was called *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film*. I made all the props, supplied all the costumes, and did all the special effects, and then played different parts in it. In which, unfortunately, because life has its ups and downs, when it came out, and I didn't get paid anything for it, because Peter Sellers said, 'If it makes money, you all get paid,' but, I certainly didn't get paid, and it opened at a new cinema in Piccadilly called the Eros, new cinema. And I did one of the funniest bits in the film, which everyone thinks is Spike Milligan, because, they didn't give me a credit on the titles. They didn't get a lovely actor called Leo McKern a credit. They said there wasn't enough space, but I mean, I could find space. And the funniest bit in the film I think is where I'm leaning by a farm gate, as a sort of poet reflecting, and Peter Sellers walks by and gives me a bit of a turned-up nose look, and as he walks by, I open up my coat and pull out a gramophone record, nail it to the centre of the

tree, bring out a sound box with a needle, and a rubber tube going to a horn on my ear, put the needle, and then, I run round the record, around the tree stump, you know. Anyway, that was called *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film*. Now, because I'm a performer, and because I'm good at making mechanical things, and because I'm also an artist too, they give me complete carte blanche. It's not my idea initially, they say, 'We want to do a thing which is called *Footo the Wonder Boot Exploder, Available in all Chemists, Price Sixpence*. I get an old army boot, and because of my aeroplane thing I've got bomb release units that work on twelve volts, I make in such a way that the toecap suddenly explodes in the air. Well the telephone rings, and as the man goes to answer the phone the whole handset goes up in the air and he sort of reaches it out of the air. And all sorts of really crazy things. One was like a, a horse that was... No, it was a tree, partly a tree and a horse but with a trumpet hidden inside that someone played, you know. All sorts of things. And then, then, I started making things for Michael Bentine. And, he did these things which have become well known in folklore, a flea circus, a flea derby and things like that. So I'd be under the table. Like the flea circus, invisible fleas. He opens up this box, takes out a pair of...not a pair, a pair of, like, tweezers, an invisible flea, and puts it on the bottom of the ladder to climb the tightrope, and you see all the rungs bend down as it climbs the tightrope. It would get onto the tightrope. He'll give it a little Japanese umbrella. Just like me in the Royal College of Art really. And then, you'd see the tightrope bend and move all along the wire, and... Because I'm, I'm pulling on this black velvet behind, I'm pulling on black threads you see, and making all these... I'm under the able doing all this. And like the flea derby, we'd got these invisible...it would be jumping over fences and all the fences are crashing down and all the sand is kicking up. Because I'm going around flicking all the sand up through, up through holes in the board and things like that. And then he starts giving me little bits to do. So, at one point he's doing a thing, explaining about, he's a general explaining to the United Nations – oh no, to NATO. And I'm a, a Turkish general with a fez. And he's moving real tanks around and the tanks are firing guns, and in the end things are really getting destroyed and it gets out of hand, you know. And so I'm doing things like that. And, once I'm a Loch Ness Monster. I'm wearing this swimming costume in the tank of water, and I've got the monster's head on here, and I've got all the hubs made out of rubber, floating on lumps of cork all being pulled along, floating on the water, you know. Or I do a bullet-hole effect. A man stands against a door, an

old[???] bullet hole comes. Or, a man dressed as a cowboy has a gun belt on, and he kisses a woman and all steam comes out, and then, he's so passionate, all the bullets start exploding. All these special effects and tricks and things. And they, so they give me complete carte blanche in designing, everything I do, they think it's really wonderful, you know. So, [inaudible]. I then start doing things with Michael Bentine, and start...I then start performing. And then, he does a stage show which travels around theatres in England called *Don't Shoot We're English*. And we...I'm playing small parts in that. And the invisible fleas, as they're on stage, you've got to be invisible for crocodiles. So it's all on a much bigger scale. And the lady at the stage door complaining, 'I'm going to write to the RSPCA, it's cruel to use these crocodiles.' Of course there's nothing there at all, it's absolutely ridiculous, you know. And then we get to Southampton or Bournemouth, and for some reason or other, they're running short and they need another five-minute act. Well I've got a cooking act up my sleeve I do in cabaret. But I haven't got all the gear. I rush out and buy chef's outfits and all the gear. And actually gave Michael Bentine, or he gave me, an audition. But he thought, oh this is all too esoteric.

Right.

Then of course, my roots had come from home entertainment, and so like with The Alberts, we were amateurs, and we were proud of being amateurs, and we performed very much like children, you know. And if we fell down, we didn't fall down like a stage performance artist with what they call a platform where you fall down like in judo and do a slap on the ground; we would fall over, and we'd be improvising, and playing silly buggers, you know. And so, he never regarded me as... He's a lovely man, I loved him, and he used to come to, where I lived with Pat, and he'd help me make certain things, you know. And he was really... But, he always...there was always this lure, like a carrot in front of my nose, that in the next series, 'I'll give you a bit more to do.'

Mm. Mm.

But in the next series, he picked up some more actors that came in. And so, they were playing some of the rolls that I felt I should play. But the other thing also is that I'm

not a straight actor, and so, I can only really be myself, and I was thought upon as a bit too bizarre and strange. Because, all the Goons, and Michael Bentine, they were very basically ordinary people, they weren't eccentric in any way. I went, very much traditional show business, I went with Pat and had a meal with Spike Milligan one night, and I didn't know whether it was going to be formal or what, and I took a suitcase of all different change of clothes, and showed him. And he lived in this straight house, with all boring furniture, you know, and I couldn't understand it, with this man with all this imagination, you know, lived in such a straight sort of, straight sort of place really.

Mm.

So anyway, I carried on, and I made things for Arthur Askey, and I made things for Tommy Cooper and things like that.

Largely props, things that they, they used in their acts, this is then, yes.

Yes.

This is also, are we still in the 1950s, the end of the Fifties really?

No no, we're in the beginning of the Sixties I should think by now.

Right.

By this time, I'm building up big hates against actors.

Right.

So I've got to do something about it, you know. And I've got to do something about it. And this is very often another thing that runs in my life, I do react to things, and come out with something very positive. So, I then created this act, was called Electric Actors, in which I am playing the part of a live actor. This is on the, this is...this is right at the end, towards the end of the Ken Russell film.

Mm.

And so, I'm talking away as an actor, you know, 'To be or not to be,' and like this actor I hate, I start forgetting my words and missing my cues, and getting...and also full of myself and boasting. A bit like an actor I had a row with later on, was called Sir Donald Wolfit, Shakespearean actor. An old actor laddie that finally has a heart attack. So I went, 'Oooooh!' My God! I've hit the microphone. I collapse and have a heart attack, collapse over the equipment. And then the two electric actors take over, one of them is called Clockface, he's an old Victorian vacuum cleaner that's going like this with a motor, and he's got arms on him, and his head is like a clock, and he's turning round. And he gets a bit carried away, he starts exploding. And then the other one, which was the other half of that mechanical man you saw in the other room, he was Electric Man Mark I, he starts singing, 'I'm forever blowing bubbles,' his head's moving and his eyes and his hands, and bubbles come out of his chest. And later on, by a strange coincidence, Ruskin Spear's son, Roger Ruskin Spear, joins this group called the Bonzo Dog Doodah Band, which very much are based on The Alberts and I to start with, then he starts making performance assemblages. And then he starts doing a robot that starts singing, 'I'm forever blowing bubbles' and blows bubbles. And of course people are thinking I'm copying him.

Mm.

Later on I meet him, years later, and he says, 'I was paying homage to you Bruce.' I said, 'Yes, but people thought that I was ripping you off,' you know. So, it's very very strange that that was Ruskin Spear's son that was doing that, you know. So it's incredible. So gradually I was building up my confidence in doing what I was doing. And then, the culmination of the making props was to... Granada Television took over an old variety theatre in Chelsea called the Chelsea Palace, and I was brought in as property buyer. I had an office with a secretary. But I made all the props for the shows, and did all the special effects. And still going off, at home at night; making all the props the following day; going off doing West End cabaret; coming back; going to

the office; arranging all the props; going to the studio, doing all the special effects, you know. And.....

[End of F8074 Side A]

[F8074 Side B]

OK, so, you're a property buyer.

So, so I'm a performer, but I'm there all day long with all these other performers, and feeling very frustrated.

Mm.

And there was the television programme at the time called *Chelsea at Nine*, which would be like a, a variety show of sorts I suppose, you'd have the, the Grenadiers, dancers and singers, and then you'd have an excerpt from a play or a review that was on in London. And, you'd have a singer and maybe things like that. And before the television show... It was in this old, this old variety theatre, in which the audience sat up in the dress circle, and the, where the stalls were, that was all the continuation of the studio floor. And before a show, there would be a warm-up. They'd call in a comedian, to get all the audience warmed up. And one day they said, 'The warm-up man hasn't come.' So... Well in the morning, he's not coming. So I said, 'Well let me do the warm-up,' you see. So I rushed off to all different places, and I rented more props for the warm-up than were in the show. And I rented all these hourglasses you see. And then the audience came in, and suddenly a spotlight came on one of the boxes, the theatre boxes, and I said, 'Hello.' And I came down a rope ladder, and I said, 'Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and others.' Which was a meaningless remark, because I wasn't thinking. I was thinking of animals or dogs or cats or anything like that. And then, just before the show started, I said to all the camera crew, and I'd given them all hourglasses, and I said, 'Synchronise your hourglasses,' and they all turned them over, and when the sand ran out we started the show you see. But during the show, there was an excerpt from a review called *Share my Lettuce*, with an actor called Kenneth Williams, who was very gay, and he objected to my remark, and others. And there was a terrible row about it. So I was never asked to do the warm-up again.

Oh.

Because he thought I was making a reference to him you see.

Mm.

But I mean I, I didn't...I didn't... It was all innocent to me you see.

Mm, yes, yes.

And, then there was another time when this very hammy actor, one of the last of the actor managers, a very Victorian ham actor, have you ever heard of him, Donald Wolfit?

No, I don't...

Well years later, Albert Finney did a film which was based on that called *The Dresser*, in which Tom Courtney was the dresser, and although they didn't say, Albert Finney was the old Victorian ham actor.

Mm.

And anyway, they were doing it in the same, *Chelsea at Nine*, an excerpt of *Julius Caesar*, with Sir Donald Wolfit in it. So I was asked to go out and buy Roman furniture. But you couldn't hire it, because all the Roman epics had been done in Spain or Italy. So I went through a book on furniture, and I thought, well, Napoleon, who saw himself as another Caesar, in what they call Empire furniture, there's all Roman sort of, iconography and things you see.

Mm.

And I thought, well look, Caesar on a campaign, it was like a battle scene, he would have gone off with a whole entourage, beautiful tents, and animals and carts. He wouldn't have been sat in cheap old...he'd have sat in all the regalia. So I thought, better go for that. And of course, I was called in to Sir Donald Wolfit's dressing room after the first run through, he was wearing combinations, you know, long johns,

looked a ridiculous figure. And he had this big row with me. 'I'll be the laughing stock of London...' he already was in a way '...if I got on with this. They'll laugh at me, I can't go on with this.' I said, 'Well it's the nearest I could get, Empire furniture, you know, Napoleon was into being like another Caesar, you know.' And he said, 'Give me that book on English furniture, on furniture.' And we looked through it, and he said, 'I want a table like this, and I want a seat like this.' And what it was, it was mediaeval Elizabethan furniture, you know. So that's what he had to have. So that was another big row. And, I used to do jokey things like, on the way to the studios, it would have been snowing, so I got government surplus camouflage snow suit and big snow boots, and I've also got, you know, Eskimo snow boots, which are a bit like tennis rackets, you know? So I walk in the studio, and they're all rehearsing. Stop everything. And I've got this, this snowball, and I say, 'Anyone for tennis?' And I hit the snowball across, you know. Or another time, there's a programme called *The Army Game*, or *Bootsie and Snudge* I think, and I'm doing a thing, it's, Bootsie's birthday, and I've got to have fireworks, with Bootsie lit up in fireworks. So I turn up in fireman's uniform, and I'm letting off, not only these little lancer fires, letting off candles which I don't really realise; they turned out great balls of fire everywhere in the studio, nearly set on fire. But... And then, it probably was about the same time, and I nearly killed myself but I didn't really realise at the time... Because I'm performer, prop maker, they liked to work with me direct. Normally, they have a script, they have a rehearsal; all props have to go off to the, the property buyer, he's got to get in touch with a property maker. Chinese whispers, it all gets changed a bit. With me, they could deal directly with me. You know, I'd made the props, and I'm a performer, I know had to make them, they could be performed with. So I have to go off to rehearsal rooms where they were rehearsing to have discussions with the scriptwriters and the actors. So I'm on my way to this rehearsal, just behind Regent Street. It's about six floors above sea level, six floors about ground level. And on the way there, outside this junk shop I see this huge rocket, you know, made in papier mâché with like all stars and things on it, so I buy it. And I get there. And I want to, I want to... I arrive at the rehearsal in a novel way. So I go up to the sixth floor, I go to the room next door to the rehearsal room, open the door, it's an office. There's a table over by the window. I push all the typewriters and all the secretaries out the way, climb onto the window, open the window with this rocket between my legs, and shuffle along the parapet. It was only about five, about a foot wide, eighteen inches

wide. Get to the window, and they were all rehearsing, turn round. And I knock on the window, went jumping as though I've arrived by rocket through the air you see. Oh! All these, these... So it's all performing you see, but, working within...

Frustrated performer obviously, I bet you would have been then.

Yes, but still going off and doing cabaret and things, you know.

Yes. Right. At the same time as doing...

And at that time, I'm then working at the Establishment. Well no, not quite.

No.

We decide, The Alberts and I, that's a guy called Tony Gray and...

You've not said...you've not actually... Can you just say a bit more The Alberts, because you've not really mentioned... You've mentioned them, but you've not said anything about who they were and what...

Oh yes. Well, The Alberts, I'd met The Alberts when they came to the Royal College of Art, and I was wearing the same...

Oh so they were there.

What?

They were art students then were they?

No they weren't art students. They, they had grown up in, with family performing, mother a piano, a pianist, and singing. So they'd grown up in the, in the thing of home entertainment.

Right.

They worked on the newspapers at night, that is driving newspapers in trucks, from the print to railway stations to be distributed all over England and made lots of money. But they also were into Victoriana, collecting horn gramophones and, and photographs and things like that. And performing in their quirky sort of way, you know. And...

How many of them were there, who were they?

There were just two, brothers, Douglas Gray and Tony Gray. Both bearded. And I was working at the, I was working at, like this club called the Satire Club, and they were performing at other clubs. And when I was at the Royal College of Art, they had come and performed, and I'd operated their spotlights. So we had originally met. And then one night they came to see me perform, then I went to see them perform. And we realised that we could work together. Now they were musicians, jazz musicians, but playing the wildest, craziest, not always hitting the right note jazz, but really frantic and incredible. Later on, you had the Temperance Seven that were all very boring and all from gramophone records. It was really a crazy band, which is in the genre of Sid Millward and the City Slickers; Dr Crock and his Crackpots; and also, there was an American group, although we didn't think much about them, but, there was, there was an American group. Anyway, I had a problem with music, because I had to have all my music on a tape recorder you see.

Mm.

It meant that we could merge together. They cold provide music for me, when I did my act, and so we alternated, they do an act, I do an act, they do an act, I do an act. And sometimes they would join me in an act, sometimes join them in an act. So it worked very well together. And, we then thought we would have an audition at the Windmill Theatre. Now the Windmill Theatre, we never closed, mainly, well, it was like a girlie strip-type show, with men all with newspapers, either playing themselves or going to the lavatory, tossing themselves off in interview. But they would always have a comedy act. And I think Michael Bentine started there. And the man that ran it, Vivian van Damm, didn't like props, he liked verbal comedians, and he tolerated

Michael Bentine, because Michael Bentine, with a bit of a chair leg, which would be like a gun or be a violin, different things. So we went on, knowing that Vivian van Damm didn't like props, and we were all about props. And also, he was notorious, that if he didn't like an act he'd say, 'Stop.' Or if someone came on and said, 'A funny thing happened to me on the way to the theatre tonight,' he'd stop it and say, 'And a funny thing's going to happen to you, piss off.' So we knew he was likely to stop us, and we thought, we're going to carry on regardless. We're not going to be stopped. So we went in like a bull in a china shop, and we went right through the whole act, boom, boom, boom. Went down the dressing room. His secretary came down, and she says, 'Vivian likes very much what you did. He'd like to have a six-week contract with you,' and we're going to be stars. And... 'But the only thing is, he would like you to rehearse one or two things and knock it into shape.' Because we had lots of bits of ad lib and things like that. So we did do a little bit of rehearsal. And the night before we were due to appear at the Windmill – well, for the first rehearsal, ten o'clock in the morning, the night before we have a party to celebrate, we're going to be stars at the Windmill. So The Alberts come and we do a little bit of the act. And in the act I used a starting pistol at one point, and then when I woke up, someone had nicked the starting pistol. So on the way to the Windmill, got to be there at ten o'clock, well really we'd got to be there at half-past nine to get ready for ten o'clock, I'm stopping off at sports shops trying to buy a starting pistol. I arrive five minutes late. We're called into the dressing room, 'Mr Vivian van Damm isn't pleased. He'll pay you for the six weeks, but you're not going to appear.' So I have given up my job at Granada, I've got to go back and say, 'Can I have my job back again?' They reinstate me in my job.

Just because you were five minutes late?

Five minutes late.

Just because you were five minutes late?

Well, we were supposed to, at ten o'clock supposed to have gone on and done the ct you see. So I should really have been there at nine o'clock really.

Oh dear.

But I didn't realise. So after that, I'm always punctual. I get to places earlier; never get five minutes late, even to see friends. Six o'clock, there at six o'clock on the dot, you know.

That must have been terrible...

It was terrible, yes.

...to cope with at the time presumably.

I know. I know. So then, then, The Alberts, they know people at *Private Eye*, and they know Willie Rushden and they know Peter Cook. Now, Peter Cook, and of course all that crowd, Jonathan Miller, they've done *Beyond the Fringe* at, in Edinburgh. So anyway, one The Alberts has known Peter Cook and he's opening this nightclub called the Establishment nightclub. And so... There is by now a political group doing political satire at the nightclub, who've now gone[???] John Fortune, John Wells. And there was an actress, and I can't remember her name, she was in various films later. Anyway...

Was this in Soho?

Pardon?

Was it in Soho?

In Soho, yes. I'm not sure what street now, it could have been Dean Street. It was in Soho.

Early Sixties? Can't remember what it was now, can you?

It was in the Sixties, yes.

Early Sixties?

Yes. And... This is all getting... I mean time-wise I'd have to refer to dates and things. And, so...

So he's got connections, they've got connections.

Yes.

The Alberts have got connections you were saying.

Yes. So Peter Cook lets us go on every Friday night, after the normal cabaret, political satire cabaret had been on.

Mm.

And everyone loves us really, you know. Because we're not show business, we're very amateurish, and also in a way, it's the top people that loved us, the sort of stars. The middle-men or the second people, they don't like us so much. But it's like, we're doing a whole piss-take of show business in what we're doing, you know. We're taking the mickey out of it, and we're, we're breaking all their sacred cows, and they're loving it, they're really loving it, you know.

So you did a thing about the ham actors and all that sort of stuff did you?

Yes, that's right. Yes. And before that we were doing a cabaret act at the Blue Angel in London, at the Gargoyle, you know. And, it's really incredible. And we're having to, like in most nightclubs you're having to go down through the audience to get to the stage, carrying all your props downstairs through fire doors, you know, midnight, take it all in, set it up, and then do it; get it all out, you know, and get back in in the early hours of the morning. And, it's really incredible. And then at some point, I'm not sure which came first, I think, Lenny Bruce came to, came to London.

Oh, mm.

And, he was at the Establishment. And we spoke to him, and, OK, the resident group go on, then we go on, and then as you're a star, you want to be top of the bill. He said, 'No, no,' he says, 'you guys, you can go and I'll just go on last. I'll go on second,' you know. So, the Establishment group go on, we see him, and I think he's absolutely incredible, you know. Because he's not a stand-up comedian.

Mm.

He is a man... [crying] He committed suicide too.

He did, mm.

Oh gosh. Oh, I loved him. He was my...he was one of my mentors. Like, I think like, like, what's his name at the Royal College of Art?

Minton?

Pardon?

Minton, John Minton.

John Minton. Spike Milligan hadn't quite been, but certainly Lenny Bruce was. He'd come out, and it was political comment. He used swear words like fuck, shit and cunt. And that's all the media and things saw. But he'd been making comments about things, like there was one thing he said, you know, like, the Establishment regard anything to do with sex as something, you know, even more terrible than physical violence. Like, a man can go in the park and expose himself or something, he'd get two years in prison; and a man can knock on your door and throw acid in your face or smash your face and then he gets six months and things, you know.

Mm.

And, he was actually incredible. Well, he saw us do...he saw us do our act, and then, we spent all night in the dressing room with him. He said, 'You guys are fantastic,' he said. 'I came to England as a performer, but I wanted to take an act back with me.' He said, 'I've seen the Bonzo Dog, but,' he said, 'they're like *Hamlet* compared with you.' He said, 'I want to take you guys back to America.' We spent all night drawing up the contract. And he said, he wanted to see some films I'd made, so, we'd recently made the Ken Russell film, and the Ken Russell film, I'd borrowed it from the BBC, but when they make a 16mm film, they record the sound and the picture separately, do it on a Nagra tape recorder. Oh I thought I had my spectacles on. And, the two have to be married. You get a married print eventually. So in that state it's got to be shone on a double-head projector, where the film is up here, and the sound is down there, synchronised. And so, my friend Bob Godfrey, who's a cartoon maker, he had, he had a projector in his, where he did his cartoon films. And so Lenny Bruce came round and we ran it on his film projector. Because it was a half an hour film, and he only made cartoons or commercials lasting about fifteen minutes, we had to stop the projector. Because the film, there wasn't enough room in the magazines. So we went down to the cutting room, brought up these canvas bags from the cutting room, fed, laid the rolls in, and then fed the rest of the film into the cutting bags. Well, in the morning when I went to collect the film, I collected the film, and then had a married print done, but when I ran it myself the last part of the sound was missing. Because in the early hours of the morning, the charlady coming to clean up, she'd been told, 'Throw away any film you find in the cutting room bags.'

Oh no.

So she'd found these reels at the bottom, pulled them out, snapped off, thrown them... Well she'd kept the picture but she'd thrown the sound away. So for years I used to run it, and suddenly the sound all goes, you know. Anyway, he saw the films, and, he really loved it. So he went back to America, and then we spent about a year negotiating and things, and then, he got us a booking in a nightclub called the Blue Angel in New York, top nightclub, and we were going to America to spend five years with him as a support act on his sort of bill, you know.

Mm.

And he lends us the money. And we set sail on the Queen Mary. And we've got stuffed camels, all sorts, penny-farthing bicycle, all down in the hold of the ship, you know. We're there on the ship for seven days. We're called into the purser's cabin. 'Excuse me sir, but, got rather strange things down in the hold. What is it?' I said, 'We're cabaret performers.' He said, 'Well would you mind performing on the Queen Mary for us?' So we performed... We were travelling, we were travelling, I suppose third class, or tourist class, so we performed in their saloon, and then we performed in the first class saloon, with all the posh people, and then because the engineers had been changing my voltage, we performed for the engineers. And so, we're setting to land in New York, fame and fortune once again. And the Queen Mary is pulling into New York harbour when the purser says, 'There's a cablegram for you from Lenny Bruce.' And, 'Dear boys,' something, I don't remember whether he says it in the cable, but it's like, the gist is, 'I'm in New York on a drugs charge, can't make it. Love to Peter Cook's grandmother and Eichmann's widow,' you know Eichmann, who was a... 'I can't be your manager any more, the new manager's waiting on the quayside.' So we came ashore and there were these very American, very hard businessmen, you know. We signed this contract, which was to get something like $3,500 a month for, well for two weeks, and then with an option of another further two weeks. And we'd got to join the American Guild of Variety Artists, and, we'd got to sign a clause in the contract where we've got to pay extra money for the welfare aid programme, and I think, this is the Mafia again. They don't go around, thump you if you don't pay protection money, it's all built into a contract. And I went round to the office and someone said, 'Don't go there unless you want to, you want to be in a cement overcoat,' you know, which is...in the, in the Hudson River. And I went round there, and I did talk about it, but, they were all like gangsters. There were all these ill-fitting suits, and they all had these ugly faces, you know. Oh, you know, lucky escape from there. And so, we were there for two weeks, and then he said, 'Well I'll only take you boys on at $500 a week.' So we had to drop our money. And then we had to pay Lenny Bruce back the money. And we were on the Johnny Carson Show with one of these, Zsa Zsa Gabor. And for some reason or other I took my trousers off, I can't remember what I did really. I think I had my underpants on. And then, so... But, it was... Well I don't know, this is a silly anecdote really, but it doesn't bear any relevance, but, when we were getting onto the Queen Mary... Now

The Alberts, one of them, I don't know if they were racist, but they were making jokes about Jews or different things which I didn't really like. But anyway, Douglas, the big fat one, he says, 'Oh you're probably getting a cabin, share a cabin with a big black man,' you know.

Mm.

I said, 'Well I'll be able to cope with it, I'll be able to cope with it.' And, in the cabin there was a lady saying goodbye to her son, you know. And I went up and waved goodbye to friends, and I went down, and the son was behind, it was the woman who was, she was going to New York with me, we were sharing a cabin. And I said...well, it was before unisex and things like that, and shared lavatories. And we said, well we didn't know that this... So she said, 'Well, it doesn't seem quite right, you know, we're complete strangers.' So she went to see the purser, and he said 'No, a mistake has been made; we'll put somebody else in.' And I went back into the cabin, and there was a huge fat black man in the cabin. And he'd been to America, he was a tuba player, he'd bought a tube. And I introduced him to The Alberts, musicians. And I said, 'This is very funny.' And I said, 'These are my friends, the Gray brothers.' And then he laughed, and he said, 'Well my name is Mr White.' And I said, 'Well you're black and your name's White, and they're white and they're name's Gray. I mean there's this a silly, silly anecdote. But, those things sort of amuse me, you know. So, so we...we had this great time...

For two weeks.

You see we thought we were going to be there for years, so we rented an apartment down in Greenwich Village, you know. And really amazing, amazing time, you know. So then we came back on the Queen Mary, but because we'd performed, we were moved into second class cabins. And they couldn't pay us, because there was a band leader called Geraldo that used to book the acts, but they gave us big blue, navy blue jerseys with Cunard on, and a, a little pen and pencil with the Queen Mary floating in liquid inside, and, those bedside folding alarm clocks with the Queen Mary on, so you know, so we had some little, little presents, you know. But...

So, had you left a family behind somewhere along the way then?

Yes, I'd left the family behind in London. And I think after that, we then, we then went to work... No no. We were working in the Establishment before, that's how it all came about you see.

Right, mhm.

And then working in the Establishment... Yes, well, there is a thing... Well, what shall I talk about? Well we could just go on from there.

Whatever, carry on.

You know, we always had this slight dream of being discovered.

Mm.

And then, two men that put on *Beyond the Fringe*, theatre impresarios called William Donaldson and Michael Codron, they approached us about turning this cabaret act into a whole stage performance. And we, it was decided we'd call it *An Evening of British Rubbish*. And because they'd promised a performer called Ivor Cutler...have you heard of Ivor Cutler?

I have, yes. Yes.

...a part in the stage show, we agreed to... He did a spot in the first half and another spot in the second half. And my friend John Sewell, I asked him to design the poster, which... John Sewell had left the Royal College of Art, and had become a head of graphic design with the BBC, and he changed the whole...he's been completely forgotten about, he completely changed the whole face of graphic design and titles in the BBC. Very often they'd been done by the director or the director's girlfriend or a member of the family. And he brought really good design into it, and it's really incredible. So I asked him to design the poster. Which was made up of a Union Jack all cut up, and bits and pieces stuck on, with bits like, words like 'toilet roll' and

[inaudible] stuck on. *An Evening of British Rubbish*. Well the night before it opened, the West End theatre managers approached Michael Codron, trying to get him to call it off, because they thought it was all disrespectful to the British show business and theatre. And ticket agencies refused to display the poster. Because in the Sixties, although the British Empire had gone, the Union Jack was a very sacred thing, and people still believed there was a British Empire about, you know. Anyway, we opened at the Comedy Theatre in London, and the theatre was packed, because a lot of it was like, free tickets and things. And there was a famous theatre critic at the time called, oh what's his name? Oh, oh... Oh, damn. He was stopping plays all the time.

Right, mm. Is he still working now, somebody who's around now is it?

I don't know. He was so famous. Just a few words from him...

Tynan?

Bernard Levin.

Oh Bernard Levin, yes.

He would close shows.

Right.

So...

But he was there, was he, in the audience?

He was there. And very often you get the first six in the row, because I'm doing a cooking act, smashing eggs, and the audience all being covered in eggs the first few rows. Anyway, he's sitting in the front row. Because we're looking out through the curtains, like amateurs do, in the interval. And he's clutching his stomach, and he's groaning, 'Uh, uh, uh.' And he's sick, and he falls onto the floor. Oh no, oh no! And

the following day in the *Daily Mail*, headlines, there's me in my professor thing with my funny glasses and the robot I think, perching[???], and he says, 'The funniest thing that's ever happened to me.' Then he said, 'In thirty years of going to the theatre, in any language, in any part of the country, this is the funniest thing I have ever seen.' He said, 'I laughed so much I was sick, and I fell off my seat laughing so much.' Well the theatre was packed. And it remained packed for four months, until it all goes [inaudible].

So how many performances did you do a week?

Well we did, we did, it was five nights, six... Oh no, was it, no. Six nights and two matinees, so we did eight.

For four months? Oh right.

Eight performances, yes. And of course, the difficulty is, when you are relying to a certain extent on being fresh and being, not rehearsed but changing things and adlibbing...

Mm. Mm. Improvising, mm.

...it's very difficult to ring the changes, you know.

Mm. Mm.

So you went through different periods when it was a bit difficult. But on the hundredth performance... You see now, at the back of the stage, there was an old chassis of a motorcar, and as props were brought on and used, they were put on the stage, and it gradually built like this incredible...

[inaudible], mm.

...assemblage, like a sculpture. And right at the end, we cling onto it; one would start up the engine, because we had petrol in it, [inaudible], and we'd drive off, the whole

thing off the stage, waving to everybody, going off, you see. So when it was the hundredth performance, we decided to convert the car into a large banqueting table, with all woods and the legs all on wheels, with a big table, and the steering wheel was disguised with a bunch of flowers, and we invited people like Joan Littlewood, who is it? David Frost. Famous, eminent people. And they all sat on the stage, eating this meal that was brought in by local waiters, and the silver salvers which were sausage and mash, all facing the audience, all drinking champagne. And every member of the audience that came in, we gave a glass of champagne to, to celebrate the hundredth performance.

[End of F8074 Side B]

[F8075 Side A]

OK.

Bearing in mind how terrible I felt after having gone down the drain, trying to avoid members of the staff, one day I bumped into Sir Robin, or whatever he was then, Robin Darwin. 'How's the painting going? You're a wonderful painter.' I said, 'Well I'm performing now, I'm an actor, I'm a performer, just playing small parts in Michael Bentine's shows,' you see. And then one day I'm at the BBC television studios I think, that week they tell me, we get into the studio, they say, 'Well I'm afraid there's nothing for you to do this week, absolutely nothing. We're doing a thing, I don't know what it is, *Dixon of Dock Green*, and the only part we've got for you, you dress up as a tramp and lean under a lamppost smoking a cigarette.' So I'm, not any acting or anything to do. And there's a whole crowd of visitors sitting up in, you know, just watching, who had come in to see the rehearsal, and I'm leaning up against this lamppost smoking a cigarette, and these people have seen the whole rehearsal. And then they come down to the floor of the studio. And it's Robin Darwin, taking a group of foreign art people around. And he comes up to me and he says, 'I see the acting is going very well Lacey,' and there's me doing the most minimalist bit there. And oh my God! I nearly went through the floor, you know. Anyway, so I've done these Electric Actors, which are things to do with things that I really hate, and it's my therapy you see, it's back to hospital again, it's my therapy. Well then I start doing... They're not...they're props, they're not sculptures, I don't know anything to do with sculptures, because painting, art is painting and things like that you see.

Mm.

So, I've had nothing to do with the art world really, kept away from it all, not interested. So I start doing things, you know, to do with, I start feeling things. Macmillan in the Prime Minister, 'You've never had it so good.'

Mm.

And I've joined a group of anarchists at this time, and they're talking about dropping ball-bearings from a helicopter on the Edinburgh Tattoo so all the soldiers fall over, and I being a pacifist say no, a ball-bearing might go into someone's head and kill them, or they could hurt themselves falling over. And thinking about political you know, because, right from being in the Navy, I'd become a socialist, because, I was on this battleship, four decks below sea level, sleeping in a hammock; the officers, they all had day cabins and they had a lounge which was ten times, and armchairs. And I became a socialist then, and thinking, I've always thought politically. And there was things, there was old people dying in small bed-sitting rooms; there was spare-part surgery; there was colour prejudice; there was over-population of the world; there was starvation and things. And so I started to make things, and tried to work them into performances. And then one day I went to see a friend that I'd been at college with, Malcolm something, over at Putney, and he showed me a magazine called *Art International*, and open up the front page, advertising for an exhibition by an American artist called Edward Kienholz. And I was amazed, there was someone making things out of like, rubbish and junk and stuff, you know.

Mm.

I suddenly thought, my gosh, this could be art. And I'd always dreamt of being accepted in art again and being an artist again. Because, show business didn't quite accept me, because they thought I was an eccentric artist, and the art world had disowned me because they thought I was just a crazy performer. And then, somehow or other I saw in the art magazine there was an exhibition at the Marlborough by a man called Kurt Schwitters. So I went along there, and that was all mainly collage, and I suddenly thought, well, he's putting together bits and pieces, and I'm putting together bits and pieces. So I spoke to the guy who was the manager, a guy called Tony Reichardt, who had been called Tony Richards, but he married Jasia Reichardt, and felt the manager of an art gallery would get more credibility if he had a foreign name, so he changed his name to the German version of Richards, which is Reichardt. He loved them. But he said, 'I can't really give you an exhibition, but,' he said, 'go round to this lovely man,' and here again, I loved Victor Musgrove, and he's dead now. Anyway, Victor Musgrove, Gallery One. And I went in there, and he was sitting in the back room with Dorothy Morland, who ran the ICA in Dover Street.

Mm.

And, they were having tea. And I showed some photographs, and they went crazy about them. She said, 'I'd love to give you an exhibition.' She said, 'We can give you prestige, but we can't necessarily sell them.' He said, 'Well I can't give them a prestige, but I can try and sell them.' So I said, 'Well I've decided to go for Gallery One,' you know. Gallery One, that's right. But I had, I had been to the, been to the ICA before when I was making props, because, there was a television designer called, an American, Dan Schneider, who we became very friendly with, and together we had gone to an art exhibition by a man called Tinguely, at a gallery. And I'd met Tinguely and got on very well with Tinguely, and Tinguely had come back to my house where I lived with Pat, and we'd spent all night sewing nails into the spokes of my penny-farthing bicycle, and then, brrrringong dingdong brrrringdongdong. And he was doing an event at the ICA, and he asked me to be his technician, whereby he was making a speech, he couldn't speak English very well. Every time he said an English word – a French word, I had to give him the English word; then he had to say it in English. Then if he said it wrong I had to correct him. It was all very bizarre, Surrealist I suppose. But the climax, he had two bicycle frames on the stage, with crack cyclists on them, and the back wheels were jacked up, and as they pedalled, a roll of paper about a foot wide shot out over the audience, but as it did, a red felt tip pen scribbled a line on. And I fired a starting pistol, off they went, and the first one to finish his mile of paper won the race. But all this paper went over the audience, and they all get covered in red paint. And they opened the windows and they fed the paper into the street, and then the police came in because we were stopping all the traffic. So I don't know whether I met Dorothy Morland then. So I decided to go for Gallery One. And, the reviews started talking about Surrealism, and Dadaism. Well as I say, my history of art at the Royal College only finished with French Impressionism. I knew about Salvador Dalí, didn't like him very much; started to get books on Surrealism. Dada I thought was like child art, like mummy dada, Dada meant it was like, art done by children. And then I learnt that what I was doing had this fancy French word, *assemblage*. *Assemblage* you see. So, I had this exhibition, and, looking at it, it was quite good reviews. There was a lovely one by a man called

Conroy Maddox, whose work has been in this Things exhibition, you know. And, so, a Frenchman called Fritz Becht, he bought one in Holland.

He bought one?

Called...

Oh right, he bought...he actually bought one of the pieces then?

Yes.

Right.

Called *The Bedsprings Twang in our House*.

And what, can you describe it?

It was a, an old-fashioned double bed, wooden frame, coil springs, and those little tiny coil springs they used to have on feather beds so that it wouldn't go through the feathers. And then there was bits and pieces of a man and a woman. There was like, a cushion covered in hair like her vagina with a little...and those things you used to press, like you can...[mooing] make a cow. This was a cat sound, like, it was where her pussy was you see. And you hear a bit of an old gramophone pipe bending round like his willy pointing towards, and there were sort of babies on it[???] [inaudible]. It was called *The Bedsprings Twang in Our House*. Tony Reichardt bought that *Superman* for Jasia. And, and then, I had electric actors in there too, blowing bubbles, and other, lots of other things. I had a thing made out of an old kitchen cabinet called *School Days*, with babies going in, sucked in by mincing machines coming out of sausages, which I think gave them the idea, there was a film made, Pink Floyd, *A Brick in the Wall*.

Mm.

And that guy Scarfe had a whole scene. You've obviously seen it there, because it was done years before. You know, mincing machines, education coming out of our... And then George Melly came, because we'd met George Melly, we had performed with George Melly in the jazz world, and he was a collector of Surrealist art and stuff, you know. And I had, I had an old wooden box, black box, with a handle, it's what they used to, in the Twenties used to buy a sausage-type vacuum cleaner in. And you opened it up. And I can't remember what I did, I built something with a head and bits and things inside. But on the lid was the registration number of the vacuum cleaner. And so, the title was, *They Don't Write Numbers Like That Any More*, because being a musician, that's a classic, 'They don't write numbers'. And he bought it, and he's still got it, you know. So then...

So it's quite successful in terms of selling...

Eh?

It was quite a successful show then, I mean, in terms of selling things and, and reviews as well?

What?

The show, the Gallery One.

Well then a retired dentist came in, he said, 'I want to buy all your work and take it in a travelling sideshow.' So [inaudible], he never came back. He said, 'I'm going off to raise the money.'

Oh.

Yes, it was. Now... Yes, and there was a, Pathé Pictorial did one of those silly little films that used to come out in the cinemas about it, you know.

Mm.

And then, some time later Tony Reichardt came back to me, and he said, 'I'm still the manager at the Marlborough New London Gallery, but,' he said, 'the directors are all away on holiday.' And he said, 'I'm the manager, they choose the work, but they allow me one exhibition of someone's work that I like.' So, I had this one-man show at the Marlborough. And lots of things were much more political. There was a thing to do with spare part surgery that's in the Tate called *Boy Oh Boy Am I Living?*, that's on the cover.

Mm. I've actually got the...

Yes.

This is the exhibition...

Well...

This one, this one.

Yes.

This says, Boy Oh Boy Am I Living?.

I was looking into, yes, a crystal ball, thinking of things that were beginning to show up what might happen. Like, it was the beginning of spare-part surgery; I thought, we can have so many things removed, that there's nothing of us left.

Mm.

And then, I started thinking in terms, I knew a psychologist working in mental homes, and he said, 'They're experimenting in American prisons, of fitting radio control devices on prisoners' heads, that had probes that go into different parts of the brain, so if they're behaving in an unruly fashion they can programme them to calm down. So on the head of that, the Belisha beacon head, there is a radio receiver.

Mm.

And so I'm imagining a person who's been completely replaced. And then I started thinking, why wait for general elections? A government in power, like, someone like Margaret Thatcher, that wasn't there but I visualised could be there. You implant them in all the babies. So when there's an election, 10 Downing Street votes Conservative yes, they all vote Conservative. Or this poor robot, they've left him with the action of just kicking his leg, like his leg is moving, he's saying, 'Boy oh boy, am I living?' And he's thinking he's living but he's not, you know.

Mm.

So that's my thoughts about that, you know.

Mm.

And then, then I had my Aunty Daisy, who was living with my parents and dying. I don't know if she's in there.

This one?

Is it in that...is it in the coffin[???]? Turn over the page, is there another one?

Old Moneybags. *No.*

No.

I'm Not chicken.

And Aunty Daisy isn't there. Anyway...

Have you got a picture of it in there?

I started thinking about old people.

Right.

She was dying in this room. She was so heavy, and calling for the bedpan all night long, that, they hired a commode chair from the Red Cross, she sat down with her knickers down and nightdress on; when she wanted to pee or pooh she just did it.

Mm.

And so I thought, then I thought, maybe, the way things were going, they could have people in like little bed-sitting rooms, almost like large casket American type coffins, on a conveyer belt. And like, when I was in hospital, the most likely person to die during the night would be moved in the bed by the door, a computer would work out who to move, like you do in these big factories now, automated, they all move next door. And so, I had some old articulated legs over from making the thing for television for Michael Bentine. I sat down on a commode chair. And I had a postcard thing from a seaside thing with all postcards, all from the family album, and make up pictures about how to make up your face to look like an old person. There was a medicine cabinet with all the old medicines. Her husband's razor strop hanging down, and a gas ring that wasn't switched on, frying herself an egg. Little bed-sitting room coffin. And my mother and father came to see me when I was making it, and I sort of hid it so they wouldn't see it, and I never told them about the exhibition.

Mm.

Then there was a thing all about overpopulation of the world, and I got this fuel tank from a Hercules transport plane, had a huge thing, like a Met balloon inside, with all little baby dolls. And it was called *It's Getting Kind of Squashy Round Here*. And it was labelled *Hom Sap*, homo sapiens, *Disposal Unit*. Because I thought, eventually, the world's becoming so overpopulated, they put babies in there and shoot them off into space, get rid of them, you know. And then, so I was married with six children, and I saw a petrol pump in a garage, an old petrol pump, and I saw the analogy, that a mother pumps out milk through her breast to her babies, which is the life liquid, but a petrol pump pumps out liquid, the life liquid to motorcars. So, I stripped all the

mechanism, all the body off, so you had this petrol pump. I put the mother's head on the top with some sticking plaster like, she's feeding the children but depriving herself. Then I had a baby coming down, and different size children, finishing up with a big teenager. Fitted her with a six-way nipple with a milk churn at the side, and then every thirty seconds she pumped out imitation milk, shhhhhh, the breast, all the babies, out through their bottoms, back into the milk churns you see.

What was that one called then?

Pardon?

What was that called?

That was called *Motherhood*.

Oh is it? Right. I don't think that's on here is it?

Then that one was called *Supermarket*.

Supermarket*, yes. What happened to* Motherhood*? Somebody bought that, did somebody buy it?*

No, I had to scrap it when I came up?

Oh, right.

Because there was a point, I had so many things.

So many bits.

And I was going along doing new things, I thought, I can't be lumbered up as the custodian of all my past things, and so I kept very few things.

Mm. Right.

So that, that was destroyed.

What about this one then, Supermarket*?*

Well that was from a, a garage that sold oil outside, you know.

Mm.

Oil. And I had one half filled with food and the other half with nothing.

Mm.

And it was called *Supermarket*. And there were hands at the back. The head of that sort of, thing I got from an anatomical shop was all full of seed, and this head at the back was coming over trying to grab some of the food.

Mm.

It was like one half of the world having all the food, and the other half not having any, you know.

Right, mm. Mm.

And then...

So they'd all got moving parts, these, had they? Most of them had got moving parts.

Well that one didn't. I used to hide behind and do that myself.

Oh right. (laughter)

So I was in the gallery all the time.

Oh right. Oh were you?

Laying on the floor behind it, doing it, you know. I filmed that. My friend John Sewell, he'd broken a leg so I pushed him round in an old pram filming it. I've got a lovely black and white film of that. That was a jokey one.

This one?

It was a hair-drying...

The Politician.

Yes, it was a hair-drying machine from a swimming pool, blowing out hot hair.

Right.

And I painted the thing you put on your head, put in false teeth, and you put in the penny and you got hair out.

Oh I see.

It was painted blue, so it was a Conservative politician.

Mhm.

Then...

Who's Jo... This one, Why Did Joshua Den Panther Die?.

Well, someone told me that Jesus Christ's real name was Joshua Den Panther.

Really?

So, I bought this in a scrapyard in Brussels.

Mm. Mm.

You put in a French franc, and it lit up an electric candle, like in Catholic churches you light a real candle.

Right.

So I fitted little, little boxes with magic lantern slides, different religious pictures, and there was a Halloween thing on the top. I was trying to show it's all a load of gobbledygook sort of thing, you know.

Mm. Mm.

And then, this was called *The Brain Machine*. There wasn't a lot that I could understand about that. It was all to do with brainwashing, and the head was balancing on a [inaudible] which was then, it would all, it would all get disorientated really.

Mm. Is this, have you still got part of this in your other room, or is it a different one?

Yes, part of that.

It's part of the machinery?

Part of it is an amazing thing I built up in Glasgow, which is the most amazing thing I've ever made, but... In that, that, that...

This one? Old Moneybags.

That is *Old Moneybags*. You see I've always hated people that work and do things primarily for money.

Mm.

And I've never worked for bosses, apart from working at the explosives factory or at the bank. Ever since I was eighteen, I've never worked for anybody. Even with Granada as a prop maker, I was freelance.

Mm.

I did go on the staff for one week and then gave myself the sack and went back. Because I hate people...because they're only bossing me about you see.

Mm.

And so that's the ultimate, beautiful therapy, you go up and you say, 'Do some work for me for a change, you bastard!' And then, that's from a petrol pump, he's adding money in his head. He's got money like, two shilling piece, florins, passing through his heart like white corpuscles.

So you actually put money into this one, did you? Did you actually put money into it?

No that...

No. No.

You're speaking to a microphone.

Oh right.

You're telling him what to do. Mind you, you could say anything and he'll work, you know.

Yes, and he does it.

And he's covered in real gold leaf, you know.

Mm.

But that, that's there in Sheffield, you know.

That's the one that's in the Things exhibition isn't it.

Mm. And that was up in my store room. I went to a party near Buckingham Palace, in somebody's flat, and they said the host is a brain surgeon. And we went in, and there was this man laying unconscious in the hallway, and he said, 'He's stoned,' you know. And I'd never smoked any cannabis at all. And they were passing this joint around. And I just, I felt I didn't want to. I mean it would have been the first time. And they were saying, 'Oh Bruce Lacey, you're chicken, you're chicken.' And I thought, well I'd rather be chicken than being like a dope-head, and I certainly wouldn't want him to operate me if anything wrong with my brain. And so I went back. And as a reaction to that, I got this anatomical figure, and then with tubing like his intestines, I stuffed it with pills and things like that. And his brain was filled with pills. Syringes were filled with pills. And then I got a thing where you put in a coin, it was where you get out a packet of cigarettes.

Mm.

And I bought all these little cardboard boxes, and I went to a sweetshop, and you can buy Love Hearts.

Mm.

And at that time they were taking stimulants called love hearts, you know, in the Sixties?

Mm.

And so I got from Barratts the sweet people all these purple coloured ones, like, 'I Love You' 'She Loves Me', in these little boxes, and[???] cotton wool, you get a little Love Heart, you see?

Mm.

But now you can't get Love Hearts, so what I had to d now is, is to buy some peppermints, cut them into Love Hearts with a hacksaw, and dye them purple, and then paint, 'I Love You' on them, and then of course, you can't have them, they're there permanently.

Mm. Right.

And some years ago my oldest daughter, when she came here, she told me a story, she said, 'When you left Mum,' because I did, to marry my second wife, 'at one point I wanted to commit suicide.' And that was still knocking around the house. 'I broke open some of those things, and swallowed some of the tablets.' But they turned out to be bicarbonate of soda, I got government surplus, so she didn't die.

Oh dear. Oh dear.

Yes. So, now, then there was...then, then... Then, because I'd lived in suburbia, and like with my first wife, middle-class suburbia, if you sat in an armchair and you disturbed the antimacassars...

Oh yes.

...she'd say, 'Can you lean forward Bruce,' and she'd sort of, adjust it. All the time, you know, lean forward. And you couldn't leave a newspaper on the floor.

Mm.

And I thought, I'm going to make a room which has got lots of taboos in. So I had all the ashtrays overfilling, I had all piles of dirt swept under the carpet. I had imitation dog shit on one of the chairs. Then I walked into Woolworth's where they sold these terrible oil paintings where the trees have been done with sort of, toothbrushes, and bought one and put my fist through it in front of the assistant, took it home, hung that on the wall. And then I had a cheap plastic, like a glass chandelier. And then I started thinking about something else. And that was, that after Hiroshima, they found the shadows of people left on the walls, someone standing against, like a, a metal wall painted. All the paint would be burnt, but their shadow was left. So a photographer came to see me, and I said, 'Do you mind standing in the room with the door open?' It's built in the garden. I said, 'Do you mind taking down your trousers?' Which is like a recreation of me when the V-2 fell, you know, and I was all covered in whatsaname. So he's crouched like that. I said, 'Hold still.' I shone a spotlight on him, traced round the shadow, and then, cut a piece of, a stencil made out of hardboard, and burnt all the wallpaper with a blowlamp. And also burnt the plastic chandelier, because that was on its way. So he'd been burnt by an atomic blast, and just the shadow left. So that was a little extra thing, built into the room you see.

So this is all in your room in your house?

Pardon?

This is in your house, where you lived?

No no, it was a separate room I built.

A separate room that you built, right.

Which was all its own walls and floor and ceiling, and that was set up in the, in the, in the...in the Marlborough.

Oh I see, it was in there was it?

Set up in the entrance hall, you know.

Oh right. Right.

And then, because, what happened was that someone tried to get in and they found someone had gone in and jammed the door, and they were having nooky in there, you know.

(laughs)

But also, I had gone to, on my scholarship I had gone to Pompeii.

Oh yes.

And the thing that affected me more than anything else was, when they were excavating, because it was about twenty foot of solidified ash, they found holes, which they pumped plaster in. They found bodies, casts of bodies, couples clinging together. I had a bed which I had a couple build out of shop window dummies, legs broken off and arms, all wearing gas masks, and a baby in a World War II gas mask. And then I got this foam, we mixed two things together and it all bubbles like horrible sores and excrement. And I had them all covered in that, you know. And, so that was... And then I had a thing to do with, very simple thing to do with colour prejudice. And then, because by that time I was still married to my first wife with six children, but having a relationship with another lady who was fifteen years younger than me, a lady called Jill, who had come to see me when I was with Michael Bentine performing in his show at London, and we fell in love, and we were having this secret affair. And then when all the neighbours and everyone got to hear of it... I then had an old pianola machine, and pianolas work on vacuum. They have a thing called a vacuum motor with a crank like you've got on a motorcar, but little valves that open

and close, like little mouths. And I stuck mouths on them. So all these mouths were going. And then on a long roll of paper I had all things that people were saying, like, 'He's old enough to be her father, it'll never last.' And, that was a way of exorcising, because one night twenty friends came round to talk me into giving Jill up. And I listened to them very carefully, but didn't take heed of their advice. And, they were friends who had gone to parties, married, and for instance, had kisses and cuddles or went upstairs and had intercourse with someone, but it was all looked on as a bit of a, on the side. But when I actually said, 'I'm in love with this lady, I want to marry her and get a divorce,' they completely ostracised me.

Mm.

Because I had been a clown in that group, going to parties, doing all silly bugger things, but there were parameters, unwritten parameters, and I had stepped beyond the bounds. In that peer group, there were unwritten laws and rules. And, so, years later, I was...they'd forgotten all about it, they said, 'How are you?' But still, anyway. So, *The Gossiping Machine*. So that was to do with like, things like that. It's therapy again you see, and getting things out of my system. So I realised it was things that I hated, things that I loved, or things that I feared.

[inaudible].

So in a way they were like... Pardon?

All these things went into these machines that you were building.

Yes, they were like fetishes I suppose.

Yes.

They were therapy, and they were making me feel much better. Getting things out of my system, you know. But, that sort of world was looked upon as like a dirty world. Because artists were doing things, not...some critics said, 'This is really not art, this is sociology.'

Mm.

No one was doing anything to do with life around them, you know.

Mm.

It was all about aesthetics, about relationships and form and colour. You know, in sculpture, you put a thing there and a thing there, and like, the space in between. It was an ivory tower, you know what I mean?

Mm.

Of elitism, you know. So I, I then, because I had a bad time at art school, I started getting invited to art schools, students would invite me, we had these great, you know, I mean, there'd be sit-ins, and staff were... Oh my gosh. And, we'd be banned from going to different art schools. Because mine were encouraging students, don't listen to your tutors, don't listen to their negative criticism. Do your own personal work at home, in secret, don't show them. Get groups together of similar like students, and make little clubs, show your own work. Do fake work for the staff, work they're going to like, and you get your, you'll get your first class degrees. In fact do composite work, you all join in and do bits, you know. Make up all this fake art for them to like, you know. And of course the staff would, would sort of hate it all, you know. And the funny thing is, while the exhibition at the Marlborough was on, the directors came back, and they were horrified.

Oh were they?

One of them saw the catalogue. 'I'm not coming in there till that rubbish is cleared out.' Another one came in and said, 'I'm not going to come in till it all goes.' And he was really torn off a strip for having the exhibition.

Really?

But, a year later, the Marlborough phoned me, the directors, and wanted me to sign a contract with them. I refused. Because I knew, from people I'd known that left art school, had a one-man show, they were in a trap.

Mm.

There was a man, there was a chap I knew, he'd gone round all the galleries, with a portfolio, of all his paintings done over the past ten years, and they said, 'We like that.' 'Well,' he said, 'I did it ten years ago.' 'Well we'll give you an exhibition.' And he had an exhibition of that. And he retrograded sort of thing, you know.

Mm.

Never even caught up with himself.

Mm.

And I thought, I'm not going to get into that trap. Because I had noticed over the years, the awful thing about art was that it...you're taught history of art, you've got your teachers moulding you, trying to mould you, taking you to exhibitions and things like that. Art is always growing out of itself. It is a, what do they call it? Incestuous thing, you know.

Mm.

It's all growing out of itself, and because I'd cut myself off from art completely and started my own thing in like a vacuum, I felt I knew that was the sort of way. And I was encouraging students to follow all their own whims and fancies, you know. And I'd be invited back to the Royal College of Art as visiting tutor, not by the Painting School but by the Sculpture School.

Mm.

And I wouldn't have the audacity to talk to them or criticise them or make suggestions about their work. I'd be talking to them about their emotional state, their psychological state.

Mm.

How they were feeling about things. Like some, I went to Farnham, and... I had gone to art schools, yes, because working with Jeff Nuttall and John Latham in the Sixties, we did a, what would be called an installation now, we called an environment, in the basement at Better Books, it was called *sTigma*.

[End of F8075 Side A]

[F8075 Side B]

OK then. So...

So, so suddenly... Lots of good reviews. And so suddenly, I'd leapt to being one of the most famous sculptors in the whole of England, for a brief period, at that time, you know.

Mm.

And, so then... Yes then I was approached by Jeff Nuttall.

Who you didn't know before? Did you know him...?

I didn't know him before, no, no. He was a teacher working in, like a secondary modern school, somewhere like Stevenage I think, you know.

Oh.

And he was doing, getting people together. Now, there weren't many artists. There was John Latham; there was a Greek architectural student called Stephan Tommasato, I used to call Stephan Tomatoes. And there were one or two other people I can't remember. And what we did, you went into the basement of Better Books, and John Latham had built a thing with telephone directories, all on frames. You could push through them but you couldn't come back. So you were trapped. And Jeff Nuttall had done things all with baby dolls all being burnt up with a blowlamp and things.

Mm. So you went into this place to have a look.

Like a maze.

Right.

Like a tunnel, adventure, mystery tunnel.

He took you there did he?

Pardon?

Did Jeff Nuttall take you there, to see this thing? Or is this what you made?

It wasn't there, we built all this.

This is the actual thing. Right, right.

We all got together, and then for a week we all built what we felt like doing.

Right. Right.

And we all built our individual things, but you went from one to the other.

Oh I see, mm.

And I, I built...I had like, a series of walls made out of polythene, and as you got nearer and nearer, you could see through less layers and you could see there were, there were shop window dummies looking over a dentist's chair. And when you got round the front, there was a woman growing out of the chair with her head, and her legs, but where the seat of the chair was, there was an old bedpan. And I'd seen that like a woman's vagina. And I'd got some complete cod's roes, just like the lips of the vagina, and because I had a stuffed camel, I got some hair, which was like the pubic hair, and then I had an air pipe with bubble mixture in it, and this was blowing bubbles out of her vagina you see. And of course, as the weeks went by the cod's roe started going off and so it really stunk. But it was partly, it was partly done to shock people. It was to shock people, because we felt, Macmillan was saying, 'You've never had it so good.' People were very complacent. And it was definitely a shock thing.

Mm.

And then, we... A chap called Charles Marowitz, who was a theatre producer or something, he gave a seminar upstairs on 'happenings', things that were called 'happenings' at that time, and we all went down to another part of the basement, and we all did a happening for all the punters.

What did that consist of then, what did you actually do, can you remember?

For the happening?

Mm.

Well, it's all about the time of the Vietnam War.

Mm.

So we were wanting, with this other group we were wanting to drop ball-bearings, or we were wanting to get bodies from mortuaries and drop dead bodies. So the Military Tattoo, which is all splendour of all these uniforms and bands, we bring a bit of reality to war right into them, you know.

Mm.

But we, we can't afford a helicopter anyway, we were penniless. And also I'm a pacifist, so we can't hurt anybody with it. So, all the audience come down into this darkened basement, and... I'm upstairs first of all. Round the walls we've drilled holes, and I'm pouring red liquid down, so there was all blood running down the walls. And then a whole trap door opens up, opens up with a chute, and all these dead bodies all covered in bandages, blood-soaked bandages, all slide down and crash amongst people. And I'm going round in a rubber suit with a helmet on, firing smoke everywhere like poison gas. And then at the end of the wall, which is like a brick wall, the whole wall collapses, because we've taken it all down and rebuilt it as a dry brick wall. And two surgeons arrive with nurses all draped in green surgical clothes wearing masks, surgical masks, and an operating table. And there's a pregnant lady in

the crowd. They drag her out of the crowd, lay her on there, and they cut her open. Because she's really my second wife. Plastic bag all full of offal. And they're pulling out all this offal and stuff. And people are fainting in the crowd, because they've heard that there was a happening in Sweden where a girl that wanted to commit suicide offered her body and they actually killed her in front of everybody. But that might be an urban myth.

Mm.

So there were all these stories going around, you know. So that was a real shock horror, you know.

Mm.

About war, you know.

Mm.

And later on, there was a thing at the Roundhouse in London about the Vietnam War called Angry Arts Week, and they asked me to make like, what would be called an installation, and I made like, something like a prison camp, all full of bamboo, growing bamboo, with all hands, all blood-soaked hands, all flying through the air, all trying to get beyond the cage. And the people who organised it were offended. They said, 'Look, there's more to war than death.' And they had, they had political poets, I've forgotten, there's Adrian something or other, I don't know, various people talking. And... But they had people singing songs and things, you know.

Mm.

Because also, that year, I think about '64, they had this big poetry convention at the Albert Hall.

So this is the same year, right. Mm.

With Ginsberg.

Mm. Do you want to say about that?

And they came to me, and asked me to do some sort of happening performance.

Right.

Well I... My first wife still has this. I had a full-size statue of the Venus de Milo. And I went to see them a couple of weeks before, they said, 'What are you going to do?' And, this is at the Albert Hall. I said, 'Well I want to, I want to come on stage, and the Venus de Milo is brought on on wheels, and then I grab a sledgehammer and I go berserk and smash the whole thing up into little pieces, which cinema usherette type people go around selling, art objects for sixpence each, you know. But before I end, two mental attendants, patients, mental hospital attendants, come in with a, a straightjacket and they drag me off, you know.' 'No you can't do that. You can't do that. This is poetry, this is about the spoken word. You must... And this visual. This is going to take away from the spoken word. You must think of something else.' So once again, I thought, you buggers, I'm going to get you. It's the way I react, you know, which is very positive. So I thought, I'm going to build a robot, and I'm going to call it John Silent, and it's going to come on stage at the Albert Hall in a poetry convention. John Silent, avant-garde poet. And it's going to make these farting noises, like, [makes sounds and growling/gorilla-type noises]. But, the incredible thing was, that I didn't know, but this was one of the latest things. Because there was a German poet which was called noise or sound poetry, he said, 'I vish to read a poem about my vife, my *Frau*.' And he went, 'Frau, frau frau frau frau, frrrrrrrrrau, feeyow yan yan yan yan yan yan.' So he was a noise poet, you know, it was actually incredible. And I'd done this piss-take, you know. Anyway, and then, a poet called Michael Horowitz that I knew, he said, 'I want to read a poem about a bird.' And I'd made my theramin upstairs, that machine with valves, which, it works from the hand, that when you bring your hand near it starts to growl, [growls]. And as you take it nearer, it starts to scream and then whistle. So I'm dressed as a bird at the Albert Hall, making all these twittering bird noises, while he's reading this poem about, about birds, you know.

So how did your robot go down there then, was it...?

It was, it was almost a complete disaster.

Oh why?

Because, I'd made it to go on level ground, but the stage at the Albert Hall hadn't been changed since 1851 or something, and it was wooden planks, and the planks had worn. And so where there were knots, the wood was up proud then it all went away, and then when you came to a nail, that was up high, and then, when it came to the next plank... So it was like this. So I had to push it. It wouldn't drive. So that was my prototype robot, you know, which was called John Silent.

John Silent. And what happened to him then? Have you still got him?

Well he then developed into the, into the other robot.

Oh I see, right.

Rose Bosom, you know.

Right.

Which had a whole incredible life of her own really. Because... Let's just look here just a sec to see, because there were so many things all being crammed...

I know.

Yes, yes that's right.

You're talking about this..

Ah yes, well then, then, because of the environment, or the, whatever you call it, which was like a maze, you went through with artists...

The sTigma, the sTigma thing?

sTigma.

Right. Back at Better Books we're talking about.

There was one area where people fell down a hole head first into a chamber all full of feathers.

Right.

And they were covered in feathers. And they came out, they all had to be brushed down, and some couldn't be brushed down. So I, I got into this business. So I was then invited to Leeds, in the old building at Leeds College of Art, to build, like an environment with the students .

Mm.

So I gave them a rough idea, I said, 'Its something where you express different psychological hang-ups. Forget all that art, think about personal things or problems or things like that.' And we built it like a continuous, almost like a, a tunnel of love you get at the fairground sort of thing. And so, over a week, it was incredible. You went up through a door up to a completely darkened chamber that was like a ramp, and students had, all in black had their hands through and they were feeling all the people that went up. And we found out later that two members of staff had gone in and had intercourse up there in this gallery. Well then you went[ph] a corner, and you had to cross some sort of rope bridge, and then, you came in the dark, then the lights came on and you went, you found a staircase. We got an old staircase and we ran[???] with it, and covered all the treads in Vaseline so you slid down. I think some feathers were used there.

Mm.

And then you came in to, into like a church a guy had made, and from an old warehouse we found all these old rotten and burnt shoes, and we had them all on the floor, and you had to walk on them to get to... He had been a Catholic but had hated the Catholic Church and all the guilt feelings. And he had the Virgin Mary sitting on a lavatory pan, giving birth to her baby or putting her baby down the lavatory, I can't remember. And then you finally staggered out, over lots of old mattresses which we got from dumps and tips. And of course there was a big scandal after that, because...

Must have been.

...they all had fleas in them. And the Council came, and they said to the staff, 'You've got to put DDT on.' They went down to the Sculpture School and got plaster of Paris and sprinkled that on, you know.

Mm.

So there was a big controversy about that.

Mm.

But I hadn't I hadn't suggested anything, so the students had actually...

So it was all their...it was all...you did it with them, you did it with the students at Leeds?

Yes, I mean I wasn't directing anything.

No.

I was just like, if they wanted shoes, I'd go off in my van. I was just, well like a parent, feeding your baby, change... I was just like their parents, seeing to all their

needs and requirements, you know, and bringing back old doors, old mattresses. And they, they were going crazy with it all, they were going crazy.

Mm.

Well then, then I went to another school down in Farnham, a foundation school, in which on the way there, I thought, this is wrong, because I'm suggesting to them something for them to do, like a structure. So I thought, I must find out what they want to do. So they said, 'Oh what's the project for this week?' And I said, 'The project is, you doing what you feel you need to do.' And they started saying, 'Well, we've come from all parts of the country...' Oh, sorry. There's a story here. 'All parts of the country, to sunny Falmouth[sic]. We're living in these custom-built studios, glass roofs like greenhouses. The offices where we used to study, there were all little rooms with nooks and crannies, we'd like to live there, we'd like to have our own little room with a door we can lock. If a member of the staff comes, he knocks on the door, there's no intrusion. We have the right to say, "I don't wish you to come in today, I've just started something, I don't want you to pull it to pieces."' So they said, 'And we find we've signed on for a combined painting and sculpture course, but the head of painting isn't speaking to the head of sculpture, we've got to settle for one or the other. We would all like to live together in a room.' And that's what we did. We found a room, and we all took our sleeping bags in there, we locked the door. We lived for a week, we lived on potato soup. The principal at the beginning, he said, 'I can give you £25 art expenses.' The staff thought we were all having an orgy in there. We were pouring our hearts out to each other. They said, 'Let's get it right. What is your role in this? You come down here; are you going to be participating, are you going to be one of us, are you going to be writing a book on it, are you tape-recording it or what?' I said, 'No, we're all in it together.' And I think what had happened was, a week before, I'd gone with one of my sons to a psychiatric ward that had been open for ten years, and I'd gone into a room where they were doing therapy. And I'd realised that people were talking in these sort of fragments of things. Oh no no, no that came after, that came after. Anyway. So we're all in this, we're all in this room, and we all start falling in love with each other. Different people. Not making love or kissing, but, you know, what's the word? You know, there's a word isn't there. Not patriotically. What's the word?

Empathising? I don't know.

Yes. But when you come in close.

Communicating.

And, we're all pouring our heart. And there's one guy... There's a girl, OK, she's studying sculpture. The head of sculpture, and the head of all...not head, but lots of art teachers are predators as far as women are concerned. The girl goes up for the interview, they're looking for big boobs and things like that, and, so they can, they can have some sort of affair while they're students. And she broke off with him, and he told her that if she didn't get back together she'd have low marks. You know? And then another student, this guy, he said, 'I've been fighting a battle with the staff all the time I've been here. They've hated my work, they've torn my work to bits. I've just been chucked out from my digs by my landlady. I'm living in the grounds of the college in an old, what was old coal shed, in my sleeping bag.' And one day the staff came up to him, and they said, 'Every year the college buys work by the students; we'd like to buy one of your pieces of work.' He was overjoyed, you know, finally they love some of his work. And they took him round the back where he'd been sleeping, on a little rubbish dump, a dog had been crapping. And they said, 'This is your crap, you dirty sod, you've been living in this place, it's crapping there. We want to buy your work.' He burst into tears, and then he committed suicide.

Oh dear.

I mean, fucking bastards. Fucking bastards, you know. So, it was after that, when I came back, and then I went to this psychiatric mental hospital, I'd talked through everything, and I'd got myself all together, and we sat in this room and these people were talking about, they'd had nervous breakdowns. Students who had gone to university, being encouraged by their parents to follow a particular line of study, a particular career; it wasn't them, they wanted to play the guitar or do something, but... One guy forced to study, be a sewage engineer, because they were building a sewage farm outside the town. And, people were talking in fragments, and they talked about,

very much about, they'd had a mask up in front of their face for years, a mask of the image that everybody wanted to see, but they couldn't take it any more. Thrown the mask away, but they didn't know who they were. So they were talking in odd fragments, as though they were throwing bits of a jigsaw puzzle into a communal pile. And if one of the other patients saw a bit they could identify with, they'd put it in theirs. A lady started talking about someone she knew, a friend, not herself; they told her to get out the room. And I made the mistake, I thought, well I'm talking about myself, not somebody else. And they told me, I could stay if I shut up. Because I was presenting, not fragments that they could use; I was presenting this whole image, you know. So that was a very, very fundamental thing. It's getting near six o'clock.

[break in recording]

After all this, I get invited up to Bradford College of Art Foundation, run by a Scotsman called Mr Mac something or other, people can remember it.

Mm.

So I go up to them, and this is a week's project, they say, 'What's the project?' I say, 'The project is, I'm going to be your fairy godmother for a week, and encourage you to do anything you feel like doing,' you know. So they're a bit flummoxed, you know. Because they've been given projects, they've got to be drawing cubes and squares and...and they've got to be, they've got to be livened up and told what to do, and suggested things, you know. And, it was a terrible school run by a man called something, it was television and film, in the main part. Anyway, so I said, 'I'm your fairy godmother.' So, they say, 'Well first of all we'd like to have a party.' You're forbidden to have parties in the studios. A party, bring in some booze, record player. Lock all the doors, no staff allowed in. They're furious, you know, broken one of the rules, you know. Then, another day they say, 'What about going ice-skating?' So we all go ice-skating, you know, we go ice-skating, we all learn to ice-skate. Another day they say, 'Oh let's go rock-climbing on Ilkley Moor.' And one of the students says, 'I can, I've been rock-climbing,' and we meet in the foyer. The principal calls me up. 'I can't allow you to take these students rock-climbing, you've had no experience of rock-climbing,' you know. So I thought, they're going to teach me abseiling and all

that. Anyway, we insist, and we go off rock-climbing. Then a girl comes up to me and she says, 'I really love dancing, but the staff tell me, "If you want to dance, go to a ballet school." I don't want to dance, I want to express myself, and my body movements.' And she said...I said, 'Well do it.' She said, 'Well, there's a record, I'd love to do it, but I can't afford.' Well we go out and buy it, and we bought her the record. Oh the record player, the staff are using it in the staff room. We go out and we borrow a record player. So she does that. Another girl says, 'I love trapeze. They say, "Go off to a circus." But I don't want to do circus trapeze. I want to do my own.' We get in raft beams and we fix up a trapeze, and she's doing that. And girls say, 'We want to make little nests under the tables.' And one guy says, 'I want to go into a, make a room and go in there with protective gear and just smash up glass, and smash up glass, you know.' And then one day we're out playing football, and the head of Foundation, he's going round saying, 'This Lacey, he's got to be stopped, he's got to be stopped. We've got to stop him being paid, he's paid £100 for this week, encouraging the students to play silly buggers and do what they want,' you know.

Mm.

And... But I mean, I was paid in the end, you know.

Mm. So that was Bradford.

That was Bradford. But, after Farnham, within six months, about six of those students had left, and of course I was blamed for putting my views into their heads, you know.

Right, yes. Yes. Yes.

So I was on a quest.

Mm.

I was on a quest. In a way, it's like this old role of the hero that I'd seen in films, I wasn't a knight in shining armour, rescuing a maiden from the tower; I was rescuing these students, you know.

Mm.

Because I had been a student, and I hadn't forgotten.

Mm.

The staff had been students, but they had forgotten.

Mm.

And I was suffering from a form of shell-shock I suppose. I'd gone over the barricades, I'd fought with the staff, but there was a lot to pay for that, you know.

Mm.

Then, this is a good thing to finish on. I go back to the Sculpture School to talk, but I realise for[???]one day, I'm a member of the staff. So I go into the holy of holies at the Royal College of Art, where only staff can go. Normally I would eat with the students, but I want to confront the staff. And there, Robert Buhler, Carel Weight, Roger de Grey: my old staff are still there, and they're all pissed as newts. And I'm wearing this Second World War simulated fur coat worn by ATS girls during the war on the ack-ack sites, and they said, 'Oh Lacey, Lacey, why are you wearing those tatty old clothes?' they said. 'Oh, you're painting, we hated your painting.' As though I'd walked out the day before, although they gave me a first class degree. 'Oh that smelly old coat, oh dirty smelly old coat.' So I said, 'My coat isn't smelly.' So I went downstairs, I asked ten students, did a survey, 'Is my coat smelly?' My coat isn't smelly. I went up and I said, 'My coat isn't smelly.' I jumped on the table, and I was tempted to kick all their dinners on the floor. I said, 'My coat isn't smelly,' I said, you know. 'And you're telling lies, lies like you've always told,' you know. And then stormed, stormed out. And that was bloody good therapy too.

(laughs) Do you feel a lot better when you've done that?

I feel better when I've talked about it too.

Good.

Mm. I think we could finish there.

Yes.

[break in recording]

So, I've had my exhibition at Gallery One.

Mhm.

I've been humiliated by Robin Darwin at the BBC where I'm just playing the part of a tramp. I've had my exhibition at the Marlborough. So I go back to the Royal College, with my catalogue from the Marlborough, and I knock on Robin Darwin's door. And I say, 'Here I am. I'm an artist once again.' He doesn't recognise me, because he's like Adolph Hitler in this long sort of office. He says, 'Who the...who the...?' I said, 'This is Lacey, don't you remember Lacey, you know, the plague of your life when I was here?' He said, 'What are you doing Lacey, painting again? Not doing that old acting?' I said, 'No no. I am a sculptor. I am an assemblage artist.' I said, 'This is my catalogue from the Marlborough New London, England's leading art gallery.' He looked at it, and he flung it on the floor. 'Oh it's a load of old rubbish Lacey,' he said, 'it's rubbish, rubbish, rubbish,' he said, 'it should all be in the Science Museum. You don't call that art.' So I then thought, this is it. I am the artist, I decide what is art. I don't have to get acceptance from my mentors. And that was a big thing. What I say, if I want to fart, if I want to pick my nose, if I call it art, because we didn't have the name 'performance art' then, if I do anything, if I say it's art, it's art. And two fingers up at you, you know, sort of thing, you know. And you know, like Peter Blake just thought I was an old joker. Because there was a humorous

element, black comedy element in things, but there was always this series element too, you know. And, I think later on, you know, I mean I had, I'd sold over the years about eight pieces, and, and the Tate Gallery bought one, not at the time, took them eighteen years, when it was exhibited again. So, I think it was worth[???] the Tate having one, you know.

Mm.

But, I suppose I'm what you might call a maverick, you know.

Mm.

And because...because I hadn't... If I'd carried on doing assemblages, then OK, I would have been an established assemblage artist. And I realise also that if you're signed on by a gallery, and you start having clients that buy your work; they don't like it if you suddenly metamorphosise.

Mm.

Like, Victor Pasmore, who was a Euston Road freak[???], lovely English, English, whatsaname, English, what's the word? Impressionist.

Mm.

Suddenly he gives it all up, becomes abstract, talking about music with patterns. And they thought he'd gone mad, you know.

Mm. Mm.

So, you are in, you are in a straightjacket [inaudible]. You can't really change too much.

Mm.

And I didn't want to produce... It's like they're producing work to order.

Mm.

And I see most artists who produce work which they exhibit and they sell almost like commercial artists really, you know. So I really...you know. So I've just gone on, like the Lord Mayor's Show was, just [inaudible] my droppings[???] I do, you know, I just carry on, you know. Mm. But it is nice, when now and again people do buy your things, you know.

Mm.

But, I mean it's the kiss of death if someone... Len Deighton, spy writer, I was asked, or[???] he was studying graphic design, he commissioned me to make an electronic owl for him, which worked on solar cells. Well when the sun came up in the morning, all these hundreds of little feathers, driven by motors driven by the sun all started to bristle, move around. And the lady from the ICA, she said, 'Oh I could sell lots of those, you could do multiples. Do them a bit smaller.' And that, I didn't want that, that was the kiss of death, you know.

Mm. What did you do that for then? Why did he want that owl?

What?

Why did Len Deighton want this owl?

Oh only because he...he was into owls, and he said, 'Make me an owl,' you know.

Right.

So I made it in my own, in my own way, you know.

Right. Mm.

I don't know if it's still, if he's still got it or if it still works.

[break in recording]

They've all kept up, all those Royal College of Art people have all kept up. I did go to two reunions, but the last one I didn't go to.

Did you?

Because they're all...they're all talking about all the money they're making, all the jobs.

Mm.

And virtually, in my purist way they've all sold out, you know.

Mm.

The guy, Ted Dicks, not a very good painter, but a wonderful composer and musician, going to write musicals and West End shows, finished up writing jingles for, and things for porn movies and things. Not that I'm criticising that necessarily. And others went into teaching, didn't do any more creative work at all, you know.

Mm.

And they're all talking about it. And I don't...I want to be bitchy, you know, and I think I'd better keep away.

(laughs)

Oh yes. Right. Well I got this here. Now. ..

Oh yes.

Because of a traumatic thing happened, I replied to there[???]; [inaudible] pneumonia; tore the skin off my knees and things; immune system went into overdrive; that triggered off rheumatoid arthritis, which is auto-immune disease.

Mm.

Been on steroids, it's given me a fat face. I now have to have calcium tablets to counteract that. And then because I've got mild angina, I have to have these slight heart tablets. And I drink this at the same time, [inaudible]. (laughs) Not the bad angina where you've got all the pains and...

Oh is it not?

And the pressure and the pain in the arm. But it's a little tightness in the throat.

Mm.

Like tuberculosis. I seem to get everything mild.

Yes.

A little touch. Which is good really.

Not the full, the full thing.

Because you see, it stops you from getting as far as the real thing.

Oh right, it's a warning.

It gets stopped at an early stage.

Mm.

And you start medication.

Mm.

Like, instead of having pains in the joints and go through years of suffering, I go to the early arthritic clinic, so I'm having treatment for early arthritis you see. So it's good to have all these things in moderation. (laughs) Right.

[End of F8075 Side B]

[F8076 Side A]

OK, yes, we're switched on now.

Mm. Just going back to the Fifties at the Royal College of Art, there was one occasion when, I don't know what, but, I hadn't had a row, but I felt I didn't want to see all the other students at the Royal College of Art, so I went in as the Invisible Man, I covered myself all in bandages, and of course they knew it was me anyway, you know. And on another occasion, because I didn't go in that day, a television crew had come round looking for artists, young artists in the programme, and so, I was a bit pissed off, because I had missed it, so I wasn't on the programme. And so I decided to go to a variety theatre that night. Towards the end of the variety, all over England they were, it started being involved in like, nude shows. And, this one was called *No Nudes is Good Nudes*, you know. And I sat in the front row, and all these girls came on and started doing things, and then at one point they said, 'We'd like a volunteer from the audience to come and dress one of the models.' So I was up there like a shot on the stage you see. But they brought out a shop window dummy you see, and everyone laughed. And then they asked me to dress her. Well, I knew I had to play it very carefully, because, they up on the stage were the funny people; I was meant to be the punter from the audience, that they could make fun of. And so, I then behaved like a clumsy sort of naïve person that had never, never seen women's underclothes before, you know. And of course, I had to put the underpants on, so I turned her up on her head and pulled the underpants, and then I put the brassiere on, and the breasts on the dummy were wide apart, but the cups on the brassiere were close together, so I put it on one breast, it would come off the other, going like that, you know. But it was hilariously funny. Anyway, while I was at the Royal College of Art, I suppose from, I started, from 1951 to '54, some time, probably 1952, an American came over called John Hoppe, and he got permission from the Royal College of Art to have an empty room above the library in the common room. And, what he had done, he had invented a form of projecting light. If you can imagine, a strip of spring steel, say three inches wide and a foot long, chromium plated, so when a light came from, like an arc lamp, or a small filament from a motorcar headlamp, hit the reflector, you then reflected it back onto the screen, and then by holding the corners and manipulating it, you could make all these incredible, beautiful shapes, you know. And by slipping a, a design,

like a stencil, over it, with a shape cut, you could also start it off with a shape, which you could then modify and change. And we started doing sound, what would now be called *musique concrete* I suppose, all [makes sound with fingers on lips] all funny noises and blowing over the tops of bottles and things like that. So we did all our own sound and things. So really, it was, as far as I can see, the beginning of light shows and things, you know. And like, Mark Boyle did lots of light things in the Sixties, you know, they had overhead projectors with worms and... And we did things with water tanks inch thick, and pouring in coloured liquids and projecting them, you know. And that later on developed into all the disco type stuff with the bubble machines and the, the oil things, and all the old psychedelic, you see them in old television programmes. He only saw it as, it could be used in advertising, but we saw it could be used in sort of, performance. And, a BBC director did a whole programme about it, you know. And the, the problem was, to go from the normal world into this sort of fantasy world, and we did it by someone looking in a mirror that then became distorted, so it all went into this sort of distorted world. And we did it with dancers and things. And then later on I did odd things like that with television. Because some of the early, you got *Top of the Pops*, some of the early television pop shows, the artists weren't allowed to be seen performing their music, you know. So there were no...they had dancers on, and sometimes I would...I would do this sort of Mobilux thing. But, but then later on, Bob Godfrey, who basically made cartoon films, you know, he did *Rhubarb* the cat on children's television, he started making live films, and there was a film – oh no, a recording, of Lonnie Donegon singing *The Battle of New Orleans*. So we did a film to accompany that. We went on to the mudflats at Leigh-on-Sea, walked towards the mudflats, where, with your wellington boots, you would sink in about a foot, and you'd try... So somehow we managed to get some boards onto it, and we, we put on a grand piano, with all the insides taken out, and then we, we had... Bob Godfrey... We called ourselves The Three Gnits, g-n-i-t-s. And Bob Godfrey was playing double bass, or pretending to, and a guy who later became a film director, I can't remember his name, he was playing the violin. And we were, we were playing this to *The Battle of New Orleans*, so we were miming. And, of course on the mudflats, someone accidentally got a bit of mud on them and he started this huge mud fight, you know, we were all covered in mud and things like that. But it was incredibly funny. Yes, so that, that's the...that deals with Mobilux and that aspect which I'd forgotten to talk about.

Why were artists not allowed to perform [inaudible]?

I don't know.

Was it a sort of, union thing?

Yes, it must have been a union thing.

Right.

Yes.

So in a sense, that gave other opportunities for people to do different things as a sort of accompaniment?

Yes. Yes, that's right.

Yes. [inaudible] that you were talking about. Were there other films and things that you were involved in?

Pardon?

There were other films weren't there, that you were also involved in.

Well yes, you see...

Was that...is Dick Lester?

Yes, well, he was called Dick Lester when he was a television director; then when he started making films he calls himself Richard Lester you see. And he directed all the, all the Spike Milligan, the *Idiots Weekly, Priced Twopence* and the Fred shows. And then he also directed all the Michael Bentine shows too.

Mm.

And, that did finish up with a stage show of Michael Bentine, and I went round all theatres in England with him, called *Don't Shoot, We're English*. But on the opening night in Edinburgh, the cast were very furious, because, they brought in a lighting man from London, I've forgotten his name, who lit the whole show very beautifully. But the performers, those people like Clive Dunn, there was Michael Bentine, Clive Dunn and Dick Emery, were the three main, main stars, with me playing minor roles, and they were used to being like stage performers, where you walk onto the stage as a comic, and you get the full spotlight on you. So they were furious with that. So, that night there was a big post-mortem, and Michael Bentine sacked Richard Lester, and he threw out... Oh no, I think we carried on the tour. When we got to London, he sacked Dick Lester, he threw out all the lighting, brought in other people. And then, a new director came in with dancers and singers and performers from a show that had flopped about two weeks before, which was *The Kiss of Death*, and so it only lasted few weeks, and that was it, you know. A guy called Thornton, an actor called Thornton that's been in *Last of the Summer Wine*, he was also brought in, you know.

Were you involved in the, one of the Beatles' films?

Yes, well, I think I was in *It's Trad Dad*, and then... Yes, because what had happened also was that various people I was at art school with then went into television and became trainee directors, and when they'd finished their course, they had what in the art world would be like a dip show, they had to make a programme. And so, they'd very often call in all the old mates, we wouldn't get paid, just to help them out and perform different things. And one of them was a guy called Bob Foost[ph], who later on directed, I think it was *Dr...Dr* something or other, a horror film with Vincent Price in, you know. And there was this other guy, Joe McGrath, he was one of the Gnits, playing the fiddle, he then became a television director and I went over and performed in that. And also, then, when they then became film directors, you imagine you're making your first film with a camera crew and everyone that is familiar with it, you need your confidence boosting. And so all the old mates used to come in, Bob Godfrey and myself and various people, playing small parts. So he was surrounded with some, with some friends, you know. And, anyway, Dick Lester was doing the

Beatle film *Help*, and he asked me to go down to Pinewood Studios and play a part. Well the night before I'd been performing with The Alberts, and I'd skidded across the stage on my knees and torn all the skin off my knees, so I'm sitting there with all my knees bandaged up for two days, not knowing what they're going to ask me to do. And then they say, 'Well...' I don't know if you've seen the film, have you?

Mm.

Well in the film, they go in to a row of houses in through separate doors, but you see inside it's all one big, big room, and they're living in different parts. Well George Harrison, in his bedroom, which was a brass bedstead, there was like a grass carpet, which turned out to be real grass. And I am the resident gardener sitting in the corner. And at some point, and this is terrible, they said, 'Well you've got to get on your knees,' knees which were extremely painful, and cut the grass with the sort of joke clockwork teeth, you know. And then right at the end, as...it's while they're playing, [singing] 'Hey, you've got to hide your love away', when it comes to the flute, end, I'm sitting there miming on the flute. But they didn't tell me I was going to do that, because I would like to have got all the fingering right. So I'm just playing silly buggers with my fingers. Whereas I would have gone and learnt those right finger movements, you know. So... And there were various odd, odd bits and pieces. I know I was in some film, *Casino Royale*, I think I was sitting next to Orson Wells, and [inaudible] off to America, so, I think, I'd...I haven't seen the film to know if I was in it or not, you know, but... But the best thing of all was, towards the end of the Sixties, George Melly wrote this script for like a Swinging Sixties film, which is...it's a strange... It's very corny and it's very funny. There was Rita Tushingham and Lynn Redgrave, and the producers saw them as a potential new female Laurel and Hardy. So it's got a custard pie scene in a café and things like that. But there's a, there's a sequence, and George Melly asked me if I could write...make lots of machines for an art gallery sequence, where I am the artist, giving this lecture to the audience about all these sort of robot machines that are going to take over the world or something, and Rita Tushingham, she's there trying to find her boyfriend, and she grabs my control, throws it at him, and it falls on the floor and all the machines come to life. For instance, there are some people standing against the wall and they're all machine-gunned; there's a machine that brings out a machine-gun and then at the end

it says 'Sorry' or something. I mean I didn't write it all. I just made these, you know... I made suggestions and modifications and things. And then a guy is standing in front of a, one of my machines that's blowing a huge net balloon, he's a very pompous sort of, ambassador with a big red sash and a beard, very pompous guy. And this balloon gets bigger and bigger, it explodes, and when it all gets away, all his clothes have been blown off and he's wearing women's underwear. And then this guy, the hero of the film, he's standing in front of a camera that's taking, a huge camera, photographing, and it all opens up and this big boxing glove knocks him over. And then there's a, there's another tall, diplomatic guy, is sucked into the machine, and a big press comes down and when the door opens this little midget comes out, he's been sort of squashed. And all the time the robot is going around with smaller lips, trying to kiss Rita Tushingham and leaving lipstick all over, you know. So that was a very good little sequence, you know, with me actually, incredible in a film, for me to be playing the part of the artist and being an actor as well, you know, and writing my own dialogue and stuff, you know. So that was, that was filmed at the, at the Roundhouse.

What happened to the film, what...where was it shown?

Oh it's been shown, it was shown in the cinemas and things.

Oh right, yes.

Yes, mm.

What was it called, that?

It was called *Smashing Time*.

Smashing Time.

But, it was supposed to be the definitive film of the Sixties. It captures, you know, Carnaby Street and wearing old uniforms and all that sort of, all that sort of jazz, you know. But... As I say, they, they saw the little Rita Tushingham and the big Lynn

Redgrave as like a sort of, slapstick Laurel and Hardy, people, you know. Then I'd do an odd film, I think I was in, what was that film called? Oh I was in a film, Richard Lester was doing this film, like a Sixties film, in which they wanted me to be... There was like a surveyor. He had a theodolite, and I'm the man standing 100 yards away holding the striped pole, and Rita Tushingham is with a suitcase trying to find some digs, and she goes up to the surveyor and asks directions. Well he's been telling me with the pole, move this way or move that way, so when he starts telling her which road to go on, I think he's directing me, and of course I step to one side and fall down one of these things where they put beer barrels down outside a pub. And I scraped all the skin off my knees and things. So, I used to play these sort of cameo roles in films, where, if you blinked or you went to the toilet, you wouldn't see me, you know, these little, little, little cameo roles. And then Bob Godfrey decided to make a film that was going around with the cinemas, with the Russian Ballet, it was called *On Man Band*. So I'm a one-man band, and I made it all, and I'm busking outside the Albert Hall you see, where all the people come in to the concerts. But when I get home at night, I've got dreams of being a conductor. So I'm standing on a box looking in the mirror and I've got sort of, some symphony going on around, sort of conducting you see. So I'm, next day I'm outside the Albert Hall, and there's great panic because the conductor hasn't arrived. So I volunteer. (laughs) And I can't remember what else happened, but I'm on the stage of the Royal...all sorts of things happen. But, it was at that time, when I was...I was sort of pulling funny faces, you know, it was really hamming acting, you know, so, 'How is this,' and '[inaudible] this,' you know. And Bob Godfrey was very disappointed with my performance afterwards, he said, 'I wish I'd...' He'd let me do it, but he said, 'I wish you'd done it in a sort of, deadpan Buster Keaton way,' you know. So that all went round the cinemas and things. I don't have a copy of that, it was called *One man Band*. And I did various, various commercials. At that time there were no funny commercials, you know, so I would do, like funny commercials and things. And then he did a film called *Plain Man's Guide to Advertising*, which was sending up commercials and things. And I did various, various live action, weird sort of films with him.

This is all in the Sixties, all these different sort of cameo roles, bits and pieces that you did?

It's about the Sixties, early...

Where were you living then?

Sixties, early Seventies I think, you know.

Right. Whereabouts were you living? Where... Had you moved on from the...I think the last time we talked about where you had lived, where you had been living, it was in Highgate.

Well I think I was still, I was still living at Muswell Hill with my first wife, you know.

Mm.

Because you see, at one point Bob Godfrey had to do a scene, advertise something in a submarine, so I converted my big hallway into the upper half of a submarine. So he had, Bob Godfrey was the submarine commander, he had to be kneeling on his knees and pushing up a periscope and things, you know. And then, once, they were doing a commercial on some sort of biscuits, those little biscuits, cookies that have chocolate in them, you know. And the idea is, they're sitting in a boat eating these biscuits, and a periscope comes up and torpedoes them, and then they get all the biscuits. And so I had to make this torpedo. So I've made this huge torpedo with a motor, and I've got to test it, so I put it in my van and drive up to Hampstead Heath to Whitestone Ponds or something, and it's three o'clock in the morning and I'm running this torpedo in the ponds, and a policeman comes along on horseback and, 'What are you doing?' (laughing) 'I'm just testing a torpedo I've just made.'

A policeman again.

Yes a policeman again, yes, a policeman again.

Keeps cropping up.

All keeps coming back.

Mm.

Well... Can I look at that catalogue again?

Yes, yes, which one is it?

The one, the Marlborough. Not the Marlborough, the, the retrospective at the Whitechapel.

Oh yes.

Forty years of robots, that sort of thing. I'll just have a quick look in...

Forty Years of Assemblages, Environments and Robots.

Yes, and robots and things, yes. Where are we now? Yes, sTigma at Better Books, and then, the thing at Leeds College of Art.

Yes, you talked about the Leeds thing, didn't you, and Better books.

Yes. Can I talk a bit more about Leeds?

You can, yes. [inaudible].

I'll go on...can we go on a Leeds trip?

Yes.

So...

So when...we're talking early Sixties again are we?

Well this is, with this environment, the students built, in '65, called *Osmosis*, at the Leeds College of Art, that's right.

Osmosis*?*

Yes.

Is that the one you talked about a bit yesterday?

Yes, yes, with the Virgin Mary sitting on the lavatory pan and things like that.

Oh right.

And the staff having sexual intercourse in the dark part of it all.

That's right.

So, that was a big controversy with all the fleas and the mattresses, and so I was banned. And then, then, they asked me to give an inaugural lecture in some sort of city lecture theatre hall, as an inaugural lecture, the first series of lectures, and I was asked to make, be the first lecturer. So I talked about what I was doing. And I talked about the fact that I was, I was working on a sex simulator. I know the way that simulators were going, they had golf simulators and yachting simulators and things, and aeroplane simulators, and I thought, sooner or later, and probably the Japanese, are going to make a sex simulator. So I thought, well I want to make a sex simulator, and to really show people how horrific a sex simulator could be, and how non sort of, you know, you couldn't beat the real thing. So, I told them I was making this, and then I said, 'Well I'm also working on something else, as a quick sex simulator, because I can't wait to finish the real one.' And that is, a man would go into a room, and take all his clothes off, and he'd be faced with, on the wall there's a picture of a, or a photograph of a naked woman, and there's a hole where the breasts are, and a hole where the vagina is, and he'd put his hands through the breasts and feel these, these simulated artificial breasts, and put his penis through the hole, have intercourse with this artificial vagina thing. And then there'd be another one where women could

go in. And they'd press their bodies against this man, and hands, artificial hands would come through, and feel the breasts and caress the body, and then a penis would come in. But in actual fact, it's just a single sheet of hardboard. And they're really doing it to each other without knowing it you see. Which I wouldn't do, because that would be morally wrong, but it was just like a jokey thing I was thinking of doing. And of course, the staff were all horrified, and I, I mentioned words like 'penis' and 'vagina' and 'clitoris' and things like that. And so, they had become aware that some of their students were starting to do works of art and things that were of a slightly erotic nature. So I decided then to have a whole seminar with all the staff and all the students in the, I think the lecture theatre in the old Leeds College of Art. And, they asked me up as guest speaker. Well, I had read some weeks before, there were men doing various things, there was a man that used to wear black clothing with just little eyes, and he'd be, he'd be by a bus stop underneath some gratings in the basement, looking up the skirts of women waiting for buses. There was another man that was caught, that had mirrors fixed on his shoes, so he could stand and look under, up women's clothing. But there was another man who, a girl had gone to the police station and he said, 'There's a man exposing himself in the park.' And when they arrested the man, he was fully dressed wearing a long overcoat, and when he took off his overcoat in the police station, he had a little bit of shirt round here with a tie, cut, so completely naked, nothing on around his groin, and then he had little bits of trousers held by elastic coming under his overcoat just under his kneecap. So I thought, well this is what I'm going to be. So, I made a costume like this, went up on the train wearing it with this sort of overcoat on, and sat through the seminar lecture sitting like this, you know. And then, then they said, 'Oh would Bruce Lacey like to say something?' So I got up. And then I told them this story of Lenny Bruce, how Lenny Bruce had said, like, you know, that anything of a sexual nature, like a man exposing himself in New York, he could get two years' imprisonment, but another man, who like, throwing acid or punching you in the face, would get six months. So I stood there, and I said, 'Lenny Bruce said about, OK, you can...you can...you know, you can disfigure someone, or something like that, and get six months, or you could be a man in the park exposing yourself and get two years' I opened up my coat and I was completely naked there, you know. And they were horrified, you know. The students were all laughing, and the staff were... Oh. And then... That was the end of the, the end of my talk, you know. But I'd gone on about, you know... Because you

see, they, they saw it, that if they allowed, they actually said this, if they allowed their students to paint work that was erotic, that would lead on to promiscuity amongst the students; girls having illegitimate babies, and that would lead onto suicides. That is the slippery slope they saw, you know. And then the principal got up and said, 'Oh well we know Bruce Lacey's a bit of a comedian,' you know. And they carried on. And of course, when I'd finished, all the students rushed me out in the gentlemen's lavatory, they wanted to photograph me like this, you know. And then when I got back to London I told my family and friends, they all wanted to see it, so, I was doing it for weeks afterwards, and I thought, well this has got to stop, you know. (laughing) Oh. Well then, then...

So did you get called back to Leeds at all after that?

Well no, then I was...

Was that your last time?

Then I was banned again.

You had a few chances though, did you?

But then they, they opened up the new college, and they invited me back with a guy called Terry Scott is it or something? No, not Terry Scott. A painter, a nice guy, a rough and ready sort of guy. As what they called outside assessors, for the diploma show. Now, you're called outside assessors, but the unspoken word is, moderator, because the, whatever they were, Ministry of Education, believed that schools which self-assessed their students will be rather biased, and up-mark them, you know. And we were meant to go in and take a cool look, and moderate everything, you know. But of course what I did was walk around with the students, like I had felt, is that, when it comes to the crunch, and students, staff are judging students on aesthetics and all that sort of thing, it only boils down to this corny old thing of, they only, they only like...what's the word? I know what I like, or something, isn't it.

Mm.

There is a corny expression isn't there.

Mm.

It all boils down to that really. They only like work that is a bit similar to work they do anyway. So I said to the students, 'Now how do you feel about, first, upper second, second or a pass?' And I agreed with them, they did, that it's, you can't, you can't grade art and pass judgement on what is better. It's only what you like, basically. And so, I said, 'I'd like you to assess yourselves.' And so, some said, 'Well, I don't think I deserve a first; I think...we don't agree with marking or judgement, if it is there, I feel I'd like upper second or a second.' And some would say, generously, 'I feel that my friend ought to get a first, and I think he's brilliant,' you see. So I moderated all the marks, and it meant that most of the students were in upper second. And it had the highest number of upper seconds in the whole country, so there was a whole Ministry of Education inquiry about it, why this happened, you know. Now, the head was a guy called Willy Turr, who was some sort of Czechoslovak, he was a lovely guy. But as far as the staff were concerned, he was weak, because he didn't have a hard, firm rule, he wasn't riding his own hobbyhorse; he let people have a certain freedom of choice, which I thought was wonderful, but lots of the staff didn't like this, you know. And I was also aware that it was a very male-orientated staff. There were no women, and at that time there were no women in fine art, no women tutors. Women were all right, you know, like for junior school, they were all right in Foundation departments. No women at all. Like I found in the film and television, no women camera crew, because they couldn't lift up the heavy cameras and things like that. Used to have great arguments with them all about this, you know. So, there were no, no women staff, and it was all a very male-orientated, boozing staff too, North Country, a bit laddy, all the lads sort of thing. And the only work that was really appreciated was like, male art which was your big sculptures, or your huge big paintings. But female art tended to be, itsy-bitsy things, all little, I don't know, well, it's an interesting thing, is that in Australian Aborigines, the men do rituals which they keep secret from the women, and they're all about time, space, the stars, the planets, all these sort of timeless things. But the women's rituals are about fertility, about love, and all these earthy things, and all the things about real life. And

the men have got all these noble things, you know, and... Anyway, so, it's like that in the art world it was, you know. And so, if there were women doing things, and there were things about fairies, or some people were doing things about, things like stone circles, that would all be pooh-poohed, oh that's all rubbish, and things like that, you know. So it was a bit like that. And there was one student who, he...he was a performer, and he had, he had done a thing, fire-eating, but didn't know how to do it, he used petrol, which, you're meant to use paraffin, and so he burnt himself. And he had all photographs round the wall in his show, of all the, large photographs of his face sort of healing from all the wounds. And then he did a performance where he was doing, up on the stage, he was doing things, like a stage conjuror doing things, snake-handling, and different things. And this guy with me, this other artist, called Terry something, he said, 'Well, he should be in a circus doing this.' I said, 'No, but look at the way he's doing it. He's doing it in a beautiful way, like an artist doing snake-handling,' you know. There was another guy called... And so, I think I gave him a first. And then, then there was a guy called Simon English, he'd taken a sabbatical for a year going round the world, putting down the letter E across South America, like they're putting markers in every hundred miles, and putting A across North America, and T across England, and he was going around the world doing that. And... Is it finished? No. And he had left the dummy hanging up in the studio, of himself, looking onto all the students in this aircraft hangar studio, with a time lapse camera, photographing and filming all the students. Well it was probably shown fast when it came out, you know. And his sister, Rose English, she was also there. Now... Anyway.....

[End of F8076 Side A]

[F8076 Side B]

And, so, I was then asked back the second year. And that's when there was a big inquiry, for two years running they had the highest number of upper seconds, you know. And there was one student who said, 'I want the degree made out in the name of a friend of mine,' a Chinese friend, like Ling Wan Pu, 'who's never had a degree, and he would like a, some sort of qualification.' And the staff refused to do that. And so I said, 'Well if you don't do it, he's threatened to change his name by deed poll, so you will have to put it.' So they did put it, you know. And there was another guy who, he, his work was brilliant, but because for his thesis he sent in the Leeds telephone directory, they failed him on that. I don't know whether I was able to. You see, and one guy had gone into the university, into what they call the high voltage laboratory, where they produce lightning, and he had made like an ecological thing. He had sheep, and from the sheep droppings, he produced a methane gas which then drove a gas refrigerator, that then kept lamb cold. But it was all done up with string and things like that. Because it wasn't done beautifully, and you know, like art has to be done, so, all carefully and things like that, they didn't want... And I insisted, and I think he got a first, or a second. But, like at Farnham with the students pouring out their hearts to me, and how girls were being treated at art school with staff having affairs, I met these three girls at Leeds that second year I went, there was Rose English... No Rose... There was another girl. Something Sargent, Rose Sargent, I think. Anyway, they, they had realised this, when they went for their first interview, that the staff were all eyeing them up, you know, to sort of, have affairs with them later. And they decided, the group of three women, to resist all that, you know. And, when it came to their Dip. show, it was incredible. Because, one of them had been studying, they were all performance artists sort of thing, although the name wasn't there then, one of them had been doing ceramics. So all the staff were all sitting there in the front row, and they came on and did a naked ballet. And they were flaunting all their bodies. And they were all wearing bikinis and brassieres, all in ceramics. And they had towels all made of ceramics hanging up. And in the end they sort of smashed the wall. But they were, they were dancing. And it was really fantastic really, that, that they were, they were like flaunting themselves in front of the staff, it was really, really fantastic. So, I wasn't...and that was my last, last trip to Leeds I think, you know.

Was that the only place that you did the moderating then, as it was called?

That finished it, that finished it, yes.

Right.

Yes.

You didn't do it anywhere else?

No, no I didn't do it anywhere else. But as I say, through asking the students, what, how they valued themselves, and how they valued other students, you know, say that had the highest number of upper seconds, you know, they didn't all give themselves firsts and things, you know. Yes. Because, you know, there's no, there's no judgement. It's only a personal, what personally clicks with you really, you know. And in the art, you know, teachers, they're all trying to wrap it up in aesthetics and all this art talk and things like that, you know.

So was that the end of your connection really with art schools, or not?

No, I carried on. Where I'd be invited and paid by the school and band, the students would fund me from the union and I'd go back. And I went to, I think it was Bournemouth or Southampton, started talking to a small group of students, other students came in, the staff came in, and I was there for two days. It opened up a whole can of worms, with students questioning the staff on their methods, you know. It did seem to be severe criticism. And obviously the ones that were, the strongest students got the most sort of flack, and, they were the ones that... And it was really an attempt to destroy them. And I think like I said off tape yesterday, it's like a, a classic brainwashing thing, in that you break a person down until they lose all sense of identity, and then you give them rewards to lead them your way, you know. And that's the way it seemed to be done, you know. I don't know whether it still is done, because I haven't had all the con... So I went to nearly every art school in England really actually, you know.

As a, just as one-off lectures and, working with groups and things? But not, never as a...on any regular basis?

Oh no. No. No, I mean I did go to Bradford School of Art doing weekly projects, like I might go once, once a year or something. And I did go down to Farnham, I maybe went down on, perhaps... Yes, I think, for the new intake in the Foundation department, so I would go there once a year for a time, you know, just talking about my work and my philosophy about art and things, you know.

Mm.

And then you'd be invited to an architectural college you see. And I'd start talking about architecture, you know. Because my second wife was doing market research on people living in tower blocks, you know, terribly distressed, because they couldn't let their children go out to play, because their children would be down there on the grass, if they fall over, you...or been kidnapped, you couldn't do anything about it, you know. And at that time, you know, they, they had a new Elephant House at the London Zoo, was made out of shuttered concrete, and people living in tower blocks all made out of shuttered concrete, and they felt they were living in the, what is known as the Maginot Line, concrete fortifications and things, you know. And, you know, having nervous breakdowns and things. And I was saying to the architectural students, you know, 'You should, you know, you should listen to the people that are going to live in these things, and get some sort of feedback from them. You're designing all these beautiful things that are going to win you architectural prizes and have photographs in the architectural magazines, but you're putting people in those. But you don't live in them. You live in a nice Georgian house in, in a posh part of London,' which they all seemed to have at the time, you know. And then, then I was invited to the Architectural Association, they had a whole series of events, and I did lots of different performances and things. And then, several years later I got a letter from a guy who had been a student, but he was now the president of the Concrete Society. And I think this was, they were having a big conference and a dinner with 1,000 people in a very posh hotel in Sheffield, I think it was Sheffield. And they asked me to come along, because he'd seen me do cabaret at the Architectural

Association, could I come along and do a performance? Well they were sitting there, and I've since realised that in that situation, it's really the kiss of death. Cabaret in a nightclub is fine, because you're on the stage, they're all there right up close to you. There's an intimacy. But in a situation where you've got this huge ballroom with 1,000 people, all sitting at tables, then there's a dance floor, this big space, and then you're on the stage, there's a big gulf, and you can't somehow make contact. But, I had been doing, you know...I'd been doing different performances. I'd broken up with The Alberts, so I was back to my tape recorder and doing my own music with kazoos and funny noises. But I was also breaking away from doing acts and performances that I had written the script and learnt, into adlibbing, improvising, and more performance artist. So I came on first with my robot, which couldn't make it over the carpet very easily, and that was a long time gap. We had a half an hour space to do this cabaret. They were wanting a stand-up comedian, you know, they were all being drunk. And that's another thing, if people are too drunk you see, their minds get sort of fogged and they... It's got to be, not crude in...but it's got to be simple, you know. And mine was all too esoteric and... And, so they start booing. 'Get off the stage, you're a load of rubbish, get off the stage,' you know. So, my wife, she runs off in tears. [coughing] Excuse me, I'm coughing. So I said, 'Just a minute,' I said, 'excuse me, excuse me.' And they all come. I said, 'Look,' I said, 'can we be democratic about this?' I said. 'A certain number you want me to leave the stage.' 'Too right, yeah, get off.' I said, 'Ah yes, but, please, stay with me.' I said, 'Can we take a vote on this?' I said, 'I'd like, hands up all those that want me to leave the stage.' So, 990 people put up their hands. And I said, 'And who would like me to stay?' Well the president, he's sitting over in the corner, with his friends, they all put up their hands for me stay. Now, it was the Concrete Society, and they believed in buildings only made of concrete. And they, in the letter they asked me, they said, 'Please don't mention the word 'brick', because they find the word 'brick' offensive.' So I had done a thing which I hadn't done at that point, up my sleeve, to finish up with. So I said, 'Well it seems as if the majority of you want me to leave the stage.' They said, 'Yes.' I said, 'But look, can I do something, a final thing that I have written especially for this meeting of the Concrete Society?' 'Yeah, yeah OK.' So I went off. And I came on in a, in a Japanese sort of kimono, and, put some Sellotape over my eyes. And I set up two chairs like this, and, I put a brick...I put a brick across the top, and they booed, 'Brick, brick, ooh ooh,' and put this brick. And then, like

kung-fu I went, 'Oo oo, choom!' I brought my hand down, and of course I'd broken the brick and stuck it together, so the brick broke in half. They all cheered, they all cheered. And then I ran off the stage, brought back a piece of concrete. 'Hooray! Hooray!' And I put the piece of concrete on the top, and I brought my hand on it. I went, choom! But this time I slipped in an artificial hand, so the concrete didn't break but my hand broke. And they cheered. And I left the stage with thunderous applause. It was incredible. But, we'd only done twenty minutes. And they said, 'Oh we can't pay you, you said you'd do half an hour.' I said, 'Yes.' And it took me hours and hours to argue to get the money for, for, you know... But that was, that was a victory snatched from the jaws of defeat. (laughs)

Did you get the money in the end?

I got the money.

So you got something off them.

I got the money in the end, yes. But I think, I think that was this big, I think it was Sheffield, this big hotel in Sheffield, you know

Mm.

But, but you see, one New Year's Eve, The Alberts and I were asked to do a cabaret at the Royal Lancaster Hotel with lots of rich Americans and things, on New Year's Eve, and they had the band of the Coldstream Guards marching up and down. But that was a similar situation, with all people sitting at tables drinking, a big sort of ballroom floor, and then the stage. And, it was run by the, something like the Victoria Sporting Club, which we found out later was like the British Mafia. Anyway, so we start doing our performance, and they don't really like it. Coming up to twelve o'clock, and I've got a big replica of Big Ben with Jill inside dressed as a baby with nappy, like the New Year born. She's ready to come out at midnight. But suddenly half-way through, all these really heavies come on the stage and start throwing us off, because all the audience start booing. And Jill gets knocked over and things like that. And then they refuse to pay. And I said, 'I'm going round to the Victoria Sporting

Club.' And then Tony said to me, 'Don't do it,' he said, 'if you don't want Jill to get acid thrown in her face,' you know. So we agreed that half the money would be paid to a charity. So we didn't get paid. But that was a... So I did realise that those situations, you know, where you've got a huge room and you've got, you've got this sort of gap, you know, is disaster, you know.

Mm.

Really disaster.

Why did you break up with The Alberts then, how did that come about?

Well, talking with The Alberts, we decided to do our version of *The Three Musketeers*. We did it at the, we were asked to do it at the Royal Court Theatre.

When was that? Because you were... When did you start working with them, 1959 was it?

Well 1966, this is like, follows on from the Leeds thing, well maybe before the Leeds thing.

When had you first started working with them?

Started working with The Alberts...

You showed me a...

Well about 1962 I think.

'62 was it? Right. They'd been going before then obviously.

Yes they had.

Got [inaudible] hadn't they, because you showed me [inaudible].

Yes, that's right. 1961 or '62 I suppose.

Right. So you, you were doing things with them for about four years. So...

Yes. And, we did *British Rubbish*, we had a director that came in, and all he did was knock us into shape a bit, but as I say, we were...we were...we were changing things and improvising as well as doing some of the set things. And, but when we came to, I think...I've forgotten his name now, he was a film director too, the guy that was running the Royal Court Theatre. He made that film all about rugby. I can't remember.

What, Sporting Life*, do you mean?*

Sporting Life.

Yes, I know the one you mean but I can't think of it.

With Rachel Roberts, she was in it, in *Sporting Life*.

Mm.

So, we then... We were asked to do, well we wanted to do this version of *The Three Musketeers*. I think we did it at the Arts Theatre in London. And then we, we took it over to Brussels, did it in Brussels. Well half the *Musketeers*, half *British Rubbish*. And The Alberts knew a girl called Sally Hunt, whose father had been Sir John Hunt, head of the Everest, but she'd been to RADA. And, so she was brought in, she was a mate of theirs, to play the Queen of France. And the guy who had been at RADA with Jill, because Jill had been at RADA, he, who finished up in *Emmerdale Farm*, we made him the King of France, and he'd been to RADA. So we were working with these two real professional actor and actresses, and we were just amateurs you see. And, Sally Hunt didn't like our amateurish way of doing things, and all the explosions and things. So we moved from Brussels, drive right across France to Caen, Caen, that's c-a-e-n isn't it. And they walk out on us, these so-called professional people,

they walk out on us. So we finish up in France, not knowing how we're going to manage without the Queen of France and the... No he was Cardinal Richelieu. And Cardinal Richelieu, and about... But one thing that they walked out on us, and they said, 'Oh you're going off to Caen; have you booked reservations?' 'No,' we said, 'we'll find somewhere when we get there.' 'Oh you can't do that, we're not going until you've booked...' We found an old café, we found some rooms when we got there anyway. They turned up about an hour before the performance. And I thought, well I'm never going to work with you again. So when we, when we last did it[???] [inaudible] at the Royal Court Theatre, I had my prototype robot I'd built for the poetry convention; I then developed it to, it became the Queen of France, you know, because I thought, I want... I don't like bossing people about, I don't like telling people they're out of order. If they are out of order, that's the way they want to do, OK, don't work with them any more. Make a robot, you've got full control over, and does everything you want it to do, and there's no arguments at all, you know, and she's not going to walk out on you. So I... We all had conferences. I mainly wrote the script, which was all our ideas pulled together, and all the dialogue and things. And I was d'Artagnan, which was my hero's role, I'd always dreamed of. And my wife Jill, she was the heroine. So we were, it was real. You know, although it was make-believe, we were really in love and we were playing lovers on the stage. It was very important for me to do this, you know. And The Alberts, so, one of them was Aramis. Aramis, he was a Russian guy that used to work with us, a lovely Russian dancer, looked a bit like Nureyev, you know, and he was, he was Aramis. And Douglas was Porthos, the big fat one, and Tony was, was Athos. And, Valentine Dial, have you heard of him, an actor? He used to be the Man in Black on the radio, a lovely old hammy actor, he was Cardinal Richelieu. And, yes the guy that was the head of the, whatsaname, he wanted Rachel Roberts to be Madame de Winter. And she didn't like my dialogue, she brought her own scriptwriter to change all her words. And she agreed... At one point... I made all the props, and all the scenery, except for the backdrops, Tony's wife did beautiful painted backdrop. But I made this sort of huge structure made out of old timbers and bolted together; it changed and became different things, you know. And, I...one scene, Madame de Winter, and she agreed to do this, Rachel Roberts, completely naked inside this bath which was like a big clam shell, and she lures me into the bath, and pulls out this big plughole, and I get washed down into the sewers. But, when we come out of rehearsals there's all these press

photographers there, and I thought, oh we're all going to be famous, you know. But they're photographing her, because she's having a divorce with Rex Harrison, her husband. And she's...and she's going through all this emotional thing that we can't insist on her...she's being exposed to all this public scrutiny in the press. And so she says, 'Well I would like to wear a body stocking.' And we said, 'Yes, you know, you don't want to be naked and be vilified for being naked on stage.' So she's wearing a body stocking, you know. And of course in the script, it's really very Surrealist I suppose, you know, and we got huge mousetraps that are catching people, and I have to fly off to England to bring back the jewels of Queen of France, as given to Duke of Buckingham. And I go off in a big balloon that goes up into the flies, and... And I say, Buckingham, he's a Jack of Hearts. The King of France is a huge chess piece with someone inside that's moving around with wheels, like a Dalek I suppose, you know. And then we bring in, we bring in the Hunchback of Notre Dame, we bring in the Man in the Iron Mask, we bring in the Count of Monte Cristo. And then we bring in the Storming of the Bastille. Had all these tea-chests, built like stones, and I'm in the audience with a ballista firing big wooden balls, and smashing it all down, you know. Oh my goodness me.

So what did the French make of all this?

Pardon?

What did the French audience make of it?

Oh they... Well, we did it all in English, but we had, we had, on a long roller of paper in front we had English sub, French subtitles going along, about a foot wide at the front of the stage going by. And at one point, Cardinal Richelieu, you know, he's an evil man, he's wearing red, and we call him the, the Red Devil, we call him *Diablo Rouge*, and we get a tremendous laugh. But we found out later that *Diablo Rouge* is the name of a Brussels football team. (laughs) Oh. No, yes. No, it was very... Because you see, one thing, we were very visual, and one thing I had noticed, that the English, they seem...they don't seem to have got over William Shakespeare. England is a very literary nation. Even art school, students are all dong all these works, but they've got to give verbal or written explanations of what they're doing. It all comes

down to words in England. Whereas in France and Belgium, and the Continent, they're much more visual, you know. And so, we're expressing ourself in visual ways; although there are words it's the visual things, and the visual, the visual things, you know. And so, it was really, really great, you know.

Did you do anything else in France, did you do other performances? Or is that the only thing you went abroad with?

Oh gosh. We're getting, we're getting into the realms of Bruce Lacey and his erring ways. So I'm with my wife and six... (laughs) I'm with my wife and six children, but I'm having this affair with this other lady, who, we're now engaged, she's wearing my engagement ring, and we're starting to have children you see. Six years, I don't know which way to go, I don't know whether to stay with my wife and six children who I don't love any more, or to go with my other wife, fiancée, who has now got two children.

So when did you have all these children? When did you have the two children?

(laughs)

I missed those.

Well I'm having this, I'm having this, this secret, this secret affair.

Are you? Mm.

Which at some point becomes known.

Right.

And I promise to break it off and I find I can't break it off, so it goes undercover again. She's not on the phone, Jill. And so I buy a government surplus shortwave radio from tanks from the Second World War. So we're communicating via shortwave radio up in my loft, you know. Oh. And, and then, she's living in a bed-

sitting room over in Kensington way, and then she becomes pregnant, and one night she phones me up and she said, 'Bruce, Bruce, you've got to come,' she said, 'I've got to go to the hospital, it's coming,' you know. And I put the phone down. My wife says, 'Who is that on the phone?' And I said, 'Oh it's just somebody.' She said, 'Tell me, tell me, it was that other woman wasn't it?' I said to her, 'Yes, it was that other woman.' 'Why's she phoning? Why's she phoning?' 'Well she's having our baby. And you know, I've go to go to the hospital.' 'I'm coming too, I'm coming too.' So we go to the hospital, we pull up outside the hospital in my Dormobile, and the ambulance arrives, and Jill gets taken into the hospital and I go in. She waits outside, you know. So that's our first, that's our son that's born, you know. And then, then Tiffany is born, and I'm there for Tiffany's birth. But we have Kevin. And then, we've done *British Rubbish*, and then someone wants us to perform *British Rubbish* in San Francisco, sight unseen. So we get booked into San Francisco at the Little Fox Theatre. And, we have to fly to America. So, all the props, stuffed camel, penny-farthing bicycles, sawing the woman in half, everything, tap-dancing, things with the dummy, are all packed into crates, cost over $1,000. It's all flown to San Francisco. We fly, but we have to stop off at New York. And we decide to wear our First World War flying gear, goggles and leather coats and helmets. And when they say to us, 'What are you wearing?' We say, 'Well we haven't flown for years, and we didn't know aeroplanes were all going to be sort of, covered in you see.' And of course when we landed in San Francisco, they say, 'Why are you guys wearing all this motorcycle gear?' you know. They didn't get the joke. Anyway, so we're flying to, we're flying to America. And, the stewardess, she says, 'The pilot wants to know why you're wearing all this gear.' I say, 'Because we didn't know things had all been closed in.' So she says, 'Well, he'd like to speak to you.' So we go up, we go up to the flight deck you see. And it was all laughing and joking. And really... George, the automatic pilot, is flying, you know, and I think, well... They didn't, but I would love them to have let me just sit down at the controls, you know. And, it's American Airlines, and so I tell them about being a pilot fanatic, and they gave me a certificate, were I become a junior pilot in American Airlines and they give me a little pair of wings and things like that, you know. And we land in San Francisco, and there are Rolls Royces, sports car, open-top Rolls Royces, and, three of them, we each sit in one with beautiful glamour girls on either side, and we drive through San Francisco, so people are all waving. Don't know who the hell we are, you know. Motorcycle

policemen, everything like that, you know. And we open supermarkets, and we're interviewed on television. And then we open...(laughs)...and we're a complete flop. They bring in an American director, and we agree to go along with it. I do a cooking act, in which I'm saying, 'Take two eggs and beat them together.' Smash, you know. 'And put in two tablespoons of flour.' Tablespoons of flour, including the spoons, everything goes in, and bones are all mixed up and everything, you know. And then a custard pie comes up through a hole and hits me in the face. At one point I pick up a frying pan and pull the trigger, it explodes, I say, 'That was just a flash in the pan.' And they say, 'A flash in the pan. What...what's it for?' I say, 'Well this is a, in England we use a flash in the pan, because, it's...it's a failure. Your flintlock musket has gone off, but it hasn't ignited the powder in the barrel, you have the flash in the pan.' They say, 'Well we have this expression in San Francisco, but it's used as a triumph. It was used in the Gold Rush, you're panning for gold, and you get a little bit of gold glints, and flash in the pan means you've found gold,' you see. And I've got my Electric Actors, and at one point, I found by accident one of the hands falls off, and so I make an electromagnet so the hand falls off you see. And the robot is saying, 'One day in the garden, Sir Isaac Newton was sitting there, and the apple fell on his hand. And as the apple fell, the hand drops off, and he gets a laugh. And then a friend said, "What was that Isaac, was that gravity?" He says, "No, that was a Cox's Orange Pippen."' And of course the Americans said, [American accent] 'Why is it a Cox's Orange Pippen?' I say, 'Well it's an English apple.' 'We don't have Cox's Orange Pippens. This is California, call it a grapefruit.' So I had to say, say, 'One day Isaac Newton was in the garden, and a grapefruit fell on his...' (laughing) It's hilarious. Well, that is doomed for two reasons. One is, because there's drinking there, no one under eighteen is allowed in, so lots of the younger people who would have loved us aren't allowed in; it's after the Beatniks, it's before the hippies, *Beyond the Fringe*, and, I think the Establishment Review[???] are playing there, so they think we're going to be like British *Beyond the Fringe* sort of thing, you know. And of course we're not, we're completely, crazy sort of thing, you know. And, that ran for six weeks, and on the last night there were just two people in the audience, there was a man there and a woman there, and I used to come on and sweeping the stage first of all, and then I'd start talking, 'Hello, hello.' I said, 'Look, why don't you two sit together,' I said, 'then you might enjoy the show a bit better,' you know. And they said, 'Well we're actually married, we've had an argument.' And then when it came,

when it came to the knife-throwing, there's only one man there, and I said, 'Would any gentleman in the audience like to throw my last knife?' And he threw it and it stuck right in the dummy, right in the right place, you know, it was incredible. So anyway, they'd paid, they'd paid £1,000 for all our props to go; they paid all our return air tickets; but they refused to pay for all the props to go back. So we had to get back from San Francisco to England with all our treasured props, because they're all treasured possessions you see. So we traded in our air tickets, and with that money we rented a big Chevrolet three-ton truck, we piled everything in, and we set out from San Francisco and drove right across America to New York. And we, the Queen Mary was in, and so we booked in to go back on the Queen Mary, where, all the props you see, on a ship, you've got huge space for all your trunks and your baggage, and we only had to pay £50 excess baggage charge. The Alberts went back on the Queen Mary, and I flew back with Jill, because... After I was there a week, Jill joined me, with my son Kevin. So, I'm relieved of this terrible situation, this double family life, secret life in London. Then... So I take an apartment. And then a week later my wife says, 'I'm coming out.' So I've got to take another apartment. So she comes out. So we've got this secret thing, with two families, with the children, and I can't take it, after a week I tell my wife, and then she goes back on a Greyhound bus, you know. Anyway, so we drive across America, and we realise we've got to do 500 miles a day, and we take it in turns, every 100 miles, changing over, you know, and we go across the Nevada Desert, we go across the Salt Lake, Salt Lake City, and go over the, the Rocky Mountains, you know. We go past Indian reservations, but The Alberts won't stop, you know, and we go by, we go by, what's that place, where Wild Bill Hickock was killed, and I wanted to go there, you know. Anyway, we get back to, we get back to New York, and then we come back to England again, you know. So that ended in, in disaster really, but it was an adventure.

Mm.

[End of F8076 Side B]

[F8077 Side A]

OK, we're on.

Well one thing, while we're in New York, the first time we went to America, at Blue Angel, *Beyond the Fringe* happened to be on in New York, and as we knew them all, and they were agreeable to this, we had like an animal cage outside the theatre as people came in, and we were sitting inside, as like, English gentlemen having tea and crumpets, you know. And, just like this is having[???] recently, as an example[???], you know. So we did our little happening event thing outside there, you know. Right.

That was when you went across on the boat...

On the Queen Mary.

...when Lenny Bruce had invited you and all that sort of thing, is it?

Yes, on the Queen Mary, with Lenny Bruce, that's right, yes.

So you went twice to America then, did you, you went that...?

Well, went to New York, and then we went, after we'd done *British Rubbish*, we took *British Rubbish* to San Francisco, and that was, that was a few years after, after having gone to New York, you know.

Right, mm. So, was that the sort of end of the relationship with The Alberts then, is that what you were saying?

No no. No no.

It went after that?

Well, the end with The Alberts came, because they had become fossilised. It was a strange mixture of Victoriana and Victoria clothes and props, but playing Twenties jazz, you know.

Mm.

And they were stuck in that time warp. And I wanted to move on, I was doing, I was doing, oh my machines, and I was into science fiction, and, so I suggested... And they were wanting to do things like, they...we'd done *The Three Musketeers*, and then they wanted to do *Beau Geste*, a piss-take of *Beau Geste*. Then they wanted to do, there's an incredible film, four-hour film made on the life of Napoleon and the Battle of Waterloo, they wanted to do Waterloo with me as Napoleon. And I said, 'Well, let's not take these things that other people have done and change them; let's do our own particular thing.' I said, 'Let's try and get together and work on a performance in which we all agree on a common theme that runs through it, but we each have our separate scenes that we write, and in a particular scene...' No, you see with *The Three Musketeers*, the lady that directed *Beyond the Fringe*, Eleanor Fazan, she directed *The Three Musketeers*. And she was lovely, because, she wasn't like a bossy director, she was like a mother figure, trying to bring out the best in her children. And so, we would work with her, and she'd like, she wouldn't be getting us to change, but she'd be like, just, bringing out the best in us. And so, we asked her if she would, she would do this new performance, in which she wasn't sure about but she did, but didn't want her name put on it, you know. And so, we each had our different scenes. I did the first scene, Jill did the second scene, and each of The Alberts did an individual scene, in which...it's very autobiographical, in a way, but still in the science fiction theme, in which, if they wanted to, they could bring in other people but they would be the main person in that scene you see. So it started off with me walking on the stage. Although we'd worked a script, I was talking ad lib and they really hated this, I'd start talking about all sorts of things, and then I'd gradually start with the actual thing, and they thought, when's he going to start, when's he going to start? you know. So I was this sort of mad professor in my laboratory, with my dentist's chair, and I was telling the audience that, I believe there's life in outer space, and I'd made a machine to communicate, and I've had some response. And I've had some communication from this creature, I don't know what it is like, and it's given me the plans to make this, this

machine, which is going to sort of reveal themself, you know. So I got this huge box with this big propeller on the front, which is like a Maltese Cross, and, I'm sitting here, and I've got to use my own magnetic powers with cables going through, to make this thing, it was called a Materialiser, to make this thing manifest itself you see. And so all the while, zhoon zhoon zhoon. And then, this picture of this beautiful naked woman, this sort of slide, is projected onto this... It starts to spin, so it picks up, it's like a spinning film screen, but because it's a Maltese Cross, there's gaps in it, and it's Jill naked with beautiful red hair, like that. But then she slips through from the back, which is another screen made of elastic, so you don't see her; takes the same position, and then, the lights are brought up on her, and they're dimmed on the slide, and it's open, and she's come from nowhere. It's just like *Star Trek*, how they materialise, it's incredible. I fall in love with her, rush to her, break all the cables; as I rush towards her she disappears. She's gone. So then it starts. I've got to search the universe, time and space, to find her again you see. And in each of the sequences, she is there as, as another persona, of herself, you know. So one she's the strong woman leading a revolt, then she's the temptress, and she's different things. So she's exploring her own identity within this. And also The Alberts and things are, you know. So I get into this, this rocket ship, which then takes off, goes off into the flies, and then on a screen above, a cartoon, it goes up and it comes down, and then, it opens up, the capsule falls, and it lands in the Pacific Ocean. It all opens up like a desert island, and I'm in this spacesuit. And then, a whole load of pirate ships come on, these huge pirate ships on wheels, all come on, having a gun battle, because we've gone back. Because Douglas, he wants to be a pirate captain you see, and we've got to fit it into this science fiction thing. And then, they're all firing cannons, all got sails and things. They're about twenty foot long, all on wheels, and they turn round and you can see all the crew hiding inside, you know. And Douglas is the captain, sort of whipping people and things like that. And Jill, she starts the mutiny. And he has to walk the plank, and he lands in the Pacific Ocean and he swims as though he's on the desert island with me, you know. And then, then, we're on this sort of desert island, it's not really the Pacific, we're on some sort of planet or something, it all changes. And then, we... So the trapdoor opens up in the stage, and we fall through, and we land, we land on some planet which is called the Doubly Planet. And Tony Gray, who, he's had this identity crisis, he identifies himself with Errol Flynn, and he's decided, because he can't, he can't remember lines very well, he's made another face of

himself on the back of his head with his back to the audience, and he's a bit like he's double faced, because he's a bit like that anyway, and he doesn't know who he is quite. But he's also reading the scripts, unseen by the audience. And we've got a pair of twins, Errol also in it, and there's all things to do with doubles and things like that. And at one point we get into this, this machine that mixes us all up, and we did an animated photographic thing of all our bodies, heads, bodies and legs being mixed up. And then somehow, I think we fall through the planet then. And then we bring in our Russian friend, and he's a stranded Russian astronaut, landed on the planet, and to make himself feel at home he's built a replica of Red Square, you know, with the Kremlin, and, with the Kremlin, and that lovely St Basil's, that lovely church. So he... I can't remember what happens there. And then, then somehow or other we get to somewhere else which, I built these huge sort of spacecraft in space. They're all performing upside-down, the performers. I can't remember quite, you know. But, so the first scene I start off with, and the last scene is Jill's, and, we finally meet. What I've actually done is, after initially meeting her, I set off on a quest. I've gone back in time, and when I finally meet her, I'm only about two seconds from when I first saw her in the first place. (laughs) Oh. And so, we meet and fall in love, and because it's her scene, she doesn't want The Alberts to be in it, she only wants me in, and of course we've all been in their other scenes, so they're all getting a pissed off, you know. So we come out, and we do this beautiful, this beautiful Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance. And Eleanor Fazan, who's also been, she's a choreographer, she worked up this beautiful dance routine, you know. And so we do this beautiful dance together. And The Alberts are all hiding behind the scenery. I find out later that while we're on stage, they're looking round, pulling funny faces to the audience, and so you've got all this...(laughing) Oh. So, I've tried to take them into the present, but, my eldest son John, who's been doing electronic music, he comes in as a technician, and he's doing all electronic music in places. And they're still playing their old jazz. So it's a terrible hybrid of a performance. And I decide never to sort of work with them again really, because I realise, they're holding me back. I've got to get off, you know. And so, we never worked together, we never worked together after that, you know. I mean...

So that was the last thing, that was the last thing you did? Where did you do the last, where were you performing that then?

That was at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, where Joan Littlewood...

Ah.

Joan Littlewood had always wanted us to work with her.

Mm.

Well, we had realised that she was very much a manipulator, and she would like to cause conflict between the performers, and she put things up on the noticeboard that someone said something about them which they hadn't, and caused arguments amongst them. And that was almost a case of people losing their confidence, and breaking them down, and she'd come in as a very strong director. So although she asked them to come, we didn't want her to direct us, and our mother figure, Eleanor Fazan, came in, who's a lovely lady, she came in and directed us. I think, I think when we did *The Three Musketeers*, Tony Gray wrote a love song for me to sing with Jill, but he didn't like my voice, and so he got the guy who was the lead role in *The Rocky Horror Show* to sing that, and I refused to allow it. This is the lady I'm in love with, I'm singing a love...I don't want to be miming someone else. You see it all had to be real, you know, for me. Yes, so that's the last time.

Right, so you broke off with that.

And so, I realised that, in performing like a science fiction thing, in the, in a theatre, you had all your machinery and your props and things. And incidentally, watching that show was a guy, now what's his name? Oh. Anyway, he went off...

What, a critic?

Pardon?

Is it a critic, you're thinking about?

Who?

A critic?

No no, a performer.

Oh right.

He, he went off, and within a few moments he started his own science fiction thing, you know. And then later on, there was a lovely guy who wrote a thing that was at the ICA called *The Warp*, in which this guy directed, and he used lots of ideas that I'd... What happened was that we decided to do our own science fiction show, which, we didn't have any technicians, we did all the music and things ourselves, and tape recorded it all, and lights. If I wanted a spotlight, I'd point an ultrasonic transmitter at the lights, it would come on. I turned on a Switchmat and things like that. And what we did, in art centres, no seating, we built all the screens and all the sets and things all around, three feet from the wall, with projectors and things like that, and the Materialiser all came into it. And the audience sat on large, big, like beanbag things, and they would have to turn and swivel. Because we're performing at different places. And we're running round behind the scenery, changing costumes, and appearing and things like that, and at different times film would come up while we were changing. And that was called *Stella Superstar and her Amazing Galactic Adventures*. And we did that, we did that up in the Durham Arts Centre where Julian Spalding was. And, it was basically very autobiographic I suppose. It was like a young space princess that was being pursued by this sort of, spirit of the Black Hole, and I had this incredible costume, it was all black, in which... It was like an amoeba, with this shape where my head was, and my arms and my legs. And I was trying to follow her and capture her. And it was like, she was a young lady experiencing her sexual feelings for the first time, and I was like, a fear of sex and things like that, you know. And lots of times we went into beautiful, what [inaudible] all like film and telecine and things like that, you know.

Mm.

Well, when they did *The Warp*, this guy used this idea of having everything all around and people on these big sort of cushion type things, you know, because, after we'd done it on one occasion, a guy who was his set designer was in the audience and saw it and was complimenting, and he used the same sort of idea. I can't remember what the guy's name was. But, I don't like the guy, because he's what I call a really, a pure rip-off merchant really, but... I mean, you see it's a funny thing, people think I'm a bit paranoid or sensitive, but people, people, they see things, and they're influenced by things. Now, I... And they say you can't do it really, but I try not to be influenced, so I don't, I don't... If I feel I'm doing something that, I suddenly see that someone else is doing, I steer away from it. I try to keep myself as pure... But they say you can't do, you know.

Mm.

Now you see, everything, I mean, people have different moralities, you know. In the advertising world, everything is up for grabs, every image ever made, every idea is there to be used, you know what I mean? I have a certain morality of making, doing my own personal things, and so, if I felt I was being influenced, I would steer away from it. Now, I've been what I call, like a beachcomber, so I, I read medical books, scientific magazines, all sorts of things about the stars, the planets, magic, all sorts of things. And all fragments of tiny bits and pieces get fused together in like an assemblage, you know. Now other people, they can't do that. What they have to do, instead of all this flotsam and jetsam, and all these itsy-bitsy, tiny little things, not ideas but fragments, tiny fragments, what they do, they have to, like go down on the beach and find like a washed-up washing machine, all ready made, and then, that's their work, do you see what I mean? And that is the sort of, the difference, you know. So, that's the way that I see things. So, I've forgotten what I was talking about.

You were talking about, the... Breaking away from The Alberts.

That's right, yes.

And then the first thing that you, the Stella Super*, what was it,* Stella Superstar.

Well...

That was the first thing you did with Jill was it, on your own? Was it...well, was it?

No.

Wasn't the first thing?

I'm not sure.

Just you two did that though?

Pardon?

Just the two of you worked on that?

Just the two of us. We made it, and we...we... We were our own technicians and things. Because you see, with technicians, they want cues.

Mm.

When do I come in, what word? We'll we're, we're improvising as well; only we know, you know what I mean?

Mm.

So we have to do our things ourselves. Well then, different things were happening. There was a whole metamorphosis taking place in me. You don't suddenly change, it can take ten years, when you're merging from one thing to the other. And, I can't remember when it was now, but...

When was the...when was the Stella Superstar...

Stella Superstar...

When was that then? 1968? [inaudible] be late Sixties?

Incredible Whotsit, *Magic Fun Factory*. Oh that was '74, that was.

Oh it was quite later on.

But then...

So what were you doing between '68...the end of The Alberts and the...?

Well, there were different things that happened. I was very much aware of education, and how children are treated. And I started going to schools and things where I wanted to give children freedom of choice. So I'd take in piles and piles of every bits of material I could think of, and let it all come rushing in, and they'd start doing the most amazing things without me mentioning a word to them, you know. There'd be a stage with lights, and some would be up in the microphone going, 'Oh, fuck this and fuck that,' and, 'My name is so-and-so.' It's very important to state your name. There'd be an area doing ultraviolet painting, there'd be bits of materials and glue. There'd be a dressing-up box, they'd be dressing up in all sorts of things, and boys would take their clothes off and dress up as women with lipstick on, and nail varnish, go home, and their mothers would say, 'What are you doing with my son?' you know. But... And so...

How did you manage to do that sort of work? Did somebody ask you to do it, or did you...?

I suppose they must have done, yes. And then... So we bought an old army marquee, and we called it *The Laceys' Incredible*... No, *The Laceys' Fun Factory*. And, we'd also go into schools and things doing, like school hall. I found that, I also... You'd have bits lit and bits dark, because shy children, they wouldn't want to be doing things publicly, they'd be in the corner doing tiny little things and making things. And, I noticed that when we went into schools, all the staff would be looking through the doors, the windows and things, and at some point they came in and stop it all. And

they'd never seen the children so creative. And they'd start taking the children away and getting the children to act in different little performances that they were guiding them in, you know. It was really appalling. And so... Then I was asked to make a thing by Camden Council, which we called *The Laceys' Incredible Whatsit Machine*. It was like a huge climbing frame, made out of aircraft [inaudible], much larger than a climbing frame, with floors and tunnels, and little walls, and they could all build things in it. And like children in blocks of flats, living in blocks. We'd go to the precincts around blocks of flats in, round King's Cross area, and there'd be piles of toys and all sorts of things, take them home if you want to, and they'd be building with cloth and ropes, they'd be building, part of it would be like a pirate ship, and they'd be making little homes inside. And it was really, really incredible. We did that for a few years, which you might call community arts I suppose, until I felt that I was, we were neglecting ourselves, because we were literally servicing with materials and things for everyone to be creative and yet we were doing nothing for ourselves. So we had to stop that, we had to stop that after a bit. And then, then we...then we... So, then we did another science fiction... Yes, no, it all overlaps rather. But going back to, going back to 1967, and I was asked to have an exhibition in Cardiff at the Arts Council Gallery, and so I piled all my things into a van, and we drove down on the A4. And we passed this incredible place at Avebury, there's this huge mound of earth, and it's...an arrow said, 'This way to Avebury stone circle'. Stone circle? We drove[???] this huge stone circle, you know. And, this was on the way to Cardiff. And who made these things? They were Stone Age men, you know. They started doing research, and, they're not these barbaric savages, like cartoons of a man with long hair and skin dragging his woman by blonde hair into the cave, you know. They were these beautiful people, and they'd lived like North American Indians in harmony with the earth and things. And then we started going to other sites, we went to Stonehenge and didn't think of Stonehenge, and then we went to Maiden Castle, this beautiful earth works, and the Cerne Abbas giant. And, all sorts of... And then, then we started, we started... I read a book on dowsing, and started learning dowsing, dowsing for water and things. And, lots of funny coincidences would be happening, like we'd go to a meeting of dowsers and then we'd walk across Hampstead Heath to an ancient site, and we'd be walking past where I'd been dowsing, but hadn't been able to dig up the ground, and I was walking alongside this guy who had written the book that I'd read about dowsing, and he's dowsing. Roger went over and he

confirmed where I found water, you know. All these coincidences and things started happening. And then, we started, we started... Oh, we did a thing called *A Journey Through a Black Hole To a Coloured Planet*, in which I made a huge inflatable, thirty foot by forty foot, and children took off their shoes and people, not just children, went inside on this sort of floor, with this sort of spacecraft thing in which there were projections of planets and stars. And, they put on these black costumes, simple costumes that had sort of, dullish coloured patterns on. And then, Jill's voice would come out suddenly, 'and then there'd be the darkness,' and all the lights would go, all the children would scream. Then they'd be taken through the universe, all these planets and stars. And they get to a black hole, somehow we simulated, and then it got to this kind of planet. And then all the UV lights came up, and all their costumes started to glow, and then the floor started to inflate, and they were painted all with the flora and fauna of the planet and they're all moving around. It's long before bouncy castles. And they're all moving around on that. And then they're brought back to Earth again, you know. So that was that. And then we started doing, we started doing performances called *Obsessions and Fantasies*, in which, I would for instance, I had this obsession about going to the lavatory and picking up germs, being a hypochondriac. I put paper on the seat, and I put paper on the water so a turd didn't wet my bum when it splashed. I pulled the chain first with a bit of lavatory paper so I didn't pick up germs from the handle. So flush away any spiders and insects, chase all the flies out, you know. And then sit on the toilet with my foot on some bricks, because I read that if you sit in, like the field workers crouch, you get all the, you empty the lower gut and you don't get cancer of the bowel and things like that, you know. Which is in this film, *The Lacey Rituals*. So I did that on a tea-chest in my underpants. And we were invited to do it at Farnham, Farnham Foundation. So, I'm sitting there, I'm doing that. And then another thing was, we'd made this film called *Double Exposure*, where Jill had laid down naked on black velvet, and I'm on the camera, and we'd got so many minutes, and she is moving and responding as though we're making love, so she's moving as though I'm...imagine I'm caressing her and things. And then after a time I call out, 'Orgasm,' and she responds as though she's having an organism. Then we wound the film back in the camera. And then I knelt over where she'd been laying. And then moving my hands over nothing but where her breasts had been, and you know, and then sort of, playing with her clitoris. And then, because my penis was all very floppy and then I'd... I'm going away, and then

she calls out at the same time, 'Orgasm.' And of course when this comes out, it's fantastic, because it's double exposed, and it's like two ghosts making love, you can see one body through the other. And when, when I finish, I lay down where she was laying, and our bodies and our eyes and our faces all merge and fuse together. And that was beautiful. And then, Jill came out and did *Science Fiction Striptease*. She came out like a mechanical robot in this sort of metal thing, which she gradually took off, and then underneath she had a thing, all in beautiful ultraviolet, things like that. Then she took another costume, all in silver things, and we had strobes come on. And then she finally became naked. And then she went behind the screen, did a double take, and I reached behind and pulled out her skin, because science fiction script is, you go beyond, you go right down you see. So I pulled out her skin, then I looked behind, oh my God! and pulled out her skeleton you see. Well... So there were things like that. *Science Fiction Striptease*, me sitting semi-naked, pretending to go to the lavatory, and *Double Exposure*. Well, about a month later, knock at the door. 'I say, we're from the *News of the World*, we hear you've done this performance at Farnham School of Art, you know, can you tell us a bit about it?' And me very innocently, we've been doing this and doing that. Of course on the Sunday when it came out, it was really terrible. What happened, there was 100 students there, and they were all thoroughly enjoying it. A girl, I don't know whether she was stoned or what, but she had gone to a dinner party about a week later and there was a reporter from the *News of the World* there, and she said, 'God! I went to this performance, Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce. Do you know what, he dragged one of the students out from the crowd, he stripped her and fucked her in front of everybody.' She'd merged all these things together. 'He's taken all his clothes off, taken all her clothes off, and made love to her,' you know. And so, this was all in the paper. They'd described everything we said when we told them what had happened. And then, everything descended on us. There were people phoning us up saying, 'They ought to put bombs under people like you.' We were accused of, you know, of, what's the word? Of, corrupting the morals of the students. They phoned up the principal, and he said, 'Well we didn't pay for it, the Arts Council paid for it.' But of course they didn't, and of course there was a number of journalists there trying to find, you know, taxpayers' money going to all these things. And so it was all in the papers, it was really terrifying. And, *Daily Mail*, all sorts of people. I refused to speak to the press, and then someone said, 'I'm from the local paper,' and I thought, well I'll speak to the local paper, and it turned out to

be another national paper, you know. And we didn't work for about a year, it really knocked us sideways. And then, once again, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, we then gradually put together a whole new science fiction performance, which is very beautiful, but unfortunately, we've only got telecine inserts, but, long before Thatcher came, we showed slides first of all, of the whole history of mankind, going right through Stone Age men, all the different things, Industrial Revolution, all very quick-fire stuff, leading right up to the present day. Visualising a, what do they call the society? Not democratic. You know. There's a word isn't there. A society, where it was like a police state.

Mm.

And we were looked upon as deviants, and like-minded people. And, because by this time we had started to do things to do with ley lines and rituals and the sign of the moon and things, they put together all these people like us, and we were all given spacesuits, put into a spacecraft and exiled into space, and sent to the moon. Computer controlled from London. We had manuals in the cupboard, but they were flying us from London. And, we were injected under our like, Union Jacks on our blue spacesuits, we were injected with, with, what do they call it now? So you don't get diseases and things. Inoculations. In case we pick up germs on the moon and things, you know. But... Are you going to change over?

[End of F8077 Side A]

[F8077 Side B]

Fantastic film I reckon anyway.

Oh right.

So, you'll know, you first heard it here.

Carry on.

Well... No, I'd been reading about Chile, what they did with their deviants. They got a lot in there in that sports stadium and just killed them, tortured and killed them. Then there was bad press from, you know, international community. So these are different things. Exiled them. One went to Canada; a year later, funny car accident. So got rid of them in funny, like accidental ways. And then I thought about the Indians living in the jungle, you know, in Chile or Brazil and things. And I know there's a natural thing when the white man comes, he brings in flu and different things, but there were cases where they went in, said to these natives, 'Well we might bring flu, so we're going to inoculate you,' but they inoculate them with flu so they'd die, to get rid of them. So that's what they did to us on this spacecraft. We'd been inoculated against these things. But anyway, we don't know about that yet. So we get to the moon, then there's a... We did this all ourselves, we're switching on our own film projectors, lacing up things, putting in slides; I'm playing on a synthesiser. And we're bringing in filmed inserts, we're changing screens, just the two of us doing the whole thing. And then, then there's a mission control, 'Sorry, sorry chaps, the computers are malfunction. I'm afraid you're going to miss the moon.' We realise they never wanted us to get to the moon. And then, in other parts of the spacecraft, these voices come in saying, 'I say, we're all feeling rather ill,' and they all start dying, because we realise that they've been injected with these diseases. So, we go through like a tunnel, and then we appear on film, and all these bodies laying around. And then we pick up a male and pick up a female on little wheeled stretcher things, wheel them in, and then we operate on them. And we take the eggs from the female, and the sperm from the male, and then we incubate them, or, fertilise them, then we put them in little incubators to grow these babies. And then we start searching,

looking for a planet that can sustain life. And on the way we come across this planet that's all exploding, and it's Earth. Since we've left, Earth has destroyed itself, and we're the only two survivors, you know. And then we find a planet where all the parameters are right, so we send these babies in little spacecraft that go shoooo shoooo, and they go off to seed the planet. And we go on, because we can't land. And then gradually the lights get, we're making the lights dim, and we lay down, and then, are we dying or are we falling asleep? And it ends like that, you know. And, various people saw that, and about a year later *Blake's Seven* came out, which I think, that also starts a bit where people are exiled into space, you know. So, so that... We called it *Exiliad*, because it was a merger of the word 'exile' and like, Homer's *Iliad* which is that epic voyage, so we called it *Exiliad*, you know. And that was really, that was our big, main science fiction thing we did, because we were... You see what happened, when I had my retrospective in '75 at the Whitechapel, something happened which was to change my whole life. And that was, a man I didn't know... We were doing things like *Obsessions and Fantasies* outside at places, and he said, 'Well we, I come from Barsham near Bungay, we do mediaeval fairs. I don't know whether you'd like to come and do something.' Because we were now doing things which, looking back on it, were like science fiction and magic, were like science fiction alchemists. Like we had a like, a spacecraft would arrive, and we'd get out this little creature which was a beautiful cake made of icing sugar, and we'd cut it up and give to everybody. And I wanted to do... This is when coincidences started coming in, we started to talk a lot about, and that is, we're living in this old factory in Hackney, we're the, we're the caretakers there and all the artists don't live there, but we live there. And I've discovered that there's an old church tower built by the Knights Templars in Hackney, and there is a pathway and roads that are in a straight line through Martello Street, used to be called Towler[???] Street, with the Tower of London, and we realised it's on a ley line. Anyway, we were doing this performance on a Saturday, and I'm in my barn on the Wednesday, and we've got to think of another five- or ten-minute item. And I'm sitting there thinking. And suddenly this flash of inspiration comes into my head, which is a thing called the *Headless Woman*, that I'd seen at a funfair when I was a child, a woman sitting there in a big wooden chair, moving with her arms and legs, she's got no head at all, there's just a bit of cotton wool. There's all tubes going in with liquids, water and blood and, blue blood going out and red blood coming in. *The Headless Woman*. But somehow, I knew

how to do it. I knew how to do it. And that is by tipping her head back, Jill tipped her head back, and then you had these pipes, and two pipes come along like this, like at ninety degrees, but they've got mirrors glued in them that are, fit in, so you don't see their mirrors. Black velvet behind, black velvet at the sides. So these mirrors are, they're reflecting the black velvet that's here, that you think is, the black velvet is there, and they're of course covering what you can little see of the head you see. So, I made it on the Wednesday, or the Thursday and Friday, performed it on the Saturday. And, on the following Tuesday, a postcard arrived from a complete stranger in Canada. It was at the time where artists were sending postcards, lists of artists [inaudible], postal sculpture, collages on bits of paper. And this postcard arrived on the following Tuesday from a complete stranger in Canada, of an engraving from a Victorian book, I don't know, two women, a man with something behind, cutting a woman, a head off one woman, and putting it on the other woman. The woman's sitting there without a head. I looked at the postmark, and that was posted on the Wednesday. The same day that he posted this, this idea came, ping! you know. Which I think goes beyond the realms of chance, really does. Really does.

Mm.

It must do, it must do. I've never had a postcard before and never one since, anything like that, but that came and that timing was really perfect, you know. And it's also made me think about this thing, the Victorian poets talked about getting in touch with the muse.

Mm.

Now what is the muse? The muse is sort of inspiration. And I think the muse is some sort of, what I think now, and you may think this is crazy, but I do believe now in some sort of telepathy. Now, you've got scientists all over the world, and there's a think which they call the state of the art, you've got inventions and all different components all being invented, so you've got somewhere in Russia, somewhere in England and somewhere in America, and all much about the same time they invent the radio, you know. Or they invent television. And they all say, 'My God! I've been ripped off by him or him or him.' But maybe... And scientists do talk about this, they

have problems, they go to bed, and they wake up in the morning and that problem's been solved. And could it be that one scientist who solved it has transmitted it by telepathy to another, you see? So I do know, and there's been so many incredible cases; I don't read it in books, because I'm not, I'm not a religious person, you know, I'm not a esoteric person basically, I'm not a, what they call, like a psychic person, you know. I don't...like people read all these books, and they all get carried... This is all, it's all in the field, what...first-hand, it happens, you know.

Mm.

Anyway, so, he says, this guy, 'Can you come up and do this performance?'

Is this the chap from Canada?

No no. No.

Oh no, this is the one...right, this is the one...

This is this chap...

The card came just...

This chap that came to the Whitechapel.

Right, yes.

And so, we turn up, we turn up in Barsham, but things have changed, because after having gone down on the A4 and seen Avebury, and then read all about North American Indians, and done the Indians in the park with the Bradford students, and lived as an Indian for ten days sort of thing, running round early in the morning with a bow and arrow, and seeing the sun rise for the first time in London, all the houses and buildings, but in like, Hyde Park, see the sun rise, and the birds, and the trees. Things were starting to happen. And, I'd gone from wanting to be a pilot, when all the space missions were on, I'd identified with them, because I nearly got into the Fleet Air

Arm, they had been test pilots who had been in the naval branch of the American Air Force. And, that had moved on to becoming a member of the British Interplanetary Society, to then becoming interested in the stars and the moon and the sun. And then joining the British Astronomical Society. And then, thinking all about North American Indians, and how Stone Age man had lived, at one with the elements. And I thought, it was about the time of the Whitechapel, you know, there was all these machines and that, but there's something happening in me which is changing. And, we're still the same people, we're homo sapiens, they were homo sapiens. They were sensitive to all these natural, natural things. We, we haven't changed, we haven't mutated, we're still there. Is there some way we can somehow, I can somehow get in touch? And, I didn't know how, and I didn't know why, but, somehow or other, I knew I had to do something with the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. And so we went to Barsham, where we did some of our, what I call science fiction, alchemy performances. And then I did something which was quite different. I set up, like an animal with poles, and a thing like the spine, and a skull and a bit of red fur in the mouth. And then, I lit fire with a magnifying glass from the sun. Then I had a tray of earth, well it's a tray that's on the shelf up there, a tray of earth. And I burnt some hay, and scattered the ash, I fertilised the soil. And they had a big piece of cotton wool with a wet sponge inside, brought it across, had a bit of jagged metal, like lightening, stuck it in, squeezed the sponge and the water came down to fertilise everything. Then underneath the earth I had wheat hidden, and I brought up the wheat. So I'd done earth there, fire and water, and fertility. And at the height of the drought in 1976, August Bank Holiday, the fair was full of people. Within two hours there was a violent thunderstorm, and everyone accused me of doing a weather sympathetic magic. A group of Christians came up, freaked out, started singing hymns at the top of their voices, you know. People wouldn't speak to me. It was incredible.

Mm.

This is a mediaeval fair, no electricity, everyone walking around in mediaeval dress in acoustic positions[???], really beautiful, you know. Anyway, so, we've done this. And this came into, also came into *Exiliad*, because, we were also, apart from the thing at Farnham, we were also doing these rituals, so we were looked upon as

deviants and things like that, you know. So that came into that. So, they were accusing me of causing it to happen, and I thought, well... And special powers you see. I thought, no no. So we went back to London, and I bought a little unit there, round the house, I got several, they're like what I call a little weather station, they're Russian, and they measure air temperature, barometric pressure and humidity. And the next fair we went to, we didn't have any plan of what to do, and we set this up, and every fifteen minutes a friend wrote down, like at two o'clock, the temperature, the barometric pressure, that, you know. And then at some point, it was quite cloudy, oh, I had this gut need to celebrate the sun. I had to see the sun. And so I made a spiral of hay, set fire to it, and walked barefooted through the ashes, getting nearer and nearer to the centre, thinking of the sun. A little group gathered round, and when I got to the centre, it took half an hour to do, the clouds parted, the sun came out, and everybody applauded. [clapping] And oh, fantastic, fantastic, you know. Well, we got back to London, and we took down all these details my friend had kept, and on graph paper we drew it all out. Well, we did this at I think about four o'clock. About five to four, I got this need for the sun. Well, on the graph, half-past three, temperature's falling, humidity's rising; quarter to, it's going up; and about five to four, temperature suddenly goes up, and humidity drops you know, and of course then when the sun comes out the temperature goes up. And it all fitted in with that, you know. And so, what is happening is that I'm becoming sensitive. You see I thought, when I tried to find, become sensitive, I wasn't thinking about the weather, I was thinking about variations in the earth's magnetic field, which does vary, or variations in gravity which can vary, you know. But out of the blue, out of the blue, came the weather, you know. And what I was doing, and this happens so many times, and in a ritual I'd be doing, I did one in Cambridge, at a place called Christ Pieces, the clouds are going in and out. And it was filmed actually by, I gave a camera to a person in the crowd, on 8mm. And every time, it was cloudy, but every time I just intuitively wanted to make fire, up came the magnifying glass and out came the sun. But then it all started to go wrong if I started anticipating. Before I started thinking about going to...I would then start looking up at the clouds, thinking, is the cloud...? And then it didn't happen. It only happened when I subconsciously just flowed with it, you know. And of course, when, when I'd had my... Then I, then, there were these coincidences. I started to think about, had other coincidences happened, you know? And when I had my retrospective, I had a photograph of Victor Musgrove on the wall

as a dedication to this man who had given me my first exhibition. There was another man who used to run a gallery called The Portal Gallery, that asked me to make one piece, which I put in his window, I had a photograph of him. And while the exhibition was on, he came to see the exhibition upstairs, didn't know mine was on, and Victor Musgrove also came, not knowing my...he'd come to see an exhibition in a small room of South American carpets. And so, it was as though we were magnetically, some telepathy again you see. Which was incredible. And then we had a, we had our first exhibition about this sort of thing called Ancient Forces I think, at the Acme Gallery, and on the wall upstairs I had all these amazing coincidences that had happened. But when I had my retrospective at the Whitechapel, the Arts Council had phoned me up, asking me to move it to Edinburgh, and I had this aeroplane fuselage in the exhibition, because I'd built this Comet airliner but it didn't have the smell of a real plane, so I had this real plane fragment there. But it didn't have the jettison seats. Before the Arts Council phoned me, I phoned up all day trying to get jettison seats, and scrapyards near London Airport, different ones, Leeds. Finished up, a man ten miles north of Edinburgh had seven in his backyard, £7 each. Put the phone down. How I get to Edinburgh? And then the phone rang, and it was Edinburgh phoning me for the first time, out of the blue, 'Can you come up tomorrow and discuss your exhibition coming to Edinburgh?' I said, 'Well look, I can't afford it.' They said, 'We'll pay your fare.' So, I borrowed the money for the fare from a friend, and I went up, had the meeting, bought the jettison seats for £7 each, and borrowed a van, got them back to the station in Edinburgh, got them back to King's Cross, in a taxi home, and I had them back there the following day. Amazing. Really was amazing, you know. And so, we had this, all these coincidences at the Acme Gallery written up. And then, all members of the public coming in... Oh I decided to recreate, like the fair, so I put polythene on the gallery, covered the gallery in real grass, which you had to mow every day. I used to make towers at the fairs, made a tower. They said, 'Do what you like here,' so I said, 'Oh cut a hole in the ceiling, take all the glass out of the fanlight.' So the tower went right up through the roof and out the top. And I built a spiral ramp so I could run up it and do different performances on it. And one day the door opened, and a drunk Irishman came in, what you might call a wino. [drunken Irish voice] 'Oh, what's this all about, what's this all about man, what's this all about?' And, then he leant back against the wall. He said something about Egyptians, and someone had sent him a picture of the

Pyramids which is in the corner of the room which he didn't see. He said, 'Pyrarids' or 'Egyptians.' And then he... Now these seats were called Martin-Baker ejector seats. Then at the top of his voice he cried out, 'Martin-Baker ejector seats.' And then he... I said, 'Were you in the Air Force?' He said, 'I never know[???],' and he staggered out. Oh I said to Jill, 'He's been in before, he's been upstairs.' She said, 'It isn't written on the wall upstairs, I forgot to write it down, about the ejector seats.' So what was it? Incredible. I mean that is unbelievable isn't it, really? That really is. Now if that isn't telepathy, I don't... And so I think this man, he's drunk, he's living rough, he's...he's living in, on a park bench, he's getting into the elements, you know, and he's floating and he's going through Covent Garden, and he's just picking up on things, you know. And it really was incredible, to cry out, 'Martin-Baker ejector seats.' And it wasn't written up on the wall, we'd forgotten to write it up, you know. So that, that was absolutely...

And then he just disappeared back out into the ether did he?

Then he disappeared outside, you know. And, as I say, the *Observer* were going to do a colour supplement, they'd got as far as the pub on the corner and got pissed and went home; a photographer came along, never appeared, slipped off the curb a hundred yards from the gallery, broke his ankle, finished up in hospital. And it seemed to be, you know, that London is always thinking about money and other things; these are sort of, esoteric, country things, you know, and, primitive, I don't know what, you know what I mean? They're not... You know, mumbo-jumbo and all that sort of thing, you know, they weren't really interested. But lots of coincidences happened, like, I'd be talking about someone I hadn't seen for ten years, this guy Stevenson[ph] down in Exeter, and suddenly a hand would come on my shoulder and he'd suddenly arrive, you know. And I hadn't sent him an invitation. But the timing of things, how things fit together, was incredible. But, of course that went on and on and on. And that really... So, we're living in London, in this old factory, and we're getting, I'm getting ill going back to London in the city, and we know we've got to live in East Anglia somehow, friends up here say, 'You've got come up and live here,' but we've got no money, you know. I'm trying to persuade my father to sell his house, and so we can all live together in the country, but, he...

Your parents are still alive then, then?

My father's still alive, yes. And he's been used to a London garden, and he comes up here, he says, 'What have you got all this garden for? You don't need all this garden, you're not growing flowers,' and things like that, you know. And I'd say, 'Well if we can buy a place with your money, and, we'll look after you and you can have your own like, grandfather flat type thing.' But he didn't like the idea.

And your mother, is she still alive?

Pardon?

Was your mother still around then?

No my mother had died.

Right.

Yes. Had a stroke and then gone into hospital to relieve my father for a fortnight and caught flu and died.

Mm.

But, yes, so, he... We wanted our own space, and we thought it would be great for him to have his own space, but he wanted to live with us. And so that never materialised. And then, we were asked to do a performance at a fair, at Eye in Suffolk, and, some guys had made a thing which they called The Mercurial Harp. There was a book written by some guy or other about sort of, some sort of, something to do with the planets where you could break them down into numbers and circles. Anyway, they put all these posts in the ground, six concentric circles, with coconut shells, half coconut shells on the top, and then, catgut, like you have in a double bass, stretched across the top. I went in with Jill and we did an initiation sort of, earth, air, fire and water, and things with mercury, because it was a thing to do with the plant Mercury. People were going in there doing t'ai chi, and if you put your ear to the

post, it was like an Aeolian harp with the wind all singing away. And we had our tepee, and decided to do a thing to do with the, with a dragon, so I made a dragon out of some dead bits of oak branches and leaves. And then, also wanting to be a wishing thing to wish to live in the country. So, the tepee was our, our mobile little home. So I tied ropes round the dragon. I'd brought earth up from London, and I scattered earth. And the tepee and the dragon were all lined with the factory in London. And then, we put ropes around to stop people walking into our tepee, and an American came along and he said, [American accent] 'Can I step over your rope and see inside your tepee?' And I said, 'Yes, certainly.' He says, 'I've got to get your permission, because this is a magic circle.' So, I said, 'Yes, you can step in by all means.' And he called out to Jill, and she was making a cup of coffee with water in a saucepan, and she jogged her arm and spilt all this boiling water over her, over her leg, which we quickly put water on and covered up. Took it off later on in the afternoon, and it was a sort of a, whatever you call it, a blister, funny old blister, which, it was just like a dragon. Where the eye of the dragon was, there was a white spot that hadn't got burnt. There was where the water had run down, which was like the tail of the dragon. Anyway, we did this whole ritual, in which I am wishing somehow or other we can live in East Anglia. Now, we leave on the Sunday, and I drive round, on the Monday, waving goodbye, 'Cheerio, cheerio.' And I can't go, I can't go out the gate. I keep going around in circles. And we've got to get back to London, because we've got to design the poster for the Acme exhibition you see. And, they've given us £30. And we get as far as Brentwood on the A12 when the vehicle breaks down by a deserted garage, and there's all pictures of like, petrol prices, lit up with fluorescent right, and I look at the bottom and it's designed by the Acme Poster Company, you see. And we've broken down at Brentwood and a lorry comes along, tows us back to London. The same price, £30 we've had, give it to him, you know, in the envelope. And Jill's grandmother was ninety-four years old, and every night we used to phone her up, 'Are you all right? Are you getting about[???]?' But that night, because we'd got back late, we didn't phone her up. We phoned her up in the morning, and we got no reply. And we went round to the house and she was laying unconscious in the kitchen. She was taken to hospital. And she had pneumonia, and she died at the end of the week. Now in her will she left £19,000 to her, and £19,000 to Jill's uncle. And so, with that money we drove up, we rented...we rented a Mini, and we drove up, and we looked over Bungay way, where all our friends and things were, in the Waveney

valley, but it's a bit pricey over there. Anyway, all we can find, going for about £6,000, is an old Victorian factory, lovely really, make a lovely little arts centre, three or four floors, and his house next door, three or four floors. But that's all we can find, and we think, well, we could then buy another little cottage, it will give us a stepping stone. But I think, ridiculous; we're living in a factory in London, we're going to be living in a factory in the country. So they say, the agent says, 'We haven't got the key, you've got to go to Wymondham to pick up the key,' from these agents called William Brown. So, we drive all the way over here, and I suddenly blurt out to him that, 'We really want a little farm, or an old pub, or an old, police station or fire station, not an old factory.' He said, 'Well there is a farm.' This farm's called Brentwood Farm. Well we'd broken down at Brentwood you see. Brentwood Farm, down the road. 'The people have died; it's on the market for something like £15,000, go and have a look at it.' We had a look at it. This had to be the place. Well, like animals do, I peed on the ground, this is my territory, you know.

Is this it, is it this one, you mean here?

Here, yes, here. When we got back to London we took out the phone in our name, but we hadn't bought it. And then he said, 'First person in here in the morning with £100 deposit gets it.' So we were staying with friends, we borrowed £100, turned up. He says, 'Well, there have been so many enquiries for this place, that we're going to auction it.'

Mm.

But, an auction like I've never heard before. Not like you're all in a room making bids. It's going to be a telephone auction. 'You make a bid, go back to London. It's five o'clock Thursday now; at five o'clock Thursday next week, the auction will close, I'll be taking... People come into the office making bids, and I'll let you know and you make your bid.' This is ridiculous. So we go back to London, we take out the phone in our name. And, we've only got £19,000.

Mm.

I get all my farmyard animals out and that little, little animal shelter thing, with a compass, they're all facing Brentwood Farm from Hackney, to London. I've got a bit of crystal, quartz on the roof, which is like a powerful thing. I've got a little footage counter from a tape recorder. And I set the numbers to 19,000, that's on the roof. And we're just looking to East Anglia from London, wishing.

Mm.

A day goes by. Oh he says, 'It's 15,000. Will you make a bid?' 'Oh,' I said, '16,000.' So that's how it was left. He phones me up a day or two later and says, 'Someone's made a bid for 16,500.' I said, 'Well I'll say 17,000.' Then two days went by, you know, we're sweating. Then someone's offered the bid for 17,500. I said, '18,000.' He says, 'How far are you prepared to go?' I said, 'I'm not going to tell you that.' I said, 'For all I know, you're making this up. You're just sitting in the office, you know, just phoning me back and making up these make-believe bids.' I said, 'You can tell who is bidding against me, if anybody is, that there's no way, we've got unlimited funds, so you can tell them to forget it.' Anyway, the day before it ended, they phoned up and they said, 'He's bid 18,5000.' I said, '19,000.' Telephone didn't ring after that. And we came up here, and we bought it for £19,000.

Just what you had got.

Yes. Yes. And I got a bridging loan from Len Deighton[ph] for 9,000, because all the money hadn't come through from the will.

No, no.

So that's all the money, that's all the money we'd got, you know.

[End of F8077 Side B]

[F8078 Side A]

Yes.

So, it's beginning to dawn on me that there is a sort of pattern taking place here, and that is that, OK, there's lots of other rituals, I might do a ritual to the Earth Goddess or wishing the earth well, or... That I find that any wishes that I have, or any desires, and in my case it's generally gut needs or wishes, I don't think about them when I'm doing the ritual, you know. And I always have to have earth, air, to start with, earth, air, fire and water, which to me is a sort of, a tuning-in. And, so my own wishes sort of come out subconsciously without me realising. And I've found that where I've tried to manipulate things, it doesn't work. And the parameters seem to be, is that if you have a wish, you mustn't have a scenario of how you want it to come true, and you mustn't expect it to come true, and you mustn't tell anybody about it; you must keep it to yourself, and in doing a ritual, you must then forget about it. And you must say, if it doesn't happen, forget it, I'll cope, I'll get by anyway. And then it seems to happen, you know. And in my case, it does seem to happen when I go through a period of anxiety, and it's a real, it's a real gut need. It's not trivia, and it's not about money; it's been about love, it's been about the need for love or to meet someone to be in love with and love you, a partner, a soul-mate. It's been to something as basic as somewhere where you live, and you put your roots down, you know. Really basic sort of stuff, you know. There was one thing that... Yes, to carry on with Brentwood Farm. So we move up here in 1979, and we start performing, doing our rituals at the different fairs and things. And then there's a particular man that Jill falls in love with, and... There's always been a monster in my mind I suppose. I don't have this with Jenny at all, I mean Jenny, I'm thirty-seven, thirty-eight years older, and I don't have any, any jealousy or any fears, but with Jill I did. She was fifteen years younger, but there was all this slight thing, would she fall in love with a younger man, you know, when I got to a certain age? And this is what happened, you know. He was the same age as her, she was forty, he was forty. And she didn't have a secret affair, she told me she'd met this man, he was into Tibetan Buddhism. I didn't talk about this on the tape, did I, I don't think?

No. No.

No. And, they went off meditating, gradually fell in love. She told me when she was going off to meet him, I would prepare her vehicle so she would go and meet him. She told me the first night they were making love. And, so she was really open and honest, and she was, she was coping with it all, you know. But, so she then finally went, to live on the Isle of Lewis near a stone circle called Callanish. We'd been doing things to do with the Earth Goddess, and she was getting a bit carried away. I was very much an earth person, and I'm going about it in my sort of, very simple sort of tattered costume, being the shaman doing all the simple rituals. She would be the great priestess, putting her arms up to the sky, you know, and acting out in dramatic way the great Earth Goddess. She believed she was the Earth Goddess, and she went to live at Callanish, where on the hillside there is this figure of a woman on the hills. It's one hill behind the other, they call it the Fairy Princess. But she saw it as the Earth Goddess. She was the custodian of the Earth Goddess. So she went. And that meant divorce, Brentwood Farm had to be sold. Well, £19,000, her grandmother's money, went into buying this place. I'd sold lots of antiques and things for about £10,000, to put in water, electricity and decorating things. So I felt... So she felt that she ought to have seventy-five per cent of the value of the house, which had now gone from 19,000 to 28,000. But I felt that as when we were in love we had a joint thing, you know, shared ownership, why have that, if when you break up, it's all changed? And I said to her, 'I'm still living here with our daughters,' you know. So I thought, I insisted we stayed to the fifty-fifty, which we did, and one thing that upset her tremendously, you know.

How long were you here then? How long were you both here, from '79?

Well '79, and it all started to go wrong, around the middle of 1981, and it was finished by '82, yes.

Couple of years then, yes. And you'd got three, three girls was it?

Two daughters, but my other son had stayed in London, didn't want to come up here.

Right.

He was a town boy, and he went to live with my first wife, you know.

Mm.

So... But, I can see how the...lots of things I suppose where the marriage went wrong was, we kept goats, which Jill was into, and she grew vegetables and things. And she was outside. Now, I, I was putting up shelves and, I was working inside and doing the house, putting up the shelves and things, and so I wasn't sharing this outdoor life with her, like she wanted me to have done. And, I was making all sorts of things and using our rituals and mainly in the barn and things, you know. And she wasn't communicating at all. That, you know, I suppose... And she was going off to do, she was getting carried away with the Earth Goddess. We were going off in different directions. I felt everything had to come from ourselves, the ideas and the concepts. But she was reading books on things. She read this book about Katherine Maltwood, a sculptress that lived in, down near Glastonbury, who had written this book called *The Zodiac of the Stars*; she'd seen all the signs of the zodiac within a ten-mile circle laid out in the field shapes and the hedges on Glastonbury. And we'd gone off and we'd done rituals around these, you know. And then, there was another... And we were going off then, she was pulling me more her way, which, lots of... She had trained as an actress, and you know, in the theatre they take plays and do other people's productions and things. Well I was like my own writer, actor, everything, everything you see, and performer; everything had to come... So we were being pulled apart anyway, and I reluctantly would be involved in these things. So, it meant that Brentwood Farm had to be sold, and, what do I do? I get half of...I get half of £28,000, £14,000, and somewhere I've got to buy somewhere else. So, it's the day before May Day, which is one of the Celtic, called Bethane is it? Beltane. A Celtic fire festival. And Anglia Television phoned me up and they said, 'Are you doing anything?' I said, 'Well yes I am, I'm doing a ritual.' A painting upstairs in my bedroom, which is like a five-pointed star, or five petals of a flower. In my orchard, all made of poles, the triangles were about six foot by six foot by six foot, all laid on the ground. They had like, string drawings of the elements, earth, air, fire and water, and on one of them there was the Earth Goddess. And I, I brought them all up together to make a five-sided pyramid, and walked around anointing things with earth,

air, fire and water, and telling the viewers what I was doing. But the thing I didn't tell them was that I was then doing things, fertility things with the Earth Goddess, and then I went inside and sat and meditated. And that was my secret. Because I was wishing to stay here with my daughters. Now I did that on the Tuesday, wishing, not wishing for money, just wishing to stay here. Oh. On the Sunday, my father was eight-four, he was all right, he wasn't ill, he was getting a little bit tired walking, but that was all, nothing wrong with him, nothing wrong with him, nothing wrong with him at all, he phoned me up, he said, 'I've had a nose bleed for several days.' He said, 'I'm going to phone up for an ambulance, I'm going into hospital to find out what's wrong. My nose won't stop bleeding.' So I go down to see him on the Tuesday. He's laying there, all my children are around him. He's had a heard attack, he's laying there, the doctor's called me and they said, 'Your father's dying.' They said he's got leukaemia. He's had leukaemia for six months, but we didn't know, and he died at the end of the week. And he left me in his will his flat in London, and that was worth £28,000, the exact price of Brentwood Farm. So I was able to give Jill half the money, her £14,000. And so, it all happened. But I mean, people say, 'You did the ritual. Jill's grandmother died. Did you think you caused it?' Well we didn't cause it. Three years before she, she'd gone into hospital for a hernia operation and she was in a convalescent ward, bedridden, the physiotherapist was ill, she was having no exercise, losing the use of her legs. She said, 'I want to go back to my bungalow.' We get her up, walk her, carry her, get back the use of her legs. And gradually she got back the use, and she went back and lived another three years. Whether or not she picked up that we were looking for somewhere, I don't know. Anyway, that was coincidental she died, but the timing was incredible. And my father, he didn't suddenly...I do the ritual on the Tuesday, he's run over by a bus on the Sunday. He'd had leukaemia for six months beforehand. But it's the way things all synchronise, and fit together, you know, which is incredible. I mean one thing, my eldest daughter, when she was seventeen, she went on the Pill to regulate her periods, and her periods stopped, and so, for ten years she was on the Pill. I don't think it was the Pill, I don't know really. Anyway, when she was twenty-seven she wanted to have a baby, so she came off the Pill, but no periods. So we thought, got to do something about this. So, we went down to the big Cerne Abbas giant in Dorset. You know, they've taken off, thousands of years ago, they took the turf off the earth, this huge man, do you know it?

I don't, no. [inaudible].

Holding a club. This great big penis, testicles. It's all surrounded in barbed wire, you know.

Mm.

It had been an ancient fertility place for thousands of years. We are prepared for this, we've got scaling ladders. We sit like a little family having a picnic at the site. Twelve o'clock. Put on our gear, over the fence, onto the figure. We do a whole fertility ritual, wishing Chrissie to become pregnant. And with some little white stones, I spell... Well it couldn't be white stones, or maybe black stones. Anyway, I spell the name Chrissie on his penis, you know. A woman starts screaming, 'What are you doing, what are you doing?' And then the police have arrived, and, 'What are you doing sir? What, newspaper, what is it, an article or was is it?' 'No no no, I'm a...we are family. My daughter wants to have a baby. She can't become pregnant. It's fertility ritual. It's been a fertility ritual place for thousands...' 'Oh very well sir, it's all right, carry on,' you know. So we get back to London. Now, I told her what we'd done. So this might not be, it might be... You see what had happened was that..

Did she not, did she not go there?

She didn't go, no.

Oh, right.

We didn't tell her we were doing it. But after we came back we told her what we'd done. Now her sister, a year younger, had become pregnant, which upset her, because she felt as the eldest daughter, she wanted to present the family with the first grandchild. So there was a certain psychological block there. And in telling her what we'd done, that may have helped with the psychological... Anyway, a month later she phoned up, 'Dad, I've had my first period.' And then, the next one, she missed, she was pregnant, you know.

Amazing.

So... And lovely... She went back to the Cerne Abbas giant, and I've got a photograph of my son-in-law holding Kesta[ph] as a young baby with the Cerne Abbas giant in the background, you know. And he, he, when he was very young, he went up to his mother and she'd be sitting in the parlour and he'd say, 'Mummy, you're not very well are you?' And she'd say, 'No.' He'd say, 'What's wrong with you?' And he'd say, 'You've got something wrong with your tummy, you have a tummy ache.' And he'd see fairies running round the place. And now he's an incredible musician. He's a fantastic guitarist, and he plays keyboards and music. And he's studying at Manchester, just outside Manchester, at a music college, you know.

Mm.

And he works with bands, writes his own stuff, and he's really incredible, really incredible, you know. Mm. Because there are lots of...my other children, my, my daughter Saffron, she studied drama at the UEA, and she does, not straight acting but sort of alternative performing and things. And Tiffany, she, she sings. Saffron sings too, but she sings, and she's got her degree at the UEA in chemistry and, and biology I think, and... Because when Jill left, they went, we all went through terrible trauma, and they didn't want to do homework, and they didn't want to go to school, and the school complained, and psychiatrists were sent round here. But I didn't insist. And people would say, they'd miss out on their education. But they've come back to it, when they felt right, you know.

Did they miss school for...?

Pardon?

Did they miss school for a while then, while that was all going on?

Yes, yes, yes. And they supported me, you know.

Yes. Yes.

And then it caught up with them about, about a year, a year later, you know.

But they all stayed with you then, did they? Did none of them go with Jill?

Oh when Jill left, none of them, they didn't want to go with her, no.

They all stayed with you?

No, they stayed here, yes. Yes. And then, and then, Tiffany meets a guy called Scott, and they're only friends, and Scott comes along here, he's a young country lad, a guy about thirty. He comes along here and they're doing photography, and doing things in the darkroom together. But, Tiffany saw him as just a boyfriend, but he, he saw, you know, the fact that she'd be laughing and talking with him, that this was like a come-on, you know, sort of thing, you know. But he lived in Wymondham in this, in this cottage, with a lady he had broken up with, who...they still lived as housemates. And he said, 'I'm sure she'd like...she's a bit lonely, I'm sure she'd like to see you at some time, you know, if you're ever in Wimondham.' And I had met her, when I was having an exhibition at the Birch and Conran, and I was doing paintings and an Earth Goddess ritual with a huge appliqué I made. And she'd seen it, and I thought, well, you know, she's rather a nice lady. Anyway, I... I'd been to a...I'd been to a fair at a place called Tuttington, north of Norwich, in which... No no, this is another story, another story. Anyway, the thing was that my ambulance] was being MOT'd, so I had to cycle into Wymondham on my trade bike, and I got into Wymondham and it started to rain. And I thought, I'll go and knock on this lady's door. And I knocked on this lady's door, and, well I was there all day. And every time the sun came out I said, 'I think I've got to go.' And it started to rain, she said, 'Have another cup of coffee,' you know. Of course it was Jenny. Jenny. And we fell in love. And I didn't ask her out like, for a date, and we started talking about water, and I invited her in my canoe, that we'd go on the River Waveney, and it was very romantic, you know, we had a picnic with a wind-up gramophone, you know. And, canoeing along, over all the water lilies, it was really beautiful. And then, I was living in my tepee in the

garden, and I phoned and suggested she lived in her tent in the garden, you know. And I'd...I'd met a girl some months before, and, had misinterpreted I think signals, different things. I don't know whether I did or not to this day, I left very confused. So, I was holding back on making any advance towards Jenny, and she had to virtually seduce me, you know. Because we were out in the orchard kissing, she had to actually put my hand on her naked breasts, and... Anyway, we were sitting outside her tent, and it starts to rain, and so we go into the tent, and then, she seduces me and we're making love, I say, 'Have I got to wear anything?' She says, 'Of course you have.' And of course I've already got a condom in my hand, because I...like a Boy Scout, I'd been prepared, because I thought, well it might happen, or it might not, you know, but I didn't want to...I didn't want to... Because there's a point, when you're friends, and you feel, you would like to become a lover, you don't want to blow it all. It's making that crossover, you know. You don't...it's very delicate, very delicate. Because you can then ruin the whole friendship, you know. So... And then of course, then, talk about coincidence, that I'd come from this place in Harlesden to Wymondham to pick up the key to see Brentwood Farm. Who is selling Brentwood Farm? It's a farmer called Bond. No, not Bond. But anyway, a farmer, who has bought eleven acres here. He's selling off Brentwood Farm and 1.3 acres, but he's selling it off with his, his mother-in-law called Mrs Bond, who lives down the road in the big house, and who's working for Mrs Bond as a live-in carer, but Jenny. So I've come all the way here, and I'm buying Brentwood Farm from a lady, and Jenny is working down the road there, working for the lady I'm buying the house from. A week later they drive by in the car and she said, 'They're not doing much with that property are they?' you know. Jenny's in the car with her. And then later on of course, it's really, it's like a fairy story, it's... It really is, you know, I mean... I know, there are some things that you can, you can bend a bit and make fit in, and there are other things that are really incredible really, you know.

Do you think you have a fate in life?

Pardon?

Do you think, would you say it's some kind of fate, you have a fate in life and that...?

Phase?

Fate.

No no.

These things come together.

No, no.

No you don't?

You see fate, fate is, well I think, it's all laid out already.

Mm.

The plan is already there.

Mm.

But I don't think it is.

You don't think so, no. Right.

It's all to do... And it can, it happens at its best, you don't have a job, you're floating through life; you're following instincts and whims; you're following the flow of things. And there are currents, and there are, there are these, what I call these transmissions and these receivings and things, and you're just picking up on things. And you're being drawn, drawn together, you know.

Mm.

So I don't believe in fate. It's all being made up as it goes along, you know.

Mm.

And it's a bit like, it's a bit like... I had an analogy of being like, walking through the woods and making discoveries, and in an analogy way, you're floating in the sea, but you're under water, and you're not heading for a goal, you're just enjoying the swimming. And you're being affected by currents. And then you're taken into a cave and there's all beautiful things in there, and you make wonderful discoveries and create wonderful things. And then you're washed out of the cave, and you move along, you know. You're not heading for a goal, you haven't got a plan in life. You're going with the flow man, as they used to say, you know. And that's the way it seems to happen, you know.

Mm. So how did, how did actually splitting up from Jill affect your work side of your life then?

Well...

Because, you know, obviously you'd been very involved together, hadn't you...

Mm.

...on these, on these things you were doing.

She, she was my, been my fairy princess.

Mm.

She was Earth Goddess, and we did the Earth Goddess, she'd be the Earth Goddess.

Mm.

So when she left, I felt, I felt tremendous lack of confidence.

Mm.

I felt, I'd lost my woman, my lover.

And then you lost your father, didn't you, as well, very soon.

Yes, lost my father. Anyway, I felt...I felt I had to do something. People said it takes three years to get over an affair, and certainly a long relationship, a lot longer. I thought, I can't hang around for three years in this terrible trauma, this terrible agony. I've got to do something about it. So my, my big GPO truck, I'd forgot...because I was looking after Jill's vehicle so she could visit her lover, I'd neglected my own vehicle, forgot to put antifreeze in, [inaudible] crack. I knew I had to have, I knew I had to be mobile, so I phoned up Len Deighton[ph], and said, 'I've got to buy a motorbike.' And he was scared I was going to go into a motorway, under a thing and kill myself. I said, 'No no, I'm not, I'm not going to kill myself over this, it's my therapy.' Buy the motorbike, and it had to be a Norton, because, I used to ride a Norton when I was an art student, and I bought...and I hadn't ridden a motorbike for years, and it was a 750 Norton Commando, you know. And I borrowed a Norton Commando from my son-in-law and went round the block a few times, and then I went into Norwich and got a Norton Commando and brought it home. And that was my real... I was like a... In a way, I'm romantic, I was this knight in shining armour, not on my white horse but on my black motorbike, you know. And, I was facing the world, you know, and meeting people and, not having love from one person, getting little bits of love from friends that all congregated to make one big love you see. And I knew I had to do a thing, I had to have a woman. And so, I decided to paint on the ground this huge Earth Goddess, so I made my huge woman, seventy foot long, painted with white paint on the ground, which was lime that had been slate so it wouldn't hurt the earth. But I did have hay all the way round. And then, so she was loaded on the ground. She had like a, she had her ovaries diagrammatically laid out, and her womb, and her vagina, and then, the opening to the vagina was a big sort of, a willow thing like that, you know, an opening. And then, I wanted to do earth, air, fire and water. And then I wanted to woo her. So I started... It's like when eyes meet across a crowded floor, when people meet, it's very often, you know, you look, and if you both like what you see, you then, like, start talking. And you start talking. And then, it might end up with getting close together, and there's pheromones and there's,

there's perfume and body smells. And then, you may touch and caress. And it moves off in different stages, you know, or it can do. Or, one thing men don't understand and it's a great lesson really, is that, a woman is opening several doors, well you are too I suppose, but she can open a door for you to like, come near her, invade her space, you know. And then she can open another door, which may be, you know, you then might start...[inaudible] or you may start kissing, you know. And then at one point you might start feeling her breasts, and then you may start, you know, exploring the vagina, and then, then you're maybe having penetration. But she opens those doors. And what you mustn't do is apply pressure. And so, when she's at this door, you've got to stay back; you don't apply pressure for that door to be opened, you always stay back, and you're invited in, you know. It's a thing I've learnt. Anyway, and I suppose you're doing the same thing, and it's all very complicated, you know. And so, I am whispering, I'm showing images of myself to her in her eyes, and I'm, I'm whispering words of love in her ear. And I'm wafting incense under her nostrils. And then I've got a gingerbread man and a gingerbread lady, and I'm eating them. And then I'm sort of, regurgitating the fragments, and when I turn round they've all gone, because my dog has come in and eaten them, you know. And then, with a thing like a, what I call African chief's horsehair fly whisk, I'm caressing her body you see. And I'm moving around her arms, around her breasts and around her legs. And while this is going on, I've set fire at the top of her head, and the fire is all burning around her. And I've got earth, air, fire, water, going up through her body, like, with a fuse, lighting up green, blue, yellow and things. So I'm doing it, it's all automatically going on through, lighting up these puffs of fire and things like that. So I'm working, caressing around her body, and then I come up between her legs, and enter into the vagina, and then crawl through the fallopian tubes, into the, into the ovaries. And then, I do then earth fertility, I get seed and corn, and I'm pouring them all over myself and all the water is cascading down. And then I climb into the womb, as the baby, covered in straw, and then laying, well not for nine months obviously, and then starting to move and then starting to kick, and starting to kick, and then gradually learning, and then being born and coming out, and stumbling around, as a young child, learning to walk all the way around. And then I'm going through all the ages of man, and then I'm walking, and then I'm running, and then I'm running, and then I'm...I'm, arthritis, and I've got a stick, and I'm walking, and then I finally sort of die. And by this time, the fire is burning round, and it comes up between the legs, and

when it hits the clitoris, a great pile of red fire powder goes woof! and it goes off, you know. And that was fantastic. It was therapy, because, eight of my nine children came to that fair, it was very tribal. Jill was there, and she...while we were waiting for the fire powder, she comes in and dances. I've got drummers drumming for me. Her lover is there, drumming also. So it's, everything, all together, and fantastic. Fantastic therapy, all together, you know.

Where was that?

That was at Ruffham, Ruffham tree fair, near the village of Ruffham, you know. So, it was all back to therapy, it was everything, everything combined, you know. Called the Earth Goddess, you know, Earth Goddess ritual, you know. And then...

So is that what, is that largely what you spent your time doing?

Pardon?

You carried on doing these sort of rituals?

I carried on doing my own rituals.

At fairs.

And some of them, there I was naked, covered in clay and body paint and things. So, I then would do, you know, different rituals, it could be to do with, there was one to do with my ancestral spirits.

What was that then, the ancestral spirits one?

Well, I only know my family history as far back as my grandfather, but I don't know beyond that you see.

No.

So, I start creating my own mythology you see. So I think, well, I've got blue eyes. Well first of all, my name is Lacey.

Mm.

I know that a Henry de Lacey came over with William the Conqueror you see. But what were the Normans? Normandy was a Viking settlement. The Normans were really the Norsemen. The Vikings settled in that part of France, and became the Normans, but they were Vikings. So I thought, go back through there, through the Normans. And I was bleaching my hair at the time, so I thought, I've got blond hair. I've got Viking ancestry. Wow! So, I've got all these, they're not Viking things, because the Vikings didn't have horns [inaudible]. They've got, 'Made in Berlin', and I think they're, they're sort of like, costumes for a German, a German production of Wagner's *Valkyrie* or something. But they're nearest the Vikings as I could get. So, I've got this male Viking thing, but I've got no female Viking thing. So I think, well the Vikings did go to Canada, they had a country called Vinlandi[???] or things[???], you know. And one of my Viking ancestors brought back this North American Indian bride, because he's got this Indian costume that Jill wore when we were the Red Indians in the park you see. So I think... And I'd been reading books about burials in, in things like Norway, where they found these huge oak trees buried in the ground, and hollowed out with a lid on the top, and they're laying there, these skeletons, with all their great goods. There's a warrior there, with all his gear, his helmet and his sword and his shield and everything, you know. And there's a woman also laying there. Well I thought, she's going to be a warrior too. So I laid them out on the ground, this female warrior and this male warrior, and then covered them in one of my earth, air and fire, water cloaks, and then the whole ritual was the reawakening of my ancestral spirits, and, I wanted to get back to my mythical roots. And so, I'm uncovering them, and then, I'm picking up all the different things and putting them on me, including the female things, because now I'm realising after breaking up with Jill, that not only is the Earth Goddess, it's not only, it's in all women, but it's also in men.

Mm.

And then have to acknowledge and find these female aspects within themselves, you know.

[End of F8078 Side A]

[F8078 Side B]

Yes, the awakening of my ancestral spirits.

Yes.

So I'm putting all these, I'm holding up this Indian costume which has two like, breasts, metal breasts on it and things. And I'm caressing my own body. And I've got on this long blond wig, so I'm now female, male and female. And then, I have a wooden structure, and as I'm taking them off me I'm putting them up, so they're side by side. And then I marry them together with flowers and bells, so they're married together. And then, then I take them off, and I lay them on the ground, one on top of the other. And I'm doing this in Lincoln, and I suddenly realise doing this with the audience there, that this is how my mother and father were buried. My father's buried on top of my mother. And I hadn't cried when they died, but I cried and I cried my eyes out at that moment. And it's incredible really, how all these things all fit together, you know. And that, that was really, really wonderful. And that was videoed, this lady who's a video maker, she came to video me. And everything had to be done on a tripod, in the normal film way, like, if you're doing a shot with the camera looking over there, if that appears in different parts of the film, you've got to do all those scenes while the camera's in that position. Well I said I can't do a ritual like that. I can't do itsy-bitsy ritual. I've got to do it in its entirety, in its chronological order, and you've got to, you've got to move the camera. And she didn't want to hand-hold, which would have been wonderful. So what I had to do, it started at eight o'clock at night, and it finished up at three o'clock in the morning, and I'm, I'm completely naked, covered in body paint. So I get as far as, when one section finishes, you've got to change the camera, so I freeze in that position, and then she moves the camera and adjust all the lighting, and then she says, 'action.' And then I carry on with the ritual. And it takes, it takes about six hours to do a half-hour ritual. And that's on video. And that is really beautiful, that is really beautiful. And I've put my own electronic music on to it now. And it really is so beautiful. It's in the Head in Glasgow. But, I decided that, to cut out all the willy shots, because I thought Glasgow Council, all the controversy, and I don't try to create controversy. So really, I've cut out shots where you see my willy flopping around, you know.

There was an interesting thing. Andrew Logan was doing a pilot, series of pilot shows for television, alternative chat shows, and he went to see an opera singer once, and he said to people, you know, 'Do it how you like.' So the interview was all done, like an opera, you know, like, where they sing in, talk singing in operas, in between the arias it's all like, [singing] 'And so I'm going down to the seashore tomorrow.' It's talking musically. And so this interview with an opera singer, he was saying, [singing] 'How are you today? I'm very well, and you?' out in the garden. So he came to me, and he said, 'I'd like to do one on you. How do you want it?' I said, 'Well I, I don't want you to be in it,' I said, 'I just want to make a personal statement.' So the film crew, which were called After Image, we all met at this nature reserve down in, down near, oh, somewhere in the south of England, Aldershot I think it was, and there was a lake there. And so I was, I'd met a lady who I'd first met when she lived next door when I lived with Pat when she was three years old. And in between, when I broke up with Jill, I then had lots of sort of casual girlfriends, and on some occasions we'd make love or not, you know. And, she phoned me up, I hadn't seen her since she was three years old, and she phoned me up and she's now thirty-three, and she said, 'What are you doing Bruce?' So I said, 'Well I've got a motorbike now.' She said, 'Well any time you're down in the Borehamwood area, come and see me.' And I was down there the following day, you know. And, I think we finished up in bed together that night, and she said, 'It's like making love with my father.' Because she was something like thirty-three and I'm something over sixty. Anyway, so, my family were freaking out, what's he going with this Sally Anne for? She's a notorious woman, you know. And they were freaking out about it all. And so, I asked her if she'd like to be in this, naked in this film, but she didn't want to. So she had to wear a Victorian nightdress which rather spoilt it. Anyway, I'm walking through the woods, talking about an analogy of my life, and it's like a traveller through life, floating through the woods, not following any pathways, just running through the woods, higgledy-piggledy, at random, making discoveries, and picking up things like that and creating things. And then, I meet the pool, and I went over to this new analogy that, it's not like that, quite; it's like being in a pool. And I stand by this pool and do a whole belly flop, crash, into the pool. My false teeth fall out, and I get up all wringing wet. And I reach down three feet into the water, all bicycles, rusty bicycles and weeds and slime, pick up my...put them in my mouth, but they cut that bit out of the film, I said, 'Please do that.' Because this is a serious ritual I'm doing.

And then I talk about... Because I had a fantasy as a child about finding some old estate, climbing over the wall at midnight with the moon shining and swimming naked, and finding a beautiful blonde woman goddess and we fall in love. So, I mix that in. So I'm talking about being in the water, and flowing with all the currents. And I meet this beautiful blonde woman, and we embrace and we kiss. And I lead her off. And like the prince and the princess, leading her off, we then, I'm completely naked, we get onto my Norton motorbike, kick-start the engine, and drive off into the future, you know. Oh. But then I realise that that analogy was wrong really, because, you know, it's not like a woman riding on the back pillion behind a man; she's got to be on her own quest, you know. And maybe you have your own motorbikes together, you know.

Yes.

And neither one is following the other, you know.

Mm.

So, that, that was a bit wrong really, but...

So did he use it, Andrew Logan?

Well, it was on Channel 4.

Was it?

Before the watershed.

Mm.

Before nine o'clock.

Oh right.

Now, there had been a programme on which the IBA objected to because they were using words like 'fuck' and 'shit', so, when they saw this, with me running along with my willy flopping about, they thought, it was banned, it wasn't shown.

Right.

And then, a year or two later, Denis Norden, you know Denis Norden?

Yes.

Phoned me up, with out-takes and things, and he said...*It'll Be All Right on the Night*, he said, 'Can we use that bit of you falling in the water and your false teeth coming out?

Mm.

I said, 'No, you're not going to use that. Channel 4 wouldn't show the film, I'm not going to... So I refused to allow that bit to be shown. (laughs) Oh.

When did you do that then?

Oh when did I do that? Oh I...

Was it 1980 [inaudible]?

Well it doesn't come in there. It was much later. So, I've got a copy of that. And I did my own music, and my own dialogue on that, and that is very, that is so poetic. And I began to call myself, not an artist, because at one time artist was a dirty word, I would call myself designer, and then I would call myself a visual poet, you know.

Mm.

Because I, I'm poetically using images and things, you know.

Mm.

And, yes, you see before I met, before I met Jenny, I'd gone off to do this Earth Goddess ritual in, in Lincoln, in which I laid the Earth Goddess down in coloured parachute, and I gave a talk in the local arts centre, and then about a month later I got a letter from Manchester City Art Gallery which I'd done things at, saying, a lady wished to get in touch with me, or I'd to give her my address, so I did, and I got this lovely letter from this lady, saying, she's very interested in my work, was I doing any more work up in the Lincoln area? I said, well, as a matter of fact, in a month or two's time, I'm coming up to an art centre, there's a beautiful lady has made a series of sculptures which are like slate stone circles and things on these different islands, linked by bridges, and she wants an Earth Goddess, she wants me to do rituals on them. But, the audience are moving on the bridges, but I don't want to, I've got to move by coracle, and I built a coracle, I'm paddling from area to area. I said, I am doing that at this Rufford Art Centre, somewhere up in Newark? I don't know, somewhere up there.

Oh yes, yes.

I don't now if that's the place.

It is, it's in Sherwood Forest.

So she said... That's right. So she said, 'Well I'd like to come and see you do it,' you know. So she said... And I said, well then, I'm going around stone circles for a week in that area and then going off to do a performance at a fair somewhere over in that area. So she said, 'Well I'd like to come on it with you.' She said, 'Well, we might not get on together, so,' she said, 'can I come and stay at Brentwood Farm for a weekend?' you know. So I'm living out in the tepee, you know, and, I...I decorate the green caravan with all fairy pictures, and she's going to arrive at Wymondham station. And I go there and a train comes in, she's not on it, but I come home, and of course she's come in I think on the other platform, you know, from the other direction. And she said, 'I'm at Wymondham train station.' So I go there, and this beautiful blonde eighteen-year-old girl with a rucksack on, sitting on the curb, you know. Oh, and we

come back here, and we sit round the fire outside my tepee, playing these wonderful chants done by this group called Prana. And, and then we say, you know, we, I give her a little peck on the cheek, and we go back, you know, and I want to stay cool about this, I, you know, I'm not in love with her. And, you know, it's lovely to have a friendship, you know, there. And then we go up to, we go up to the art centre, and they say, 'Well there's a flat, you can live here, with a couple of bedrooms.' So we, I say, 'Well which bedroom do you want?' She says, 'I'll have that bedroom.' So I have that bedroom. Then we go out for a drink, and I think, this is ridiculous really, I think. I'm doing these sort of rituals and things, I'm living in a flat, with central heating. And I've got my tepee with me. I've only got to carry it onto the island, or, the first island. So I said, 'Well, I'm not really wanting to sleep in the flat,' I said, 'I really want to sleep in my tepee on the island.' 'Oh,' she says, 'well I'll join you then.' So we carry the tepee over, and set the whole tepee up, you know. And then, and then, a friend did come and stay here once, a lady I knew, and we slept in the tepee, and she went in it and she made the beds like two sort of sleeping bags together. And she went in and she made a double bed, and she went in and put on her pyjamas and I went in and put on my pyjamas, or a long t-shirt, and we laid there. And we were just sort of talking and things like that, you know, and playing music, and, communicating and things like that. And, I don't know what she had in mind, because I, I thought well, she can't be interested in me as a man; she's probably interested in the rituals and that, she was trying to learn from me like a sort of guru you see. And then we went around these stone circles where we're back in the, in the ambulance, sleeping in our separate stretchers and things. And then we get to this fair, and she's phoned up her mother, because she wants her mother to meet me, and so her mother comes up to the fair. So we're back in the tepee again. And we're laying there, and I start having a dream that we're making love. And, I start fondling her breasts, and then, I start fondling in between her legs, down in, crotch, nether regions, and wake up and realise that I'm actually doing that, you know. And she pulls my hand away, all shock horror. She thinks I've been trying to rape her; she doesn't realise it all happened, that I'd been fantasising, start fantasising about, you see. So, she runs out of the tepee. And then for the rest of the day we don't, we don't really speak. And, she comes up to me and borrows some money to buy some grass, and goes back to the tepee, and I sit up all night talking to some friends round armchairs and get back to the tepee about three o'clock in the morning. And, we

don't speak again. And I take her back to Lincoln, and, that's the end of it all, you know. And then I get back, and whereas I've been keeping it all under control, I suddenly fall madly in love with her. So I start sending all these love letters, all these beautiful romantic love letters, all about fairy princesses and princes and things. And then I, I start writing a rough draft, and then I start realising that this is fantastic. This is beautiful prose I'm writing. So I write to her and say, 'Look, could you send me photocopies of my letters? Because I really, they're really great writing.' Of course never hear from her again, you know. And when I, when I did the reawakening of my ancestral spirits, I was really wishing I had pictures of her tucked in my, under my shoes, and I was really wishing, and of course nothing happened. And that was because I was trying too hard. And never heard from her since, you know. So...

Mm.

So when I met Jill, you know, I was holding back. Jenny, when I met Jenny, I was holding back, because I didn't want to blow everything, you know what I mean?

Mm.

And so that's why she had to really woo me and seduce me, you know. Because I didn't want to, you know, read all the... I don't know if I was reading the wrong signals, I don't know whether, whether, you know... But, I didn't want to sort of, do anything, because I didn't...I didn't have any feelings like that for her, you know, it was really platonic. It was only when I, when I had these fantasising dreams, and then fell in love with her when I came home, you know. But, I think it would have been difficult, because, she was like another Jill really. She wasn't able to communicate her feelings and things, you know. So, it would have been, if we had have established something, she wasn't very good at communicating her sort of feelings and things, you know. And I was trying to communicate mine, but she didn't want to know. But... I don't know whether she bought the grass and was smoking a joint, hoping I'd go back and we'd smoke a joint together and make love or what, I just don't know really, you know. It's one of the mysteries of life really.

Mm.

But...

So where does...you've talked about the, you've mentioned the Head in Glasgow. When did you do that, is that very recent?

Probably about, '80...'80...between '80... Well I...

Was it I this period, when you're doing...

Yes, you see, after, after Jill and I broke up, I did the Earth Goddess.

Yes.

I did this Earth Goddess thing I told you about...

Mm.

...on the Saturday, at the fair.

Mm.

And by the Sunday... Because I don't like leaving things behind.

Mm.

There are different people that do things, artists that do things in the landscape with stones or pebbles or things, but they leave them behind.

Mm.

And I like to leave things as they were before. There are certain people that do things with leaves I like, where they're floating through streams and things, I don't know his name. But people that do things, and they want to leave their mark on the landscape.

It's like coming here, I haven't done anything to Brentwood Farm, I haven't changed it in any way. So I like to leave things as they were, so I cleared everything up, cleared all the grass, so you didn't know anything had happened there. And my tepee was still there. And then a lady arrived on the Sunday who was a basket-maker, that I vaguely knew, and...but...she came late, there was no place for her stall to go, so she said, 'Could I put my stall next to you?' And we started talking. And that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship that grew into love and she lived with me for about five years here you see.

Oh, I see.

So that, although I hadn't wished in doing this ritual, about the Earth Goddess, I hadn't thought that it's going to attract another woman, she's going to see me there naked and... I hadn't thought that at all. And yet this woman had come out of the blue the day later, that we were to fall in love with you see. Which is another one of these interesting sort of coincidences, you know.

Mm.

So she lived with me here. Jill had gone, we lived together here and we grew willow and she made baskets, until about 1980...about 1986 I suppose, or '87, and then I had about two years on my own, so I met Jill in – Jenny, in 1980...1988 I think, you know.

Mm.

What question did you ask me? I can't remember. No, I just go off at different tangents.

I can't remember now where we were.

No.

The paintings that you start, you've got lots of paintings in the room upstairs, when did you start actually doing those, that [inaudible]?

Ah, well, within a year, or two years of leaving the Royal College of Art I'd given up painting entirely.

Yes, I remember you saying.

Did no more drawing or anything again.

Right.

Until I designed a poster for a fairy fair. There had been lots of fairs in which they had electric music, and I felt I wanted to have a fair that went back to the mother of all fairs, which was this mediaeval fair at Barsham. And decided to have a fairy fair. And lots of people gathered round me to help me put it on. We banned all electricity, all performers, and, performance artists of course were Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron, they came up and did a bit of performance art. But, whereas performers and theatre groups did things at fairs, they weren't anything to do with a theme. Fairs all had themes, earth, air, fire, water. And I and Jill, we were the only ones that did anything to do with a theme, the core of the fair. And you might get a theatre group coming to a moon fair, they were currently going round everywhere doing the Second World War, and they'd do that, you know, or they'd be doing *Hamlet* or something, you know. But I said, if you come here to perform, you've got to perform things to do with fairy. And fantastic things were done, really incredible. And lots of performers came, and there was no money to pay them but they still wanted to come. We'd use all the budget. And they came, worked on the site crew for work, and then all got together and created, with no director and no writer, they created their own incredible, they built a huge fairy castle on the edge of a sandpit, and they performed a huge, the huge sort of, conglomerate of performance, you know, there. And, so, yes that was the fairy fair. Now what did you say?

The paintings.

Pardon? Oh yes.

Your paintings.

So I'd painted the Earth Goddess on the ground in white paint.

Mm.

And then I did a diagrammatic painting of it on a sack. In my blacksmiths that was in the winter, dark, wrapped in fur coats or, not fur coats, simulated fur coats, with a candle, using size which I had to keep melted over a flame, and, just like a cave man in a way, painting with chalk and brick dust, like a view from above of the Earth Goddess, with all little dots which were like the path I took, and the ritual. It was like a blueprint, that you could refer to, all the information, like the one upstairs of the five-pointed thing, that's the blueprint of what I did. So I started doing that. And then I started... Then when Sue and I got together, I did that painting above the bed which is called *Love Within the Egg*. So it's slightly diagrammatic. You see when people do paintings of love, it's like holding hands, Rodin's *Kiss*, you know, it's always... I wanted to do the, the unseen things, the feelings. So there are things like this which are like hands holding together, they're all little things that are floating across, like, like little, little feelings of love. And there's Sue on one side with her ponytail, there's me on the other, and there's this thing representing, representing the penis and this beautiful thing representing the vagina, and we're merging together, and there's crystal and there's this, the flow of love with this little blue line going together. So, it was like a sort of blueprint of a feeling of love. So whereas as an art student I was painting things that I saw, or paintings, feelings about things that I saw, here I was painting just pure feelings, imagining putting into a visual form, sort of emotional feelings. It's also my therapy, because it was then getting over, over Jenny, trying to understand what love was all about, and love was all about sharing. It wasn't about giving and taking; it was about giving, but receiving. If anything was being given, you would receive it, but you wouldn't grab it or take it. So there were all things like that, you know. And, a beautiful one I did, which is on my, you know, in the room behind the bedroom where you're sleeping, I saw this beautiful thing called Volvox under a microscope. The Victorians called it Revolving Globes. It's a tiny colony of algae cells that live on the surface of a ball. Now they're all individuals. They all have their individual cell walls, they all have their own nuclei,

but they're joined together by little lines of like, protoplasm or something. So all individuals living in a colony. But when there's a shortage of food, they get together, and they all go in a particular direction, they go this way, or they go that way. And because they're all linked by these little sort of lines, I saw this as an analogy of like, my great, my great analogy. You see I don't believe in God, but Christians pray, and, for wishes and things, and I wish. It's the same sort of thing. So I have Christians tapped into this sort of, telepathic thing, which is an incredible analogy with the Internet. Because I see, it was long before the Internet, that there is a telepathic internet at work, where everything is, is in connection, everything is connected. And you flow or you meander along, and drawn together to make different connections at different points. Now the Christians have this analogy of God being at the centre. And if you pray, you go in to the centre, rather like a spider's web, there are different points, and you go into the centre and communicate. Rather like phoning up a company and the switchboard operator says, 'Yes, who do you want to speak to? All right, I'll put you through,' or 'I won't put you through.' But I see it more as like an automatic switchboard, which is like, you dial, you get straight through, which is a bit like what the Internet is you see. And it is, it's like a mesh, it's like a network, you know. But it's a telepathic network, where you, you know, and with all the different things, and the different... It's a perfect analogy. So I then started doing paintings of microscopic things where I saw different analogies. Now, some of my children were joining a cult called The Emin, which was run by a master figure called, what's his name, oh I can't remember now. Or Leo, Leo, who sat under a tree and pushed his finger into his head and his skull was soft, and received enlightenment, you know. And he runs this group where everyone's got to pay a tenth of their income; got to change their name; cut their hair short so all the women wear the same, same hairstyle. And they believe they're the elite, that when, when the holocaust comes, they've got special powers and they're going to take over. And they're all, they think they, they think they're enlightened, but they're all caught. And I saw they're all caught within a bubble. And then, I saw this programme on television all about this American professor who had been researching slime moulds. Now slime moulds, slime moulds, and if you can imagine, you've got amoeba, individual amoeba, and they're all living [inaudible], and there's a shortage of food. One of them sends out a chemical signal, which is called cyclic AMP, and they all pick up on this, and they aggregate in a series of spasms, and they collect together into something which is only

about two millimetres long, which is like a slug. All these individuals all collect together. And then it goes off collectively with more power to find food. Now, if it meets an obstacle on the way, it separates, but each half is the same size as the first one anyway, and they join together and carry on. When they get to the end of their life cycle, they rise up, and then a [inaudible] is presented, sacrifice themselves, become a stalk, then it becomes like a plant, and it rises up with all little, like petals on it, or little bubbles of spores, and a passing earthworm comes along and carries on the spores and it carries on you see. Well I saw this as a tremendous analogy. I saw somehow, it's a beautiful painting in the barn, and it's called *Escape From the Bubble* or something. I saw that, when we are born, and we go through life, you go to school and society and you're conditioned, and you're not told about other possibilities of alternative lifestyles, you've got to fit in, get a job, and you've got so many jobs. You know, you're not told to find your own job, make your own niche, find your own way through life. That, it's virtually like living in a valley. Living in a valley, you're all grubbing for existence, and there's a cloud overhead, which, you don't see what is above. There are...there are mountains that go up but you're too scared to go up into the...you don't want to go off into the unknown, so you stay in the valley, you know. And there are some people that join cult groups, Buddhism, Christianity, and they follow the leader, and he takes them up through their cloud, but like the slime moulds, they rise up on the stalk, but they're still trapped within his bubble, you know. But, through the middle there are two, and it's myself and anyone that wants to go with me, there are these two things that rise up, and they go right through the bubble and they break out. Because the whole thing is inside one huge bubble, which is split open, so you can see what's going on inside. But the other bubbles are still trapped within the big bubble, but we've escaped right out through the top, you know. And that was, that's a great analogy. So although I've been fascinated by, by these microscopic creatures, it's only when I've seen... It's a bit like a jellyfish in a way, you know. And, I've seen these analogies and things, you know. It's like there's one in the barn now which, I realise that you have children and things, and even though you split up and you divorce, you're still connected, you know, and still that... And so, there is this shape, which is a bit like a penis and testicles. And there is this sort of, line which is like semen coming out spiralling around, that goes into the vagina, and they're locked together, tied together. And all around there are these funny shapes that look a bit like foetuses. I didn't know, when I finished, I counted them,

there were nine, you know. It's a very beautiful painting. You wouldn't know what the hell it was all about, but I know you see. And my trouble is, that I know, and when I show them to people, I tell them what it is, and I pre-empt all their... Because they may have different ideas. Because I've also learnt that you do something, thinking you know what it's about, and ten years later you think, my gosh, subconsciously there was something else that I didn't know at the time, you know. And a great lesson I learnt was when my son was at public school, my eldest son, and the English teacher gave them a poem to read, then asked all the class for their interpretation. And then said, 'You're all wrong.' And he gave them his interpretation, which he said was the right one. But I don't think, if you phoned up the poet, the poet would have had a completely different one. And every one is as valid as the others, you know.

Mm.

Because, you know, you do things without knowing quite...you think you know why you do it. And so other people, you know, they should, I should allow them to actually read into it whatever they do. There's the title there, which is only a hint, you know. But, I'm rather naughty like that, you know. Like with my assemblages, I'm going round the exhibition telling them what this is all about, this is all about the womaniser, this is all about spare part surgery. And I'm blowing it. And I can't just keep my mouth shut, as you know from me prattling on here, you know. I would like to talk about the robot.

Yes, you [inaudible]. Actually we're just near the end of this tape side.

Are you?

[End of F8078 Side B]

[F8079 Side A]

Yes, I talked earlier about starting art for the very first time in my life, at the age of something like, nineteen, in hospital with tuberculosis, as my own form of psychotherapy. And that basically has filtered through everything I've done. Now... So, lots of things... So, I'm not like a nine to five artist, you know, you work in your studio to a certain time and then you finish. My art and my life are all one and the same thing, so you could say my whole life has been an art work, but all biographical, and all, all therapeutic, all... And people say, they look at my things, they say, 'You're mad, the womaniser, you're mad.' I say, it's only by doing things like that that I've kept sane. I've been my own therapist, you know. It's kept me sane. And I, before I had my exhibition at the Whitechapel, a guy was having an exhibition there of abstract art, and he says, he said, 'My whole object in life is to wean any individuality or any personality of myself in my work.' Well I'm doing the opposite, you know. And I think like I said earlier, I don't know if I said it on tape, about, in the literary world if you write your first novel, it's accepted for it to be autobiographical, but then after that, it's sort of frowned upon, as it's not sort of, not...not good enough, you know. But anyway, so all my life has been this sort of, therapeutic sort of thing, you know, coming through, which... And it's interesting actually. Different artists have secretly told me that, in that painting... There was a guy called Gary something that was at Hackney, in the SPACE studios there, he did these wonderful paintings, but he said, 'I'm telling you something Bruce that I'd never tell anybody, certainly not an art critic, is that, when I paint, I'm getting into a sort of ritual, and I believe that there are magic things taking place. There are things that are accidents that happen.' For instance, he left his charcoal drawings on his room, upstairs studio, and all the rain came in and smudged them all. And he suddenly, he had a metamorphosis. It changed everything. He didn't destroy it all, do it all again. He went along with it all, and merged it all in, you know. And he said, 'I do believe that painting, I get into this magic communication thing,' you know. But he said, 'I wouldn't dare tell anybody else, you know, because I'd be laughed at, you know?' So, I built this robot to play the part of the Queen of France, and then, so when I was getting married to Jill at Finsbury Town Hall registry office, I couldn't bear to leave Rosa Bosom, which is radio-operated, simulated actress, battery or standby operated mains, that was the, the name, code name, couldn't bear to leave it

behind, so I took it to the registry office, and my best man was going to be my best friend John Sewell. I said, 'Do you mind stepping aside and letting Rosa...?' So she in, and got photographs. I'm there in my wedding clothes, in my black velvet coat and my wide bottomed trousers and my radio control. And the registrar says, 'Can the best man give you the ring.' I'm pressing the radio controls, it comes up and gives me the ring and we head outside. It plays the *Bridal March* on tape, blows confetti and kiss the bride, you know, all those traditional things. And of course, it's picked up by the newspapers. The newspapers, they're not really interested in me, Bruce Lacey, don't know much about Bruce Lacey, but they picked up on robots, which they're interested in, and also weddings. Weddings and robots is big time for newspapers. So, it's in all the newspapers, and it's in *Titbits* and then it's, we're on the *Eamon Andrews Show*, and then we're on *Blue Peter*, we're on, on, what was the, the ITV equivalent?

Magpie.

Magpie.

Magpie.

It's on *Magpie*, I'm on *Magpie*, you know. With the robot. Because I've an argument with *Blue Peter*. Because *Blue Peter* you see, you are there, the presenter's there; the presenter talks to the children, explains things to the children; the children trust the presenter. The presenter asks you questions, and you might tell her and then she tells the... I said, 'Well I want to speak to the children.' 'Oh no you can't, you can't go direct to the children.' This is their philosophy. This was their philosophy. Anyway, so, we get married, things like that. And then, I take the robot round. And I built a mate down in, I built another robot which isn't radio-controlled. It's going round in circles. I'm controlling Rosa. This is done at a event down at the, at the Middle Earth, you know. And, I'm controlling Rosa. Now, if Rosa accidentally turns her back on him, as he faces her, she's sending out an ultrasonic signal which he has to receive. He starts following her, everywhere she goes he follows her. Now his motors are slightly faster than hers, and as he gets close he switches on infrared, which is like male passion coming towards her. And she has an infrared detector. Oh

he's getting near, and she starts screaming, screaming. And then he has a voice operated switch tuned to that frequency. So he has to turn away, oh my God! what have done? sort of thing, you know. But of course no one knows about this, only I know. And then, but yes, he touches her with, with pressure switches, she blows confetti and they're sort of symbolically married. So I'm doing all these different performances and things, you know. And of course the Middle Earth, so, we're doing things down at the Middle Earth, and, so happenings have gone on to a new... Because, the Better Books thing in the Sixties, I go across the road to the Central School of Art – not Central School of Art...

St Martin's.

St Martin's. To give a lecture on the students. Freedom, don't take notice of your tutors. Really be yourself, really do your own personal things. Forget about painting and sculpture. If you want to do anything, anything intuitive, do it. The students are all shouting, 'Shut up, shut up.' One gets up, he starts thumping me, 'Shut up Bruce Lacey, we don't want to hear all this rubbish,' you know. This is at St Martin's School of Art, you know. And so, we're down at...a new generation of students come along and I'm all discovered, invited to go back to the Middle Earth, these are students from Hornsey School of Art. A lovely guy called Peter Dockley[ph]. And there's old, what's his name, Stuart Brisley, with his wife doing things. Now, the happenings, which were wonderful things, and one did things with Mark[???] [inaudible] and things, and... Then, artists, art schools were getting interested in these things that were going on, you know, and they were beginning to call it, no, not performance art, that hadn't been made up yet; it was then called 'events', you know. And then Stuart Brisley, and it's all very aesthetic and it's all very high art. You're all in black – white, clothes, white gloves and a white face; they're sitting at a white table, white tablecloth, and they're drinking white milk, and they're eating white spaghetti, and it's all very aesthetic and they're all making these various movements. I am there, oh I'm there, with two mates, one's a musician, used to play saxophone in, with, with the, what's his name, Ian Drury and the Blockheads?

Oh yes, mm.

Fantastic saxophone player. Can't remember his name. Oh, fantastic. But I mean we're forming a little alternative performance group you see. So, so, we've got this bed, this big double bed, and we're all in this bed wearing rubber pigs' heads you see. Now, there is an old conjuring trick where you're laying in a bed, what seemed to be a bed, with the sheet, but you're really crouching down, and you've got two long poles with feet fixed at the end, and you do levitation. So you rise like this, and it's as though you're floating up in the air. So we're the three little pigs in this bed, in this nightshirt, which is one nightshirt with the three pigs all inside with one arm that way, one arm that way. And we've got Walt Disney's film *The Three Little Pigs* running at the same time, which we've told someone, 'Switch it on and off whenever you feel like it.' So nobody knows what's going on. And then we finally get out, and we all start dancing around the three little pigs, and of course all the people are like, what the hell's going on here? All very jokey. And then, it's interesting what you said about this exhibition, I then make a head, which is a side view of a head, which is from an old print I've got called *The Human Factory*, which is like, all little men living in the head. There's a man up where the eyes are with the camera; there are men, as the food comes in the mouth they're all chopping it and all sending it down. So we're in the head. And there's a man called, like a psychiatrist, one of...he's a white coat, he's interviewing me. And we're passing. One's got a headache, so, I'm passing down giant aspirins in little buckets and things and it all gets passed down into the throat. And it's all rather jokey, but, you know, whatever, you know. And then, then we do another thing, in which we're sitting round a table, having a meal, and wifey is there cooking the spaghetti, and she brings out her spaghetti on plates. And we tip the plates over, so all the spaghetti's on the table. And then we eat the plates, because the plates are made of pastry covered in white icing sugar. And she would have taken the plates and washed them up, but she takes the spaghetti, washes the spaghetti up in Fairy Liquid, then hangs the spaghetti with clothes pegs on the line you see like that. And then it all finishes up with a great spaghetti fight everywhere, you know. And then another thing I did, I made a huge, it was a prototype of the, of the Materialiser. It was a huge aeroplane propeller, tapering out from the centre, covered in white, and a film projected on it, and spinning round, so you see a film on that. But I'm dancing round in a white sort of, floppy plastic garment, until the film's picking up on me. But, I've made it like a real propeller, and so it's blowing air, it's sucking, and I get sucked into it. And my whole costume gets ripped off me, and it gets sucked into the

balsawood and the whole balsawood propeller disintegrates. Luckily people are standing there, and they don't get hurt with all the, all the stuff. Anyway, so that's going back to the Middle Earth. Yoko Ono comes down, she's sitting there in a chair like a prima donna, you know. And, she's got two...because did a thing with, people are supposedly making love inside a big black bag, making, [makes relevant sounds]. But she's not doing it, she's just sitting there, you know. And of course, she made the Bottom film. She didn't make the Bottom film; her husband at the time, he was a film-maker, he made the Bottom film, you know. So then when she goes and meets John Lennon and marries him I think, you know... Because, there's a whole story about John Lennon you know which... There's a funny little anecdote about John Lennon. Peter Cook and Dudley Moore start doing a television series with the BBC called *Not Only But Also*, and I go in playing small parts. And John Lennon, he's doing something in it, you know. And, I got to know John Lennon a little bit through, in the film *Help*, you know, and he's a really lovely guy, you know. I hate Ringo Starr, because Ringo Starr is a nothing, you know, he's not even a good drummer or anything, you know. And all the camera crew are laughing, oh, he's so funny. Ringo's only got to go, [makes short sound], and they go, 'Oh that's very funny, very funny,' you know. And I'm on my hands and knees with my clockwork teeth trying to be the funny man, and they're all laughing at him. Anyway, so...but, I love, really love John Lennon, John Lennon, really fantastic, we got on so well together. And we're having a drink afterwards, and we're up in the BBC club having a drink, and we're talking and chatting about all sorts of things. And a commissionaire comes up, 'Excuse me sir,' commissionaire comes in, 'ladies and gentlemen,' he says, 'there are some girls outside would like John Lennon's autograph. I've got the book here, which of you two gentlemen is John Lennon?' He gives me a nudge. I say, 'Oh give it to me.' And I write 'Bruce Lacey'. And I said... 'Oh,' he said, he nudged me, he said, 'OK John?' I wrote 'Bruce Lacey'. I gave it to him and he said, 'OK Bruce.' So he wrote 'John Lennon'. So they got a real John Lennon autograph. And he said, 'Oh thank you, thank you sir,' thanking me as being John Lennon. And then a bit later on he came up to me in the corridor and he said, 'All the girls are outside, they all want to meet you.' And I roll off the other way. But that's a little bit of fun we had on the way. Anyway, so, with the Rosa Bosom and the robot and things, and then getting married, and then, Jill being invited to go in for all the Alternative Miss Worlds, so I'm...as she goes on for each one she's going on in one...there's water, and

she's got a big water tank, she's a mermaid, and I'm fitting her into a costume. And I'm making costumes out of all bits of cloth and creating them, or I'm...she's naked and I'm painting all body paints and things on her, you know. But, she, she never wins, and she never gets even second or third prize. And she's in incredible costumes really, and, beautiful cloaks, and science fantasy things. And headdresses which I've made for her, really beautiful. I've got film, I filmed her for one or two of them. And then we leave. So he phones me up and says, 'You'd like to be in the next Miss World at the Academy in Brixton?' you know, the theme is, is water, you know. And you've got to have three costumes, daywear, beachwear and eveningwear. And I go into the lavatory and I think, well I'm not really into drag, and I don't want to compete. I don't want to compete. Like the quiz we went to last night, you know. I don't like competing. Partly because, I don't like all the disappointment at the end. And, and I don't like battling with people. I'd rather, I'd rather sort of relate to people and cooperate with people than, than conflict, you know. And so I decided, my robot, my robot, you know. So, we took the robot down to the Academy, and it came on doing these different things. All the contestants came down a sort of staircase, but Rosa had to come in from the side because she's on wheels and you've got to get all the blooming lighting cables, and there's people rushing past you, and wires are breaking off, and you're quickly... It goes on really perfect, you know. And... And then at the end they... So she came on for daywear as a bride, and somebody turned up with a bunch of flowers they gave me, so that was stuck on it. So she was a bride for daywear. And then she came on for beachwear with a diver's helmet and a lifejacket, and blue bubbles out the side. And then eveningwear, she came on, and her arms moved around, and all her head lights up, and different things. Her heart lit up, and different things happened. And then, all her arms lit up with little bulbs I'd fitted on. And then, she had this wonderful explosion of fire out the top of her head. And then, then one was interviewed. So I had a, I had a radio mic, and so, with a hidden microphone. You see they were asking her questions, and I was making the answers, hiding behind, you know. And then at the end, all the contestants came on again and I was asked not to come on, and then they had third prize, second prize, and first prize, Rosa Bosom, you know. And then I got onto the stage with Rosa Bosom, and then they tried to put the... The cloak had been hanging up like a huge whale which was then lowered onto her, and of course the arms were still up in the air. So as the cloak went on, the arms, they broke partly, the wires broke, and the fuse, and all smoke and

flames started coming out. I rushed in. All the mechanism was all right, it was just the arms. And quickly unplugged bits, you know. And then the guy that had won it the previous year, he held the crown over her head and she moved along the front of the stage, and I'm running along with all, hundreds of people crying to me, 'Don't go off the edge of the stage,' you know. And then they bring on, they bring on...the crown won't go on, and the sceptre and the orb, so they put me in this sort of bath pulled by swans, and I'm decorated in it, you know. And I go up, and I...I told you didn't I, but not on tape.

No.

That, I suddenly felt, it's really Rosa that's won, and I felt, she's being left out of it, so I went up and we had a kiss with her lips coming across and kissing me. Everyone was hugging me and kissing me, you know. And that was really, really, really fantastic and amazing, you know. And... But before then I think, she had been in this film *Smashing Time* which I have spoken on tape.

You did mention that, yes.

With Rita Tushingham, that's right, yes.

What happened to her, what's happened to her since then? I can't remember whether you mentioned this or not.

Well...

Is she here, is Rosa Bosom here?

She's here, yes she's here.

She's in the back room then?

Yes. And she was last working in... So I'd made her in about 1965. When she went in for the Alternative Miss World, that was in I think 1985. The radio control didn't

work any more. I sent it back to London where I bought it from, and the original mechanic down there got it going again. And, of course, the equipment was all obsolete, radio-control model aeroplane, radio-controlled. So everything was working. I had it so that if the batteries failed, it would run on the mains, and if the radio-control broke down... It all has aeroplane motors operating it. And I've got aeroplane gun control, joystick controls which I can control if the radio control breaks down you see. So all contingencies are allowed for. And, then, a friend of mine last year was talking about doing an event on Valentine's Day, and he said, 'It would be great if your robot was there kissing.' So I thought, I've got to get the robot going. So the radio control didn't work, sent it back to London, and the same guy was still working there, had been working there since 1965. And he said... I sent him all that...I contacted Germany, got all the blueprints, sent him off. He said, 'It can't be mended.' So, I've had to take certain bits to pieces to get the radio control out, but now I'm going to buy updated radio control, so I'm going to put it all back. So it should be working by the end of the year. Because I want to keep the thing, I want to keep the thing going. Now as I'm getting older, and I'm seventy-three, I have a problem, you know, well I could burn everything I suppose, but, what happens to all my paintings, what happens to all my assemblages, what happens to all my films and my videos, my archive materials, where can it go? None of my children have got room, room to store it, you know. My only thought at this moment is, maybe, at the UEA in Norwich, there is the East Anglian Film Archives that have got some of my films, they might take all my films and negatives. There's an aeroplane museum at Flixton near Bungay, they might have all my aeroplane things. What happens to my paintings? What happens to my sculptures and things I've still got? I don't see any art gallery having them; no one would have... In a way, that's what I did when I built the Head, I decided to make it, not my memorial but it's all autobiographic, all the things I've ever done are all in there. So that in a way was like, it's a lot...it's like archive material which I built, you know, rather craftily really, you know.

Do you want to talk about that now?

Pardon?

Do you want to talk about the Head?

Yes, well the thing about what happens, and I did think, OK, for years I thought, maybe this place could be turned into a museum, you know. Andrew Logan has an old squash court down in Wales where he stores all the things he'd made, and members of the public go in, you know. But if members of the public came here, you'd have to go around, because they'd be nicking things, and lots of things are small and tiny.

Mm.

And then, who looks after it? Jenny wouldn't want to live here after I've died, as a shrine to me, and I wouldn't want her to. Where would anybody live? Because if it's a museum, you can't live in a room. And it's...it's sick in a way, that's the other aspect, of this sort of shrine. So all the things can be sold, my children can have things, the house can be sold. But it's my paintings and my, all my archive material, and... You know, the actual stuff itself, you know, what would happen to it, you know. I mean I did think when I built the Head of making secret compartments in there for storing lots of things, you know, would be hidden in places, you know, so the whole thing...which they wouldn't know about, until someone discovered it, you know, like planting a, sort of a time capsule thing, you know. Anyway, talk about what?

[end of session]

[End of F8079 Side A]
[Side B is blank]

[F8507 Side A]

This is Gillian Whiteley interviewing Bruce Lacey on Tuesday the 18th of July 2000.

We, last time we talked, we sort of ranged over your whole life really didn't we.

Mm.

But there are quite a few things that we can go back to. Perhaps you might want to start with the film that Ken Russell made about you.

Yes.

I can't...has it got a title?

Yes, it's called *The Preservation Man*.

Ah.

It came about because, a friend of mine played clarinet with jazz bands, called Eric Lister, was also running his own art gallery in, just off of Bond Street, called the Portal Gallery. And he was having an exhibition of artists' work including a man called Roddy Maude-Roxby. And he asked me, because he knew I made these odd machines which I used in cabaret, if I could make something to go into the window. And so for the fist time I made something, which was not a thing I could use in performance, but just as a thing on its own. And, because of that, Ken Russell, who had just made a film on British Pop artists with Pauline Boty and, who is that guy, you know, with the beard? Oh I don't know. Did the cover for the Beatles' film, *Sergeant Pepper*. Oh...

Peter Blake.

Peter Blake. He was in that film too. Ken Russell thought he'd make a film about me. Now, because I had a whole collection of things, and was obsessed with

collecting things and using things to perform with, like I performed on the spokes of a penny-farthing bicycle, *Show Me the Way to Go Home*, and different things, he made a film about me and my family life. And right at the end of the film... You see me doing different things, like you see me dancing with a dummy woman; you see me playing on the penny-farthing bicycle; you see me knife-throwing. And at the end of the film, he had my two electric actors which were like these robot sculptures that I perform with. Now... So, it was called *The Preservation Man*, the film was. And right at the end... I made a film with The Alberts called *Sleepy Valley* that was, was, what's it, A&M man, was called...is it A&M? A&R, that's right, with George Martin, who had done the Beatle films you see.

That was another film, was it?

Pardon?

The Sleepy Valley *was another film?*

No no, no, it was just a record that came out.

Right, a record.

On EMI label, Parlophone label.

Mhm.

It didn't get very well in the charts, I think we made about £1.50 each from the royalties. Ken Russell wanted to use that with me miming to that at the end of the film. Well I'm singing this song called, [singing] 'Everybody loves a fireside, picture[???] sitting by a fireside, in a cosy little home you can call your very own.' And I used to sing it in a rather eccentric way, you know. [singing] 'Everybody loves a fireside.' Anyway, the film was shot in the garden where I lived with my wife and, first wife and six children. And the grass had long gone, because the nappies out every day would wear the grass away, and another, so it was all like a chicken run, it was all trodden, hard earth. My wife is hanging up the washing and the children are

all playing around in the garden, with this old junky motorcar that I had. And it was very funny. Anyway, when Huw Weldon, who was the presenter of *Monitor*, and which the film was being made for, when he saw it, he said, 'We can't have that. This is an arts programme, and nothing in the programme is really to with art,' he said. 'And then this thing, with him singing the song in the garden, I won't allow it,' so that was cut out of the film, you know. I've now got a copy of it with it on, you know. So, that's how, that's how *Sleepy Valley* came about.

So it was shown on the TV, but with that piece missing?

It was shown on TV with that bit missing, you know.

How long was the film?

It's about a fifteen-minute film.

Right.

Mm.

And there are some clips of it on that video, the compilation that were done for the Things exhibition.

That's right. Yes. Yes. But it's a song that I sang from childhood, you know.

Was it? Did it have a special meaning for you, that song?

Yes it did. It's all romantic, and it finishes up, I just sing, [singing] 'All of my troubles, cares of the day, like silver bubbles...' And when I sang it in cabaret, I'd be drinking from a wine glass with like, crème de...cream de minth[ph] in it, what I call, a green liqueur, but which would actually be bubble mixture, Fairy Liquid. And I'd be wearing a pair of glasses without lenses in, with one earpiece removed, and when I came to 'All of my troubles, cares of the day, like silver bubbles,' I'd take my glasses off, dip them in the wine glass and then blow bubbles you see. And, in a way, I've

achieved this Sleepy Valley, because, where I live... Right at the end it says, 'Roses round the door and babies on the floor' you see, and I've got a little cottage, you know, with all roses round the door outside. So... It's a song I still sing at times, you know. I sang it the other day at a folk evening in Wymondham, and I sang it very eccentrically. I sang it, and I told them I was singing as though I was in an aeroplane, a propeller aeroplane flying from America. So it was like, [singing] 'Everybody loves a fireside, [twanging/flying noise]' I was making all the noises of the aeroplane engine all the same time. And people didn't know what to make of it really. Because sometimes when I sing it, they don't know whether I'm singing it badly, and they should all be embarrassed, or whether it's meant to be funny. And so, I like this sort of razor's edge, you know, with like, walking a tightrope, you never know quite... Anyway. So that, that was the *Monitor* film with Ken Russell.

Mm. So the children were quite happy to take part in that film though? Because I notice they were all...they were all in the trolleys and things weren't they at the end.

That's right. And I had a full-size stuffed camel at the time, which used to dominate the hall.

Oh that's right, yes, it was in the film wasn't it. I remember you talking about that.

Yes, and one of my children are on top of the stuff. You had to go... In the hall where the camel was, you had to climb underneath the belly to get into all the other rooms and things, you know.

Mm.

And of course eventually I did perform with the camel.

Where did you actually get the camel from then?

Well, I...

Originally.

I used to go to taxidermist firms, and they were... The middle section of the camel was on its side, and they were using it as a work bench. And I said, 'What's that?' And they said, 'Oh it's a stuffed camel. We don't really want it. We made it for someone in South America, but we couldn't get it through the Customs' or something. So they gave it to me. It's a full-size stuffed camel, in three sections. With all the adrenaline and the excitement, I was able to take it home on the roof of my van and inside the van, assemble it all on my own, but after that it took three people to assemble it. I had superhuman strength that time. And I used to sit on the stairs looking at it and laughing at it. And I eventually wrote a play all about it, which I submitted to the Royal Court Theatre but it wasn't accepted. It was about a man, it was called *The Exhibitionist*, it was about a man laying underneath the camel, trying to commit suicide by sawing through the legs of the camel so it would fall on top of him and kill him. But of course, he didn't want to do this so no one else would know, so he'd be watching... He'd have the legs partly sawn through, and he'd be watching out the window by the front door in case anybody arrived with the front door unlocked, so that the timing would be that, as they approached the front door, he'd finally...and he'd, it would crash on him, kill him. And they'd hear the noise, go inside, and discover him you see. And so that it would get worldwide press, he was draped in a Russian flag, and he had a copy of *Mein Kampf* beside him, which Adolf Hitler wrote. He was sawing through the legs with a saw made in Sweden. So all newspapers all over the world... And the camel would pick up all the other press you see. And the Russian press would pick up the Russian flag. So it would be all over the world you see, it would make news. But the point is that no one comes, or, eventually different people come and all sorts of bizarre things happen, you know. Anyway, I eventually turned it into a musical instrument, because I, I saw the hole in the side, and opened up a trapdoor, and I used to come on stage and sing, in an Arab costume, singing, *The Sheikh of Arabee*, or, like a love song to the camel. And when it came to the middle eight[ph] of the tune, I'd open up the trapdoor, and on an African xylophone painted white, it looked like the ribs of the camel, with little hammers I played the middle note/eight[???] of the tune you see. And then at the end, his tale was bent into a crank, a bit like a motorcar starting handle; I put a bucket between his legs, and he had a big pair of hairy coconuts, like testicles, and as I turned the handle they'd drop into the bucket, as though I was milking him. And of course

coconuts have milk inside. All very bizarre. But when it came to doing it at the Comedy Theatre, we did *An Evening of British Rubbish*, which ran for four months at the Comedy Theatre, the Lord Chamberlain said, 'For matinees, when children are present, I won't allow the coconuts to be used.' So I had to hang a couple of milk bottles painted white, and they dropped into the bucket. But the joke was, that his testicles... But then, you know, that's the way things go.

So what happened to the bits of the camel eventually? Did they disintegrate?

Well, eventually, it all eventually fell to pieces, and eventually I set fire to it, and said goodbye to it, 'I'm sorry you've got to go but I just haven't got any room for you left.' And, I made a film of it, which I've lost now I think; anyway, I made a film of it.

Mm.

But when The Alberts and I went to America, to perform *An Evening of British Rubbish* in San Francisco, it was at the time of the Cuban Crisis I think, where you couldn't get Havana cigars in America, and The Alberts always smoked Havana cigars, so they stuffed it with Havana cigars. And they put...all wrapped in plastic. So when the Customs opened up the lid, there were lots of kippers inside, so they immediately, ooh! horrible smell, and slammed the lid down, but underneath the kippers it was all stuffed with Havana cigars. (laughs)

Very sneaky. You didn't mention that last time I don't think.

Pardon?

You didn't talk about that last time.

No, no.

You mentioned going there, but I hadn't realised that you'd... So you actually took the camel with you, all that way.

Yes, we took the camel, yes, that's right. It went by air and had to come back on the Queen Mary.

Yes, I remember you talking about the Queen Mary. So that was the film. There are one or two other films actually that are on the list in this catalogue...

Mm.

...that I don't think you talked about last time. Just looking down, there was one called Arthur, Arthur.

Well *Arthur, Arthur*...

Well, let's just see when it was, that one. What was...which one is it?

Mm. I can't remember what year it was. [pause]

I've written it down. I've not written the date down.

Is it under there, films? Is it there somewhere?

Should be. Mm. Oh, 1969 that one.

1969.

Which, you made assemblages for it. Which ones were they?

Yes, well, *Arthur, Arthur* was a film that never came out.

Mhm.

It was starring Donald Pleasance. And the producer, or the financer, was a rich Texan oil magnate. And even while the film was being made, there were whispers going

around that it was never going to come out, and it was just for, some sort of tax thing, you know. And so the film never came out. Anyway, I was asked to make... Donald Pleasance was playing the part of a mad inventor that had made a dog-washing machine, a machine to put a tie round your neck, and also a machine that fitted onto a lawnmower, the grass box, on caterpillar tracks, like a robot. And it was controlled by radio, but supposedly it was controlled by him producing whistles. His wife hated him doing this, so at one point she actually diverts the grass box to sort of try and kill him with it. Anyway. The dog-washing machine was a long conveyor belt, about thirty foot long, in which you put a dog, it was a stuffed dog in the film, and first of all, it was sprayed with water, and as it moved along on the conveyor belt, soap was pumped onto it, and then big brushes to wash it all, and then it was rinsed and finally hair-dried and then shampooed. I went on a David Nixon programme, television programme years ago, in which they wanted me to give them the script, and I said, 'No, I want to do it all live.' And so, it finished up with this man called David Nixon and I actually going on the conveyor belt all being washed and shampooed. But it wasn't rehearsed at all, you know. So it worked very well, you know. But, it's all fucked now.

It never appeared, never appeared.

It's all fucked.

Right, OK then.

All in pieces now.

Are there any of these other things that we didn't mention last time...

Oh let me put my reading glasses on.

Right. What about The Knack*, that's a famous, well known film isn't it? What did you do in that one?*

Yes, well I had made the television shows with Spike Milligan, with Richard Lester as the television director. Then he started becoming a film director.

Mm. You mentioned Help *for, I don't... What [inaudible]* The Knack*?*

With *The Knack*, I found that when various friends of mine became film directors, they were all rather nervous, so they used to invite their mates, including people like Bob Godfrey, to play small parts in the film, so that when it came to the coffee break, we'd all sit around, and we'd be his sort of support, you know. And that happened to lots of friends. Anyway, *The Knack*, I can't remember much about it, but... So I was asked to do little cameo pieces, and in *The Knack*, I'm standing... You know when a surveyor is looking through his theodolite, he's looking towards a man standing holding a pole with different lines on it, and I was a man holding the pole. And Rita Tushingham, who is trying to find new digs, she's walking around London with a suitcase, and she goes up to the surveyor and says, 'Can you direct me to such-and-such a street?' And he starts giving her directions. But I'm at the other end of the street, thinking he's giving me directions. So I start moving to the left and to the right, and then I eventually fall down a manhole cover, and very badly bruising my arms and everything. Now when Dick Lester did the *Help*...

Yes, you talked about that last time.

Yes. Well, I had to go into Teddington film studios and wait for several days, waiting to be told what I was going to do, not knowing what it was. And in the end they said, 'Well you're going to be a gardener inside George Harrison's house.' Well in the film, they all go in through separate doors in a row of terraced houses, but when you get inside, it's all been made into one. And at one end George Harrison's bedroom has a green carpet on the floor and a brass bedstead, and I'm the resident gardener, because the carpet isn't made of, like a carpet, it's made of, it's a lawn. And I'm going round on my hands and knees with those mechanical teeth, sort of cutting all the grass. But the night before I'd been doing cabaret, which, I skidded across the floor on my knees, taken all the skin off my knees, so I'm there on my knees suffering tremendous pain, doing this performance, you know. They're playing that song, [singing] 'Hey, you've got to hide your love away,' you know the song?

Mhm.

And right at the end there's a flute solo, and they asked me to do the flute solo, mime to it. And of course I wish I'd known, because I would have learnt all the right fingering you see. But I'm just playing silly buggers on, with my fingers, you know. And I got to know the Beatles then you see. And I particularly got to know...

Oh you talked, you did mention John Lennon last time.

John.

When you...you mentioned where you wrote his autograph for him. Then he wrote yours.

Well, I wrote my...that's right, I've told you about that, yes.

Yes, you mentioned that.

So I got on very well with him, yes.

Any other... Wait a minute, now let's just see. Bang*, what was that one,* Bang*?*

I can't remember much about it.

Can't remember that one?

No. No.

Or The Bliss of Mrs Blossom*?*

No I can't remember much about that.

Can't remember?

No. I mean I'm only playing... In *Bang* I was doing quite a lot really. It was done by Bob Godfrey. It was...

Right. Bob Godfrey did the...did he do the Gnits*? Is he the person that did* The Gnits*?*

Yes.

When you talked...

That's right.

Because I noticed...

That.'s g-n-i-t-s.

Right. Yes. There was an excerpt of, I think, The Gnits *on that compilation video at the Things. I realise now.*

Oh that's right, *The Battle of New Orleans*.

But it didn't say what they all were. No, when they were on the march.

That's right, yes.

Is that The Gnits*?*

It was, it was...it was done...

With the sort of, string instruments.

It was done to the music of Lonnie Donegan singing *The Battle of New Orleans*.

Ah, right, that's it.

Because there was a...

So there was you, and who were the others?

Well, there was myself, Bob Godfrey, and there was a guy called Joe McGrath.

Joe McGrath, right.

Who later became a film director.

Oh, yes.

And then...

Right.

But you see, when all these people... We knew him as Dick Lester, but when he became a film director, he became Richard Lester. We knew him as Joe McGrath, but when he became a film director he was Joseph McGrath, you know.

Yes. Right. So they were the various films. Just let me see if there are any other, any... Oh, Everybody's Nobody*, that was, there was a clip from that short film...*

Yes, well that's a film I made with a guy who was a student at the Royal College of Art with me.

Right. So that was in the Fifties was it, when you made that one?

That was in the late Fifties, that's right.

Was it?

Yes.

Because I don't think there was any date on the clip actually.

No, no.

So I wondered how...

I told you about that film, did I? It's like, you've written off for a mail order catalogue to buy this android, this robot man, and he comes out of a big packing case which is me.

Mhm.

And then first of all he's discovering things he can do. He's got hands and he's got eyes and noses. And then he starts doing things, like, at one point he was a human vacuum cleaner, and then... He's doing all sorts of things in it, you know.

Mm. And the funny noses.

That's right.

Oh, is that the one where he eats the Union Jack, or is that, was that another one?

This one, yes. [inaudible].

He eats it, doesn't he?

Yes.

He gets the Union Jack flag out.

That's right, yes, yes.

Which I thought was quite...quite [inaudible].

Yes, yes. And all the noses and the banana and things, you know.

That's right, yes.

Mm.

So, I don't know if there are any other of the films you wanted to talk about in particular.

Did I talk about the *Lacey Rituals*?

Now the Lacey Rituals*, you did talk about doing some of these things that you did, but not all of them.*

Well it's very interesting actually.

Just talked about one or two. Obsessions and Fantasies *you talked about.*

Yes. It's interesting the *Lacey Rituals*, because I wanted... People used to come and make documentaries about me, but they weren't interested in the day-to-day family life, that I, I found extremely interesting and funny. So I decided to make that film myself. All the members of the family wrote down all the different day-to-day things that they wanted to be seen doing.

Mhm.

Now it's interesting that in this week, Channel 4 is, they've locked about six people, or eight people...

Oh yes.

Four men and four women, and they've just videoed them going to the lavatory, doing day-to-day things. So suddenly after all these years the media's interested in it. Because in the film, I go into the lavatory and talk about chasing all my obsession about picking up germs, you know. But even that, they wouldn't even do that nowadays I don't suppose.

No. So which were the children that were actually in that? Tiffany, Kevin and Saffron.

That's right. They're the children by my second marriage, you know.

Right. Fred?

My father, Fred.

Oh he was in it, was he?

He's in it.

Oh right.

He came to visit us one day, and so he's sitting in there while my two daughters are actually doing ballet dancing, you know.

Right.

Which is incredibly funny, because they never had any ballet lessons. And, you know, they're doing things like, sort of, pulling up their socks. Oh it's extremely funny, you know.

So, your dad was in it as well then?

He just happened to be sitting there, completely bemused, he didn't know what the hell was going on, you know.

And, so they let...the whole group of you actually did something at the Serpentine, didn't you?

Yes.

Was this related to the...?

Yes, well with the *Lacey Rituals*, I realised that, although it was long before I started doing rituals to do with the Earth Goddess and things, I saw the day-to-day things you do as rituals, because very often, you know, like, you get out of bed, and you do things in a very similar way, and, like you put your shoes on, and you do your tie, and put your shirt on, put your coat on. And... [crashing sounds] My gosh! Hang on.

[break in recording]

OK.

OK. Well that noise you may have heard was, a log fell out of the fire, it was panic stations. Right.

So the...yes, the family, you were just talking about the involvement of the children, the Lacey Rituals. *What about the Serpentine Gallery? Because that was called* The Laceys at Home. *Something you did outside the gallery, was it?*

Yes, that's right. Serpentine Gallery.

1972, called...

I can't remember what year it was.

Do you not remember it? The Laceys at Home.

I had built a living room at the ICA for an exhibition called *Ten Sitting Rooms*, so I set out all the walls and floors and ceilings for that room.

Mm.

And I decided... I was asked to do something. And so outside the gallery we reconstructed this room, in which for about three days, we had one wall removed, with a crash barrier, so the people watching wouldn't actually get anywhere near us. We ignored the people watching. Well what happened was, that some, some years before, I'd been driving along near Tottenham, and I'd seen a council house where they removed one wall with like, patio windows, and the family were still sitting there having their dinner or something. And the bus just went by. And I thought, well that's fantastic, fantastic, you know. Like during the war, when parts of houses were demolished, you could see inside a room, you could see all the wallpaper, the fireplace, maybe the bookcase, and the remains of a bed. And I was fascinated with like, looking, like a fly on the wall, you know. And so, we removed one wall, and lots of my children from my first and second family used to come along. And they'd be sitting there doing their homework, we'd be watching the television. We'd be preparing food and things. And we'd put up news flashes, like we'd tell the audience watching, we're going to be watching *Batman* in half an hour, or we'd be having dinner in three-quarters of an hour. And people were just fascinated, because they were non-captive, they could walk away if they felt bored, stay as long as they liked. An interesting thing was that, because we were a little family there, if someone, like a little boy fell over, playing in the park, complete stranger, and cut his knee, his mother knocked on the door, there was a door, and said, 'Excuse me, but do you have any Elastoplast or something?' Or another family would come along and say, 'We've been having a picnic, we've got some milk left over, would you like the milk?' And later on, when the *Lacey Rituals* was shown as part of the London Film Festival, we met David Bowie, who had come to see a film made about a mime artist that he used to work with, and we met him in the green room, and he said, 'I saw you doing that thing in the park.' It turned out he was one of our fans. Anyway. So we lived for about three days. We didn't sleep there, because we weren't allowed to. We had to board it up every night. And, we put a notice up saying, 'You can look upon this as either live sculpture or...' live sculpture, or...or living theatre, you know, you could

make up your own minds, you know. So, that was the... And I did film that actually, you know, so I've got a record of that.

So, how long did the Lacey Rituals*, or working with the family, as a big group, go on? Just a few years was it?*

Well the film...

Did you work...

Well we called... You see, I was invited by Camden city council to make something, an experience, for children to interact with. And I decided to make something which we later called *The Laceys' Incredible Whotsit Machine*, which was all made out of aircraft tubular metal. It was like a big climbing frame, but on a much bigger scale, with platforms, and holes and things. It was like a maze. And then we used to have a pile of raw materials alongside, in which children could go in and do anything they liked. And we used to have piles of toys, all sots of materials. And people would make little homes, little nests. They'd make pirate ships out of it. All sorts of things. And we did notice that we were largely going to places around King's Cross where there were like, blocks of flats. And, the children used to get so excited. They were very deprived, they couldn't even climb a tree, like... Oh I've knocked the microphone. Like in the country you can climb, climb a tree. So it gave them lots of facilities for doing things they couldn't normally do. And they wouldn't let us go, at the end of the day, that they were clinging onto it, and, 'Please,' they were crying, you know, 'Please stay, please stay.' And on one occasion, we took six children clinging on the back without realising it, down the road, about a mile away, and we said, 'Look, you've really got to go off, get off.' And they said, 'Where are we?' And we found that children living in London, in like, in these blocks of flats, if you took them about three streets away, they'd be completely lost. Because their, their sort of...they only knew from the block of flats to the school down the road, or to, to the local shop, you know. So that, that... So, all my children used to come along and help with it, you know. But we did nothing apart from supervise in case of injuries and things, you know. So that was called *The Laceys' Incredible Whotsit Machine*. And then, we bought an old government surplus army marquee, which was twenty foot by forty

foot, and we then had a thing called *The Laceys' Magic Fun Factory*, in which we'd have a stage in there with a microphone, different musical instruments. And we'd have an area, a dressing-up box, we'd have make-up, we'd have ultraviolet paint. And kids would go in there and just, just, just without any instruction or any, from our point of view, they would do their own thing, which was really incredible, the things they used to do. I mean one boy took all his clothes off, put on women's clothes and make-up, went home, and his mother came round furious, said we'd encouraged him to dress up as a woman. But we hadn't, it was what he had done all on his own, you know.

Mm.

I did find that I had like, little bamboo flutes and things, and I imagined children would make funny noises, but they didn't. In fact one child actually one day broke all these bamboo flutes, and I was about to stop her, because it seemed as though she was destroying something, but what she was doing, she was listening to the amplified sound of all the bamboo breaking, you know. And I realised that, when you give children things, toys and things, with limited, limited sort of, use, they may break things up. Like my father, being a house painter, he used to bring back bits of wood, and that was the most marvellous thing. I'd rather have bits of wood and off-cuts of wood than have readymade toys, because I could make those bits of wood into all sorts of things. And a big lesson I learnt was from my daughter Tiffany once. I gave her some drawing pencils and a drawing pad, I suppose hoping she'd do some sort of drawing. But she was sat there, and she started tearing all the paper up. I was about to stop her when I suddenly thought, no no, I'll let her do it. Anyway, she tore it up into little pieces, threw it up in the air, and she said, 'Look Daddy, it's snowing.' And that was a great lesson really, that if you leave children to their own devices, they'll do all sorts of unexpected things, and really beautiful things, you know.

Did the children go to school while they were doing this, or did you, did they just work with you really?

No, it would probably be at weekends and things, so...

Oh right.

So that was all right, you know.

Mm. Do you want to talk a bit about the children? Because you didn't say much...

Yes. Well...

Particularly about what...I mean the first...

Yes, well...

Which, who was the first child to be born?

Well my first wife...

Pat, that was Pat.

That was Pat. I was always very shy about women and things. But, on one occasion, I went to see a French film, I've forgotten what it was called, and there was this guy, he went into this, this boat with this woman. He was sitting back like, drinking champagne and everything, and she was doing all the rowing, you know. And I thought, what a masterful man he is. And the following day I was invited to, with a friend of mine, to a dance, which was like, a blind date, and because I'd seen the film the night before, I was all full of confidence you see. So we went to this, went to this dance. And then we went back to Pat's parents' house where she was living to have a cup of coffee, because her parents were away for the weekend. He, my friend started snogging this girl, and I started snogging with this lady called Pat. And we were laying on the floor in her sitting room. I suddenly felt courageous to say, 'Well, it's a big cold here; do you think you could get a pillow and a blanket, keep ourselves warm?' So she brought a pillow and a blanket down. And then I, then I plucked up courage and said, 'Well we're laying on the floor here, it's all a bit hard; what about going and laying on the bed?' So we went upstairs, and we're laying on the bed. And I say, 'Well we're laying on the bed; why not get in the bed?' So we, we then took all

our clothes off, she put her nightdress on, and I put on her father's pyjamas, and we got into bed. And all we were doing that night, it's the first time I'd ever been to bed with a woman, we just kissed and cuddled all night long. And I was so exhausted from the emotional experience of that, when I got home, I was completely unconscious the rest of the day, as though I'd been making love about ten times during the night, with the emotional thing. Anyway, so, talk about, fair heart never won the fair lady, or, he who...what's it? No. He who dares, wins, you know. Those sort of expressions. Anyway, it got so that, her father was a very high up sort of civil servant, very, very upper middle class, you know, and I used to call round for Pat on a Sunday afternoon to go for a walk in the country with a rucksack on my back with a tent inside and all tent poles sticking out. (laughs) Because we'd get to the nearest bit of land and, wood, and then we'd put up the tent and we'd be making love inside, you know. So anyway, the night I.....

[End of F8507 Side A]

[F8507 Side B]

You were sat on the park... You were on the park bench.

Yes, we sat on the park bench, and I went down on bended knee, and asked her if she'd marry me, and have six children. Because I felt I wanted to embrace all inner being[???], you know. And it wasn't the case, I suppose, not consciously, of passing on my genes or anything. Anyway, we lived in Highgate Village, I was a student, but I went... Did I tell you, I was knocking on doors?

Yes, you told me about the [inaudible] thing. Yes.

Yes. Anyway...

So you actually thought you were going to have six children then? You actually had said to her that?

Yes, that's right, yes.

So you...

And, when I had tuberculosis, I finished up in a convalescent home, which had been lived in and built by W S Gilbert, who had made the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, you know, with Mr Sullivan. And I took Pat there just to show her where I had been, studied art for the first time. And we found a bear pit, he used to keep a bear, and in this sort of depression in the ground there was a wooden post. And we decided to make love and conceive our first child. And I'd being using condoms up to then, and on that occasion I didn't use a condom, and then I used a condom afterwards, and she became pregnant, just from that once, you know.

Mm.

So that was our first child, called Christine.

[break in recording]

So that was your, your first child, Christine, you were saying. That was the conception of Christine.

Yes. Is that running?

Yes, we're all right now.

Right. Well Christine, or Chrissie, was born in 1951. And then, in 19...

Were you there when she was born?

Pardon?

Were you there when she...?

No I wasn't.

Can you remember anything about it?

I can't, no. I... She had to go into a maternity home I think, you know.

Right.

In those days it wasn't even thought about, husbands being present.

No, it's true. Mm.

And then a year later Angela was born, who was really called Angela Marion, so she was originally called Marion. And then later she chose the other name, and so she's known as Angela now, you know. And then I don't remember how long afterwards, but then, a year or two later John was born. And a bit later on Julie was born. And then, a bit later on... Let's see. Well how many have we got now? We've got

Chrissie, Angela, John, Julie, and then, Peter was born, and then Rosemary was born. Well, I was doing West End nightclub cabaret, and one night I went off to, it was about midnight, I went off to perform in the West End, forgot something, went home, and I walked into the... We had a, because the children had all the bedrooms, Pat and I slept on a bed-settee in the living room. And I walked into the living room, and she was laying on the bed with a young guy who lived next door. Anyway, they jumped up. I don't what they were doing, but they jumped up, all looking very embarrassed. He pushed past me, rushed into the lavatory and pulled the chain and came back. So I immediately assumed that he was getting rid of a condom or something. I was really horrified. Because, I looked upon, you know, love and marriage as a very sacred thing. We did have lodgers at different times, at different times, there were occasions when one or two of the women lodgers made sort of, overtures towards me which, because, you know, it had all been a sacred thing, I had, wasn't interested in. But once I found her with this other guy, and I don't know what they were doing, they may have been kissing and cuddling, or groping or whatever, it really destroyed everything for me, you know. I just, they gave me some sort of, what I thought was a lame excuse about what had been happening, and I just went off, drove around London for the rest of the night really. But that, something within me sort of died I suppose. So, we used to know lots of friends from a local dramatic society and they used to come to parties and things, and during that time there was this young lady called Jill that was there. And, I suppose I must have fancied her to some extent, because later on, when, with Michael Bentine, I was doing a show in London with him, called *Don't Shoot, We're English*, Jill came along with a friend to see the show, and I took her home, and the following week she came to see the show again, and then when I took her home the other night, a week later, we made love. And so, then on, started a secret affair. A secret affair, which was horrendous really, because, my wife didn't know anything about it at the time; one or two of my male friends did, including my friend called Ted Dicks that I've mentioned previously. And one night he confronted me with it, with her, telling me, telling her in my presence that I was having this affair, you know. And all hell was let loose, you know, there was screaming and shouting and things like that. And I remember one night this theatre group, there were twenty-five, they all came round, and they all tried to talk me into giving Jill up, which I thought was very hypocritical, because all the parties with them I used to go to, they were always kissing and canoodling with some sort of other

member of the group in the corner. But it seemed to be, in peer groups there are unwritten laws about how far you can go and what you can do. They were quite happy to kiss and cuddle at a party with another woman, but not have an affair, and I'd broken the rules by having an affair. And they may have had affairs, but they wouldn't have given up their marriage and their wife and family, but I wanted divorce, I wanted to go and marry Jill, you know. So this went on for five years, which was incredible. I mean at one point, Jill wasn't on the phone, and I bought sort of army, government surplus shortwave walkie-talkies, so that we could keep in touch, you know; she was about three miles away, you know, and we...

Mm.

And then there was one time when I... Have I told you this? I went...

You did tell me about the, the two apartments in America.

Oh yes.

You mentioned there.

Well in about, when I went out one night, one morning, and found Jill in the van outside.

Oh no, you didn't say, no.

Well, I smuggled her in the house. Pat was in the kitchen doing the washing-up, and I had to smuggle... If she turned round, she would have seen us. Smuggle... I don't know if my wife knows this. I had to smuggle Jill up the stairs into my studio in the loft for about three days, because both my, both... Jill was threatening to commit suicide, and attempting it, and so, and Pat was, Pat took an overdose at one point, we had to walk around the room for hours, you know, save her life, you know. So I had two women pulling me on both sides. I really...you know, I couldn't bear to leave my wife and six children, but then I couldn't give up Jill. At one time I tried to, but it all came back again. And for a year I might think, I've got to give up, I've got to give up

Jill, and another year would go by, I've got to give up Pat, and I didn't know which way to turn. And, in the end, of course then Jill became pregnant with our first son called Kevin. And so, there was like a wife and six children on one side, and then there was my girlfriend. We became engaged, I bought her an engagement ring, while I was still married to Pat. (laughs) We then had another, she had a child on that side. So it was all being pulled this way and that way. And then I thought, well, this is going to be very selfish, because, if I stay with Pat, that I no longer love, what sort of environment is this going to be for my six children? Just trying to keep a marriage together, for their sake, but they're going to pick up that we're not happy, we're not in love. I thought, I've got to be selfish and I've got to go for the, you know, the woman that I want to be with. So I eventually made the break. But because Pat used to get so angry and furious, I thought, I can't just walk out and leave all my things behind. So secretly over a period of about a year, I rented a basement in Soho and I gradually smuggled things out of the house. So everything practically gone, no one seemed to notice. But of course, the terrible night was when the phone rang, and Jill phoned up and she said, 'The baby's on the way.' And I put the phone down, and Pat said, 'Who's that on the phone?' I said, 'Oh I'm invited to a cabaret.' She said, 'No no, it was that other woman wasn't it?' She said, 'What is it?' I said, 'Well if you want to know, Jill's having a baby, so I've got to go to the hospital.' She said, 'I'm coming along too.' So we pulled up outside this hospital at Hyde Park Corner, sitting in the car, about to get out when the ambulance pulls in and Jill goes in to the hospital. Anyway, I wasn't present for that birth, but...

That was Kevin was it then?

That was Kevin. But then later on, Tiffany was born, and I was present for that, that was a maternity home. And then when Saffron was born, Saffron was born at home.

Oh right.

And we...

It was at Hackney, when you lived at Hackney, in that factory you mentioned?

No no. That's before then. Lived in, where is it now? Not far from Hackney.

Was it Bounds Green?

No no. No. I'll remember, I'll remember at some point.

Mm.

And I didn't have a camera, but I wanted to do a sound recording of it.

Oh.

So I put a microphone up by the window. It's one of those microphones, it's, what's it now? Well it's used like, two ways, you can speak this way or that way you see. And we were living on a busy road, so when you play back the recording, you hear all this traffic going by, as though she's being born alongside a sort of, a motorway or something. And I remember when she came out of the, you know, when she was born, I was from a particular position, and I saw these two lumps down in her pubic area which I thought were testicles. I said, 'It's a boy!' you know. And then the midwife said, 'No, it's a girl.' I said, 'Oh it's a girl,' you know. But I mean, it was her pubes that were rather swollen, and I thought they were testicles, you know. Anyway, I've still got this recording somewhere knocking around.

And that was Tiffany? Is she the youngest, Tiffany?

No, Saffron is the youngest.

Sorry, Saffron's the youngest.

Now, now it's interesting that out of my nine children, my eldest daughter, she, although she hasn't done a lot of music, she did learn to play the guitar, but she has, she has backed up, she backed up her husband who is a rock guitarist, and she's backed up my eldest grandchild called Kesta[ph], because he's a brilliant guitarist,

and he's studying at a music college near Manchester. So, it's interesting that, some of them have gone into performance and music, you know. And film, and video.

Mm.

Angela, the second child, she married a guy, and then they went into buying houses, doing them up, and she now runs, she ran a hotel in Bournemouth, she now has blocks of flats. And she went, I suppose she's picked up from Pat, who was an accountant, she's picked up all the money, go for money and things like that, you know, and holidays in Tenerife. Now, my next child, John, he, he has, he's got a degree in art, and he has, he does video performance and does masks and things, you know, he's a performance artist; he does everything, films, video, music, everything. One time when he was at art school, because he was being accused of following in his father's footsteps, he actually changed his surname to Gunibusque[ph], which, Pat's parents came from Denmark with the surname Busque[ph], and her grandfather was Guni Busque[ph], so he called himself Gunibusque[ph], you know. Anyway, Julie, she has been studying art and she has wonderful exhibitions of what they call installations, you know; the most recent one, she went off to Yorkshire and stayed with John, and videoed a beautiful waterfall. And then down in some barns near Bury St Edmunds, she had this huge cinema screen, which started...fixed onto a beam, which hung down and then draped all across the floor, and this whole video is projected onto it. So you really feel you're watching a waterfall. And of course, I, when I went in, the screen that's on the floor, you really feel it's water, you can walk into it. And my youngest daughter, Saffron, who's a brilliant singer, she's sort of singing beautiful sort of, not songs but beautiful sounds on it too, you know. So Julie is an artist. And then, my next child, Peter, he went into... Pat, because she was involved with Highgate public school, she sent him to public school, and he's now a teacher. Although he plays the dulcimer, he doesn't do anything really artistic. My next child, who is Rosemary, she, she's got synthesisers and recordings and she does music and things. Tiffany, who was at the UEA studying maths and...no, chemistry and biology, she sings with bands and different things, she's got a brilliant voice. And, then there's... Oh Kevin, sorry, Kevin is older than her. He, he used to sing with a band. He now sings with a choir, and when he...he's a teacher. And at one point he, he was teaching the children to make robots and things you see. This is interesting.

Mm.

And then Saffron, she's just got her degree in drama from the UEA. She is, she's a cross between performance artist and doing field theatre. She was at Glastonbury walking around in a sort of, weird sort of ballroom, wedding dress thing, playing the part of like, a, a debutante, you know. At Glastonbury, like, oh, what is it all about, and oh it's all very strange, and... And she's fantastic, she's got her own theatre group. So it's interesting that, you know, my children have grown up in this sort of environment, with me doing different things, covering a whole range of things, and a lot of them, you know it's in the genes, but it's also nature and nurture mixed up together you know.

Mm. Any of them been to the RCA?

Pardon?

Have any of them been to the RCA?

No.

No.

No. No. No, I mean they're all doing alternative things really, you know.

Mm. Mm.

That probably wouldn't be acknowledged by the RCA.

No, I meant to train. You said one of them had been to art college, I just wondered, given the fact of what you, your experience had been, whether any of them had been to the...

Well, when John, you see John first of all went to a Foundation school where he did change his name to Gunibusque[ph] then. Because in Foundation they give you all sorts of projects, he knew what he wanted to do, and he wasn't allowed to do his projects, so he left. Then he went back part-time and got a degree, in the Manchester area, you know.

Right.

But there's always been a sort of rivalry between me and John, because in the, in the Seventies I was building synthesise, doing electronic music, and making films. He was working in the same field. I think we both influenced each other, you know.

Mm.

But, there has been a bit of rivalry between us, you know, and when we get together we tend to wind each other up rather, you know. And, all my children, I think my children by my first marriage, they have a sort of love-hate relationship with me, because I left them and got a divorce from their mother to marry Jill, my second wife. And I know my eldest son, John, did feel abandoned, I was his hero and I'd walked out, you know. Mind you, I used to go and visit them two or three times a week, used to do all the shopping, . And when I went on holiday with Jill and my other three children, all the other six children used to come along together. So they all regard themselves, although they're stepbrothers and sisters, they don't see the step business at all, they all see themselves as brothers and sisters bonded together, you know, which is really beautiful, you know.

Mm.

And, although I don't get on very well with Jill, my second wife, we're not really on speaking terms, I'm great friends with my first wife. Which is strange, because I left my first wife to go and marry Jill; Jill left me to go off with some other bloke she fell in love with, and I supported her in it, because that's what she wanted to do, although I was heartbroken. She won't speak to me now, you know.

Mm.

I told you about that, did I? Oh, well we'll come to that. It's all to do with the Head in Glasgow. Mm.

Ah, right.

Yes.

No.

And... Well then, after my second marriage broke up, with Jill, I then met a lady through going to the fairs, a basket-maker, we lived together for about five years.

Oh you talked about her. That was Sue, was it?

Sue.

You did talk about...

Who was very manipulative and eventually... When Tiffany and Saffron moved out of Brentwood Farm, I said, 'If ever you want to come back, the door's always open, your bedrooms are still here,' and when they wanted to come back Sue said, 'It's either me or them.' I said, 'Well it's got to be them.'

Mm.

Which, I was rather relieved, because, it got me off the hook, you know.

Mm.

And then, then I told you about meeting Jenny, did I?

Mm.

Yes, about meeting Jenny, you know, which was a very magical, classic love story really.

Mm.

I can't really talk too much about Jenny.

No?

She doesn't like a lot of publicity.

No? That's all right. So you've talked a bit more about your family now haven't you.

Mm. And I'm very proud of them, you know. And my grandchildren, you know, my grandchildren...

Oh yes.

I've got about fifteen grandchildren.

Fifteen, have you?

And I can't remember their ages; I can't remember all my children's ages really. And they come and visit me here. There are...Julie has three daughters, Matty the youngest, then she has twins. And, obviously we're only on audio, but, you've got the *Womaniser* in the corner, and over there, for my ninetieth[sic] birthday party they gave me that thing with rubber gloves on, which is like the *Womaniser* made by them, you know.

Your seventieth.

My seventieth.

Not your ninetieth. You just said ninetieth.

Seventieth, yes.

And did you have all your family round? Do you want to talk about the party that you had, because that was quite a big occasion.

Well... Yes, well, Chrissie, the rest of my children don't really speak to Chrissie. There's a family feud going on, you know, which I haven't got to the bottom of.

Which one's Chrissie?

Chrissie is the eldest.

Right.

Chrissie, she... I don't know what it's all to do with, but one or two of them will speak to her near enough, but the others don't. And so, Chrissie was the only one that didn't come to my seventieth birthday party, because she couldn't face meeting the other, the other children, you know. But Jenny persuaded me to have a seventieth birthday party. But I was rather reluctant, because, I've never really bothered about birthdays and things. And suddenly, to take your seventieth and have a big celebration, it took me a year to get over it, because it was as though life had stopped really. It's as though, I was like a butterfly, I'd been flying along all my life and suddenly I've got a pin and I've been nailed down, 'You are seventy,' you know. Anyway, I went along with it. And now I'm very pleased that we had it. I'm a part-owner in a big circus top. They wanted, the other people wanted to charge me, but Jenny said that if I clean it, we'll have it for free, and they said yes. So we erected this in my field, this huge circus tent. And we invited about five or six hundred people, all in fancy dress, come in your own fantasy costumes and things. And we had a jazz band, we had a rock band, we had Irish sort of kali[ph] band, wild Irish rock band, and then we had Spanish and Arab flamenco. And then, I...I used to see a man called Arthur Brown in the Sixties, the Amazing World of Arthur Brown, he'd come and he'd sing, 'I am the god of hell fire,' and he'd have all candles on his head,

and flames and things. And a friend of mine said, 'I know Arthur Brown, I'll see if he'll come.' So he came, and it turned out we were blood brothers, he'd seen me in the Sixties performing and I'd seen him. And a local band called Dommburys[???][inaudible] that were playing, they learnt from the record, fire, and Arthur Brown, he came up on the stage and they all sang and played as though they'd been rehearsing for months. And that was fantastic, you know. And I appeared, I appeared at nine o'clock. I'd made this, this machine years ago. In *Star Trek* they, they sort of materialised in this machine, and I made a machine in which I could materialise for a show I was doing.

You talked about that.

I talked about that.

Yes.

So I appeared in this sort of space costume, you know, to the, the music of *2001*, boom boom boom boom, you know. And that was really fantastic really. Some of my old Royal College of Art friends came along. I had about sixty presents all brought along, you know. It was really incredible. But as I say, it took me about two years to try to...for some life after my seventieth birthday party, you know, I felt I'd been sort of, put into mothballs somehow, you know. Mm.

Mm. Shall we go back to the Sixties again?

Sixties, yes.

We keep moving around here don't we, but never mind. There were just one or two things that you didn't mention. Well, the opening, the BBC...I don't think you talked about the BBC2.

No. Well...

'64 when it actually opened, you were going to do something on... Well you did, you did some kind of performance for the opening of the channel.

Yes. The Alberts I worked with, they had a guy called Tom Parkinson that used to work with them, and he, he joined up with a guy called Denis Gifford. Denis Gifford was a film archivist, who did team up with Denis Gifford in lots of those early Denis... No... No, Denis Norden.

Right.

Denis Norden does those sort of out-take things. And, anyway, this other guy... Anyway, they wrote a script, which they presented to us, and they got a BBC director called Denis Main Wilson to direct it. And they also invited Ivor Cutler to play a part. And it was really a jokey way of presenting like, the history of communications. It should have opened on one particular night, but there was a power failure so it opened on the following night, you know, in which, I'm playing all sorts of parts in it.

Mm.

I'm not really being myself, and so I felt very uncomfortable doing acts and things that I didn't think were very funny. And so... Anyway, it went out on the opening night of BBC2, it was called *Alberts Channel Too*, which is like, t-o-o. I've now got a copy of it. Bits of it are embarrassing and bits of it are quite funny really. But, the thing was, I had a big row with the director. I always blow it all somehow or other. Having a discussion with the director, a week after the programme, about, let's do a series, you know, and then we had this big argument about amateur and professional performing. And Denis Gifford...no, Denis Main Wilson was saying, 'Before you can do anything funny, you've got to professionally practise it and get it perfect.' And he said, 'Jack Benny does a funny act with a violin, that's only because he's studied the violin.' I say, 'You don't have to play the violin to do a funny act about violins.' And we had this... I said, I do a tap dance act in which, although I did learn tap dancing, I'd forgotten half of it, and it's where I get all my legs tangled up and the dummy all falls to pieces, and everything goes wrong. And, we had this big argument, and so we never did a series. And then, I sacked Denis Gifford from being

our scriptwriter and he burst into, crying, because he said, you know, 'I've got a wife and a new baby, and I need the money.' 'Sorry, I don't want to do a series with you.' So, I blew him out and blew myself too, you know, so we never did a series. Because I didn't want to compromise you see. I never want to compromise, you know. So, that was on the opening night. It should have been the first programme, but we were beaten to it by *Playschool* in the morning, you know. But it's something the BBC have forgotten about, you know, I think they're all a bit embarrassed by it, you know.

What about the...I know the dates aren't much use, but 1970, the International Broadcasting Convention, with the demonstration with robots, Come Together festival, does that mean anything to you?

That's a different thing, yes.

Was it? Right.

No, the...

What was that then?

The Broadcasting Convention. I had a friend that made radio mics, and he said, 'If you put your robot on one of my stands, I have a stand, it's on a balcony, and I have another stand on the other side of the balcony, so if you look across, and you can see the robot.' And I said, 'Well, if you give me two radio mics,' there's one on the robot and Jill has got one, and as people pass by, she can see them and she starts speaking to them through the robot. And they think, oh it's a tape recording, you know, like she said to one guy, 'How are you?' and he said, 'OK' and he thought it was a tape recording. Then she said, 'I like your coloured trousers,' and everything. And, once it was established that, you know, it was live one-to-one talking, he really believed it was a woman talking to him, it was the robot. And you find men, very shy men, will start sort of talking, and flirting, and, like sort of, making private sort of, intimate disclosures about their lives and things. And it was interesting, you know, that they... I thought, this could be a very sort of, psychotherapy tool, you know, where they, they

can't speak direct to a woman, but they'll speak to a woman if it's coming through like a robot figure thing, you know. Yes.

The Come Together festival, that was different, was it, event?

Yes that was at the Royal Court Theatre. We did do... We... The Alberts and I upstairs, we did do a play which was like, an amateur play in which everything goes wrong, you know. Because we really hate professionalism, you know. And so, you'd have a thing whereby, there's a lot of people in a room, like a society, a soirée, you know, and, suddenly all the lights go out, and when the lights come on, all the jewellery has gone. And then the lights go out again, and when it comes on again all their clothes have been stolen, you know. So they have to send for a detective. And the detective knocks on the door, but can't actually make the people inside hear, so he pushes through the French windows, but all the scenery falls down, and collapses onto an armchair. Then they say, 'You've got to go in through the front door,' so he goes out and comes in through the front door, and then, because it's in the script, 'Would you care to sit in the armchair?' and he has to sit on these broken pieces. So it was like a sort of, a satire of, of the theatre, but using amateur theatricals, you know, the show must go on at all costs.

Mm. So that was Come Together.

That was Come Together, yes.

[End of F8507 Side B]

[F8508 Side A]

Right. 1964, The Operation*, can you...*

Well, yes. Jeff Nuttall, that I had met, organised this environment or, we now call an installation I suppose, like a maze you went into in the basement of Better Books, with people like, John Latham in it, and, they were the only two sort of artists I think, the others were like, architects or poets and things. And, while that was on... Oh no, it must have been after it was over I think. Charles Marowitz had a seminar upstairs at Better Books on happenings, which were all the rage then, happenings, and, everybody, the audience all went down into the basement to witness a happening. And I think it was at the time of the Vietnam War, they were all down there, I was wearing a rubber suit with a gas mask spraying out sort of smoke everywhere. And then, suddenly a trapdoor opened up, and then a big chute... Well first of all, blood started running down the walls. I was running round upstairs in the Better Books, pouring red, coloured, like blood through funnels, so it would all run down the walls down in the basement. And then, a trapdoor lifted up and a chute, and then all dummies covered in blood-soaked bandages all came down and crashed onto everybody. And then suddenly a brick wall at the end of the basement completely pushed out, because it was all bricks, took no notice of[???] [inaudible]. And then out from there came two surgeons with, like an operating, operating table, and they dragged a girl, a pregnant girl out of the audience, laid her on the table, cut her open, pulling out all her blood-soaked organs and things. It was Jill in the audience, with a big plastic bag all full of offal and stuff, you know. And people were fainting and screaming, all sorts of things were happening, you know. So that was, that was the happening. And the happenings were really to try to... Well, ours were like, politically motivated to try to shock people. Did I mention Macmillan was saying, 'You've never had it so good,' and yet we thought things were bad; everyone seemed complacent. No one seemed bothered about things that were happening in other parts of the world, you know. So we, we did that. And then later on there was a thing at the Roundhouse which I think you mentioned called the Angry Arts Week.

Yes, what was that? I'm not sure whether we covered that.

The Angry Arts Week was a protest about the Vietnam War I think. And they asked me to build some sort of installation. And I decided to build, like a prisoner-of-war camp, with a, it had all bamboo inside, all sort of barbed wire and stuff, and there were all these bits of bodies. And there were like, hands clinging onto the wire, but then the hands, there were lots of hands floating through the air and things. And the people organising it got quite upset, they said it was very distasteful. And I said, 'It's all to do with war, all to do with death.' And they said, 'There's more to war than death you know.' And I thought, yes, there is, but you know... Because they, they would have people, protest poets talking about war and things, and every now and again they'd have people playing the guitar to lighten things up, you know. Whereas I would want it to have been heavy and heavy and heavy, you know.

Mm.

And so that was the Angry Arts Week.

Did you do any other events with Jeff Nuttall, apart from the things at Better Books then?

No, I didn't, no. But the...Jeff Nuttall really introduced me into building these sort of environments, and I did go to various art schools, including Leeds.

Ah, that was, because he was at Leeds wasn't he, mm.

Yes, and I told you about that, where I was banned.

You talked about Leeds. The osmosis, and...

Did I tell you about the, the...

The sex thing.

Did I tell you about when I exposed myself?

You did, yes.

[inaudible].

Been up on the train, that's right. So you didn't do anything else in particular in London with him then?

No. But of course while the environment was on in Better Books, did I tell you I went to St Martin's to give a lecture to the students about expressing their own person things?

You said that... Well, you did talk a bit...

Attacked by the students, you know.

Yes, why were you attacked by the...? Because I listened over...

Well they got angry you see. They were all under the influence of all the art teachers, like Anthony Caro and things.

Because he was there then, mm.

About producing art which looked like art, as had been up to that time.

Mm.

Whereas I was, I was trying to encourage them to free themselves of all these art school restrictions, and decide for themselves what art was. And they, they were angry that I was preaching freedom, you know.

Mm.

And I say, one of them came up, or two of them, and they actually tried to hit me, and I had to pull them off, you know.

But other art schools, you didn't find that reaction at all; you found the opposite reaction didn't you, from what you were saying.

Yes.

Other places, students were very...I mean that's what they wanted sort of thing.

Yes, they were. It would be the staff that would get angry with me, you know, and...

Mm.

Be banned, and... I mean I think, Southampton, a two-hour lecture developed into a three-hour, with all the college came in, you know, pouring out all their grievances and things, you know.

So that was quite unusual, the reaction you got at St Martin's, presumably?

Yes, that was, that was.

Yes.

There probably were one or...several years in between, I don't remember, you know.

No. Right. The other thing... Let me see. Oh, what about...what was that, 1968 I notice in the catalogue it mentions a World Marathon Kissing Competition. What was that about?

There was an exhibition at a gallery, I don't know whether it was like, the British Society of Portrait Painters or something, you know.

Royal Institute Galleries.

Oh the Royal Institute Galleries, yes.

Was that it?

And I decided to have the World Marathon Kissing Competitions, you know, in which people had to continually kiss, and, and without moving their lips apart, you know. And I found that the people that won had done nothing except just touch their lips, conserved all their energy. The ones that were snogging away soon burnt themselves out, you know. And I did try to have a second run of it at the National Film Institute, when I had a two-hour talk there, showing films, and the *News of the World* picked up on my press report that there was going to be the World Marathon Kissing Competition, but when it came to it, no one volunteered to go in for it, you know.

Right. What else is going on at that time? I'm just looking to see if there's anything else that you... Oh is this...I've got down here, 1970, some...a lecture that you did. Perhaps that was the one that you just mentioned, 1971, let me just have a quick look. Was that the John Player Lecture at the National Film Theatre then, is that what...?

Yes that's it, yes.

Is that [inaudible] you were talking about?

I did [inaudible] John Player, yes. No.

You were also commissioned by Habitat to construct a work called Universal...

Integrator.

...Integrator*, for the BSC.*

That's right.

For the British Steel Corporation.

Yes.

What was that then?

Well, I'd seen a thing from childhood whereby, it's a book you open, and each page is divided into three sections, it's called Heads, Bodies and Legs, and you can make up different figures. So, it was about nine foot high, these big revolving metal frames that had six compartments, one with just legs, one with bodies, one with heads. And every thirty seconds they'd all change. And they made six times six times six, but I've never worked out how many that is. Anyway, the British Steel Corporation really hated it all. Because I had gone... You see, what's his name, who is the head of Habitat? Conran.

Conran.

Yes. He, he had designed the stand in which all the metal was like, stainless steel, or chromium plate. I'd gone to a steel stockist and just bought metal and welded it all together; it was all a bit, covered in grease, it was all going a bit rusty. And British Steel Corporation said, 'This isn't a very good image for us.' I said, 'Well that's the way steel comes; it doesn't always come chromium-plated.' So I stuck to my guns, and that was it, you know. I had to break it up when I came up here, because there wasn't room for it. But I wish I had kept it, you know. Because, lots of things I left behind, well like assemblages I made, I've only got the photographs now, you know.

Mm.

Which is very sad really. But, there is a veterinary place in Wymondham where my dog, Tammy, has recently been to have a hysterectomy, and round the back there's an old petrol pump, and I've got my eye on it. I think it's in use at the moment. Because I could put together an assemblage I'd made for the Marlborough Gallery, which is called *Motherhood*. Did I talk about *Motherhood*? It's...Jenny was in it.

Is it that one? No it's not that one.

No no no. It's not in there.

Oh I know the one you mean, yes.

No. Had I talked about that?

Where it feeds all the babies, and it all goes round the body and comes back out again.

Yes, yes, called *The Six-Way Nipple*.

Mm.

Well I've still got *The Six-Way Nipple* and all the babies.

Right.

And if I could get another petrol pump very similar, I'd put it back together. And I'd tell the...I'd say that this is, this has been put together, mostly from the original. I think it's legitimate to do that if you actually tell people what you've done, you know.

Mm.

So I've still got bits and pieces knocking around, I could put, about two or three I suppose really.

And you...which ones have you still got? You've still got Rosa Bosom.

And I've got the drug addict. Did I talk about the Drug Addict?

Is that...

It's called *I'm Not Chicken*.

That's...is that the one with the pill machine in? Is it this one, the pill machine?

Yes, that's right.

Purple hearts.

Yes.

Right, oh you've still got that one, right. Is that...what's it called?

It's called *I'm Not Chicken*.

I'm Not Chicken*, right. Not* Drug Addict*.*

Because I went to, I went to a party near Buckingham Palace once, and I stumbled over this man laying unconscious in the doorway. And I said, 'Who's he?' They said, 'He's the host.' Apparently he's a brain surgeon, and he's been smoking a lot of dope. And, I said, 'Well I hope he never has to operate on me in that condition.' And then they were passing a joint round, and I'd never really... I know people smoke things, but I'd never been in any situation, and I said, 'No no, I don't fancy that,' and they were taunting me, and crying out, 'Bruce Lacey's chicken.' So, lots of things I do are like a gut reaction to what has happened to me. So I thought, rightl you buggers, I'll...this is what I see you as, like, completely laying unconscious, you know, stoned out of your minds, incapable of doing anything, you know.

You've still got bits of that one then?

Bits of what?

Bits of I'm not Chicken*.*

Oh it's all, that's all complete.

Oh is it?

Upstairs, it's all complete, yes, yes.

Oh so it's all complete is it?

Yes, yes.

What about Eeny Meemy Miny Mo*, that's another one that was on at Marlborough, what was that like?*

Well that... (laughs) That's in there. It's really a, it's very simple really. It's just a nest of drawers with Eeny Meeny Miny Mo, catch a nigger by his toe. It's about colour prejudice, you know.

Right.

It's been pierced with arrows and things, spears and things, you know. It's a very simple one.

Just looking if there are any others. What was Why did Joshua Den Panther Die?, *what does that one look like?*

Well, when we were doing *The Three Musketeers* in Brussels, we went to an old scrapyard and I found a thing which was like a metal crucifix.

Oh yes.

And when you go into a Catholic church you buy a candle and light it, but in this case you put in a coin, and it lit up an electric candle. So I bought this, and in the gallery, you went in and you put a coin in, and little boxes lit up, which had religious lantern slides. And then... Was saying significant things. And then, at the top there was a plastic pumpkin I brought back from New York. So, it was like, it was all to do with religion and gobbledegook and things. It was called that, because someone said, 'Did you know, the real name of Jesus Christ was called Joshua Den Panther?' So I called

it *Why Did Joshua Den Panther Die?* Because I used to give, I used to give funny titles to things, you know.

You've still got this one, you've still got the bits and pieces?

It's all rusty, it's all rusty.

Oh right.

I don't think it will ever work again, you know, but...

No. What happened to The Politician*?*

Oh, that was bought by a man called Ceri Levy, whose father was an art critic that bought it from an exhibition, running in London at the same time at the Barbican.

Oh right. Is that...Mervyn Levy is it?

Pardon?

Isn't there somebody called Mervyn Levy at the Barbican?

Oh that must have been his father.

Oh I've heard about them, yes. I think he wrote in Studio.

Because his father bought it, and then his father died and then Ceri inherited it, you know.

Right. Oh I see. Oh that's where that went.

It's really a hair-drying machine from a swimming pool, and the thing that goes over your head is up-ended with teeth in, and when you put a coin in, it blows hot air out the mouth, and it's called *The Politician*. It's a very simple jokey one.

Quite a lot of them, you seem to put coins in your machines. (laughs)

Well that is because...

Is it the slot machine?

...they're not working all the time you see.

Oh that's true.

Only operates...that's a way of making things. So they only operate when there's someone there, and they're not wearing themselves out unnecessarily you see.

No, that's true, yes that's true. And it sort of reminds one of the old slot machines and, that were always around such a lot, or...

Yes. At the end of the pier.

Chocolate bar machines and things everywhere weren't there.

Yes. And I've worked in a swimming pool when I was a student in the summer holidays, and I'd seen one, you know. All these things drop into the mind, and you remember them. So when one comes up, you know, you, you [inaudible].

Just looking on the list if there are any others that you didn't talk about last time. We talked about... What was the Wartime Marriage *one? I'm not sure you mentioned that one.*

Oh *Wartime Marriage*. Well when I was, when I won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, I went to Italy to see every mural painting in Italy, and I went to Naples, and I went to Pompeii.

Mm.

Now Pompeii was covered up. They'd had lots of near misses, you know, there's going to be a, there's going...the volcano's going to erupt, Pompeii's going to erupt, and we're going to get covered in a bit of ash and things. And so when it finally happened, no one really believed it was going to be as bad as it was. So some left, some didn't. Some tried to leave when they realised it was going to be bad. And they were covered up with twenty foot of volcanic ash, which eventually solidified. So when they started excavating, they would...with a pickaxe, they'd find a hole. And by pumping plaster of Paris into the hole and filling it with plaster of Paris, when they eventually broke all the solidified ash away, they found complete casts of bodies. There were some that were like, people trying to open what would have been a gate I suppose, or get out of the house. There were couples laying clinging together. So I wanted to update it in like, this atomic age, so I got an old bed frame with no mattress on, and I put a man and a woman on it, shop window dummies with bits of arms broken off. And a baby, cuddling a baby, and they're all wearing gas masks. The baby was wearing a special gas mask in the Second World War, which was like, you put it inside and mother moved a pump to sort of pump air into it. And then I had this sort of plastic foam and mixed two together and you put it on and it starts to expand. All lumps of, lumps of foam, which were like some sort of atomic diseases or horrible eruptions on the skin. And I left it out in the garden, and it all got full of worms and insects, and it was all crawling, you know, in the exhibition, you know. It was a bit too much for them I think at the Marlborough. In fact eventually...

It was actually crawling in the exhibition, was it?

Yes, yes. Well then that's all rotted away, I no longer have, it, you know.

Is it? Oh right. Just wondered if there were any others that were in the...I'm looking at the Whitechapel catalogue now, because there might be some that were in this exhibition that weren't in the other one, which you'd not talked about. Just looking at the assemblages. Electric... You mentioned Electric Man Mark I, because that was the companion to Rosa Bosom wasn't it.

No it wasn't, no no.

Oh wasn't it?

This is what is in the *Monitor* film. These are two robot actors. [inaudible] my late[???] actors things, yes.

Oh right, oh I know what you mean, the robot actors. Oh you did talk about that. Superman's the...

Jasia Reichardt does that. And then one of [inaudible].

Oh well what's that one? I don't think I know...

Well that is a grandfather's clock.

This is One of Our Generals is Missing.

Yes, it's a grandfather clock without the clock, and the door is open. And inside is a thing they used to send to the widows of soldiers in the First World War, 'Your husband has been killed in action.' And the actual man's name was just typed on a bit of paper, just stuck on, all, at a funny angle, which I thought was a terrible insult. And during the King George VI Coronation I had little cut-out soldiers on horseback which I stuck inside with a general in front. And I fired airgun slugs into it. And then on the top of the head there was a tin helmet, as though a shell had gone through, with all the metal, jagged, sticking out the back. And inside was a pair of crutches. And I thought, well certainly in the First World War, generals didn't get killed, they were at the back, sending all the troops off to be killed. So it was an anti-war sort of thing, you know. It was bought by a man called Patrick Krell, but eventually disappeared. They found his clothes folded up on a beach in France, they've never found his body. So his wife inherited it I suppose, and then later on, a few years later I saw it in an art gallery being sold, so I don't know what's happened to that. So lots of things have become the disappeared, you know.

What about this one, They Don't Write Numbers Like That*? Oh wait a minute, that's the George Melly one.*

George Melly one, yes.

You did talk about that. I know this one...

The Institution, I talked about that, Aunty Daisy and the coffin there.

The People Are Talking*, you talked about that one, because that was the one with the Gothic machine.*

Yes, that's right.

Were there any others or is that it?

While I was having the affair with Jill, it was, all the neighbours, everyone was saying, all my friends, you know.

Perhaps there aren't any others then. Astronaut*, what was that one?*

Well that was the, I think it was the *Telegraph* gave ten television sets to artists, and asked them to make things. So, it was like an astronaut with the, a television set as the body, you know, and videos running of all...and landing on the moon and things, you know.

Right. Mother Head*.*

Mother Head, well that was the, the petrol pump blowing, pumping out all the milk to all the babies.

Oh right. Oh but it was, [inaudible] Motherhood*. Is it* Mother Head*?*

No I think it's *Motherhood*. No it's *Motherhood*, they've printed that wrong.

Yes, it looks like. It's Motherhood *in the other one isn't it.*

Yes, I never noticed that. No.

Yes it is.

It's been printed wrongly there, yes.

Oh well. Living Room...

Did I talk about *The Living Room*, did I? About going to Turkey and seeing this, this cemetery and things, did I?

No I don't think you did. Don't remember that.

Oh, [inaudible] a picture?

Is it this?

Yes, that's right. Well...

This is part of the Ten Sitting Rooms *exhibition.*

Yes, yes. Well the *Ten Sitting Rooms*, Jasia Reichardt, which, I kept bumping into over the years and things, she was at the ICA, the director, and she asked ten artists to make a sitting room each, you know.

Mm.

Well, on one of my travelling, well my travelling scholarship, I'd gone to Turkey. I was walking alongside a field in which men were digging trenches for foundations for a block of flats. And in the corner were lots of headstones from Turkish graves. They were like slabs of stone, with all Arabic writing on, and then turbans on top. Because,

before 1927 turbans and fezes were used, but 1927, they'd purged the language of Arabic and tried to de-~Arabicise themselves. Anyway. So I knew it was a cemetery. So I asked permission, and I went down into these trenches. And they were quite deep, about six foot deep. It was an old cemetery you see.

Mm.

And so they were cutting through skeletons and things. And I thought, you know, I always have these vision analogies, and I thought, this is like walking through the middle of a fruitcake, where you're cutting through, you cut a slice out of a wedding cake or a Christmas cake, you're cutting through nuts and raisins and glacier cherries. I thought, I'd like to make a room in which you have people in the room, and you freeze them, and then you cut through them and separate the two halves, and you can see all the secrets that are going on. So in the centre of the room there was a real cake, a real fruitcake. A slice had been taken out with a giant knife. It went through the cup and the saucer, the tablecloth, the table, through the walls and the ceiling, through the girl sitting there and the mother standing by the door. And then the whole wedge, cut out like a wedge of cake, that whole wedge was then pulled back about six feet, so you could see all sorts of secrets. You could see the mother was pregnant. Now, she was expecting a black baby. She also had a half of a cabbage in her head, because there's this analogy between, you know, housewives being cabbage-heads you see. The daughter, she was pregnant, which the parents didn't know anything about. And the baby in her womb was ready to come out head first, but inside the baby was another baby. The baby was also pregnant. And also inside her head there were all sorts of lollypops. And inside the, inside the armchair was her boyfriend, snuggled up there with Thermos flask and sandwiches, secretly, so touching her up with his thumb inside, under the chair. Because my sister had smuggled boyfriends, and I'd smuggled sort of, women into the house. So she was living... The father was sitting by a bookcase – it's significant I suppose, I didn't realise that at the time, he isn't cut at all – he's sitting there with his trousers open, wearing his wife's knickers, sort of wanking himself off, not moving, he's just holding his penis there. He's got all sorts of dirty pictures, you know, which he's masturbating with. And if you go over to the cocktail cabinet, open up the cocktail cabinet, there's all sorts of things that the wife is secretly using, like dildos made out of Plasticine and all sorts of

things. On the mantelpiece, and in all little nooks and crannies, are love letters that the wife is receiving from her lover. Now, after it was exhibited at the ICA, Wolverhampton Art Gallery wanted to exhibit it. But they said, 'Because Enoch Powell is our local MP, can you take the black baby out of the white mother and put a white baby in?' Because they were very sensitive about things like that. And I said, 'No, no you can't.' So, they never had it, you know.

So, what happened to it?

Well it came here, it came here from London. And eventually, you know, all the upholstery all got infested with mice and things, and I had to scrap it in the end, you know.

Right. Quite a big piece to keep really I suppose.

Oh, it...it had its own floor, its own ceiling, everything, you know.

Mm.

It was an amazing thing really. And I didn't have a camera at the time, so it wasn't even videoed. Just had odd photographs.

Is that all?

Mm.

Gosh.

So, you see I was trying to show some of the undercurrents, some of the things that I knew went on in suburbia, that, I know that a man next door will go off to work, and if you looked out in the garden you'd see another man three doors down would be climbing all over the fences. He wouldn't want to go in, into the front door. He'd be having an affair with the woman next door, you know.

Mm.

And all sorts of things that were going on in suburbia, you know.

Mm.

As I was involved in things going on in suburbia too you see.

There are a couple of other pieces actually mentioned on here which I've not particularly come across before. Supershadow*, 1971, what was that one?*

Mm.

That, again that was in the Whitechapel exhibition, obviously with [inaudible].

Well they had a thing at the Whitechapel...

Supershadow.

It doesn't say what it was called.

Supershadow.

Oh that was only the piece.

Oh.

But they had a thing in the Whitechapel, I've forgotten what it was called. It was about all sorts of alternative installations and sculptures using light and things, interactive things. And so, I, I made a wall that was six foot wide, eight foot high, that was covered, oh I don't know how many hundreds of little circuits, that were light-sensitive. Now, a light shone on those, but if you stood in front, you would block out the light on some of them; then on an adjacent wall, would be hundreds of little boxes, all little bulbs inside, that were behind white Perspex, that would light up.

So if you cast your shadow on this light-sensitive wall, your shadow appeared in a geometric form on the other panel. I've still got it. But it was, it was a nightmare technically to do that. I don't suppose it ever worked.

So you've still got the bits and pieces for this? Have you got it...is it still constructed, or not?

I've still got all... But it was a, it was a...oh.

It's quite a...I bet it's huge, isn't it?

You see, the... I forgot to read the instructions on... There were little things called, cadmium sulphite cells, tiny little cells that were light-sensitive. And I soldered them on. But I didn't read the instructions, which said that when you solder them on, you've got to use a thing like a heat sink, because the heat from the soldering iron will damage it. And so I damaged lots, and had to repair them. And then moving it to the gallery, the vibration got more damaged, so I had to repair more. And so then it came back. And so I don't know if it still works, you know, but I've still got it, you know.

Right. So that's that one. The last one as well, My Hero*, 1971. What was that?*

My Hero.

Wood and hardboard. Yes.

I can't remember.

It's a big thing, look. 518 times...

My Hero?

240 times 122, so it's a... No? Can't remember that one?

Can't remember.

Right.

Absolutely can't remember. That's amazing, that the only thing I...

204 inches times 96 times 48, that's pretty big. No?

I can't remember, I just can't remember, no.

Oh right.

I've never ever forgotten anything I've done, but I can't remember.

My Hero*, 1971. No?*

No.

Perhaps it'll come back to you.

I don't know. I can't remember. No.

OK.

Mm.

That's all I've...they were all the ones that I've noticed in there. I just thought it was worth going through them, see if there's anything else that you've not talked about last time really. Well that's a pity, I wonder what it was. (laughs) It's intriguing that isn't it.

Yes. *My Hero*.

Because you had so many heroes didn't you really.

Well I didn't have many. My biggest hero was Lenny Bruce I suppose.

Yes. But you talked about your grandfather, and, was it your uncle and...

Oh yes, oh yes those people, that's right, yes. Yes. Yes. My grandfather, that's right. And my uncle.

Perhaps it'll come back, perhaps it'll come back [inaudible].

Yes, I can't remember.

Yes. Just, one other thing that I was going to specifically ask you about, in the... Are you all right?

Yes, I'm all right, yes.

The Marlborough catalogue for 1964. I notice it mentions some specific exhibitions which I don't think you really touched on.

No.

But, there was one at the Prospect Gallery 1951.

Oh well, the thing I...that's the thing I put in their window.

Right.

Yes.

OK. The Gimpel Fils one, that was...was that paintings, in 1951?

That was a painting, that's right. I... When I first went to the Royal College of Art, because I'd always collected things, I didn't bother with painting or anything for the first six months I suppose. I put in an appearance and, so they'd know I was there,

and then I'd disappear. And I went on a rampage through all the galleries, right through the Natural History Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the Geological Museum, and a wonderful gallery which is gone now, called the, oh what was it called now? Oh. Imperial Museum was it? I don't, can't remember now. But it was a, it was a gallery devoted to all things from the British Empire. All the ethnic things, all the, the culture of all the different...

Is it the Horniman?

No. No, it's...it's up the road, it's in Exhibition Road, it's all within that same complex.

Oh yes.

Including... I sit there and watch films about them making, you know, harvesting coffee and things. Anyway, and the Science Museum, all these galleries. But in the, in the Victoria & Albert Museum, down in the basement there's this wonderful birdcage made out of ebony and ivory. It was a six-sided birdcage, a double-tiered birdcage, I did a painting of it. And that was in the Gimpel Fils Gallery. And Hugh Casson, or Sir Hugh Casson, bought it.

So it was a painting of a birdcage.

1951. Well the same year he's involved with the 1951 Festival of Britain, and he, one of his jobs is to protect Eros in Piccadilly Circus. And what does he protect it with? He builds a framework of a double tiered, six-sided birdcage, all around this, you know. Which must have been inspired by the painting he'd bought from me, you know.

Mm. What was, what did you show at the Portal Gallery in 1961? Was that assemblages? Were they assemblages?

No, no, I'm confused. The Prospect. No the Portal Gallery was where I put my first thing, you know, for the opening, just to sit in the window. But I can't remember what happened. I can't remember that, no.

Oh right. So it was the Portal where you put the thing in the window.

Mm. That's right, yes I can't remember it.

And you talked about Gallery One and Victor Musgrove.

Yes, Victor Musgrove, that's right, yes.

Soft Time[???].

Yes.

Have you got...did you have a catalogue for that?

Yes, I have. I have, yes, it's somewhere around.

I've never actually seen a catalogue for that.

No no, well, it's upstairs.

Is it?

I'll show you.

It would be interesting to have a look at that.

Yes.

Oh and this one which was in Holland, the New Realism.

Yes, well...

What was...

I had a thing...

How did you get involved in that then?

Yes. I had, this thing called *The Bedsprings Twang in Our House*.

Mm.

Did I tell you about that?

Yes you did.

That was at my first exhibition at Gallery One.

Right.

And then it went off to Holland for that. It was seen by a man called Fritz Becht, who later bought it, and I had to take it to Holland for him, you know.

Oh right.

And it did appear at the, oh what's...Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, they gave him an exhibition about four or five years ago of all his collection, and it reappeared there, you know.

Right.

Mm.

And was it the same piece that went to Vienna and Germany?

No no, no.

[inaudible].

This one went to that. Where are we now? He went there, *Old Moneybags*.

Right, Old Moneybags.

I think, they sent me a photograph in which they put something on upside-down, you know. So that's why I had to travel. Whenever my things go I have to travel, because, people often get things wrong, you know.

[End of F8508 Side A]

[F8508 Side B]

OK.

Well, this guy called Chris, Chris what's his name, from the Tate.

Stephens.

Chris Stephens. He came to see me. I thought, well, one thing I...whatever I talk about, I've got...I've got to avoid talking about magic and telepathy, because he'll think I really [inaudible]. But anyway, I couldn't resist, you know. And it's interesting really, that the day he came, the day he came, and I knew I was faced with a bill for £350...no £250, because my dog, Tammy, was having a hysterectomy. She was having a hysterectomy the very day he came, when he says, 'The Tate would like to buy your thing,' you know. And this all fits together, this amazing thing, you have a, you know, you have a debt or a bill or something comes in. Because he said to me as I was saying goodbye to him, 'How do you manage to survive financially?' I said, 'Well a magic cheque usually arrives,' usually for about the same amount, but usually arrives, and within a few hours or days of you suddenly being faced with this bill to pay, you know. But, but you mustn't count on it, you know. But I did also speak to him about my thoughts on installation. I don't know whether I spoke to you about that. Victorian artists used to talk about getting in touch with the muse. And the Greeks had this concept of the muse, being something that inspired artists, they had a muse for poetry and a muse for painting, and a muse for sculpture, all these sort of things, you know. And I had a sort of a concept that, that if...inspiration, when it happens, it all seems to come from somewhere, you know. It's like when I put the *Womaniser* together, I had a dentist's chair, I had artificial legs, I had an inflatable balloon. And all I needed was to somehow, suddenly see that plastic thing for displaying three pairs of women's brassieres, and suddenly, it all came together. And everything seems to fit, everything seems as though it was all ready... I don't believe in fate, being preordained, but it's amazing how things all seem to come together at a sort of magic moment. Very often artists will reveal to you secretly that, when they're painting it seems to be you're part of a ritual where things are coming out sort of subconsciously, almost as if inspiration is coming from somewhere else, you know. I

don't know where it comes from really. Is it coming from you, or is it coming from your subconscious? I also believe that it can be coming from some sort of telepathic communication with other people working in other fields or similar fields in other parts of the world somehow or other. You communicate with each other on a telepathic level. There are cases of scientists who go to bed, wrestling over a problem, you know, and in the morning you've woken up with a solution. Maybe another scientist has solved it the same night, and he's sort of sent that signal to him, you know. So I, I believe...it's like with dowsing which I also do, that we are somehow or other transmitters and receivers, you know. And people have tried with all sorts of instruments and things, they've tried with ESP, you know, having two people equal side of a screen. But all they're doing is like, someone picks up a cross, and they've got to telepathically send that to the other person. But that doesn't seem to work, because there's no emotion involved, and I think emotion is the thing. It's to do with the emotion, to do with the stomach, to do with gut feelings, certainly in my case. If I have gut needs for things, I seem to send out signals and pick up on things, you know. It's like, lots of the things I've done and I've made, they've been a gut reaction to something, you know. Someone has said something to me which has angered me, or a situation in society I'm angry about. So I feel passionate. And I feel emotional, you know. And then something seems to happen. So I'm very interested in this whole business of creativity, inspiration and things like that, you know.

Do you get those sort of feelings, I mean is that how you still work?

Mm?

Is that how you still work?

Mm.

On gut reactions and the same sort of...

Yes. Yes, yes. And this sound I'm doing now, it may be sour grapes, but it's partly a thing that I've built up over the years, is that, I've tried to learn to play the guitar and different things, and I've failed. And I'm surrounded by musicians who seem to be,

have a superior air about them, you know, that you're only a singer, you're only an unaccompanied singer, and we have all these skills and things. But I think they're imprisoned with their skills. They can only play the notes that are available, they can't...well a pianist, can only play, I don't know, ninety notes. They can play half notes, but they can't play quarter notes or fifteenth or sixteenth, you know. Indian musicians can. So this is really... And it's like the, playing 'Show me the road to go home' on the amplified penny-farthing bicycle, which is really taking the piss out of electrified guitars, you know. And playing *Sheikh of Arabee* on the stuffed camel. And so, this music thing is also really, it's like sticking two fingers up at musicians and say, you can be a musician, you can...you can make all sorts of noises, and you haven't got to play a musical instrument, you know. So there's also that lurking there, you know. So when I do my first performance I'm going to invite lots of musicians and things, you know. I mean I did have an evening a few...in the, in the Sixties and Seventies, we used to do all sorts of experimental things with noises and things, mainly with non-musicians, and I did invite several musicians last year round about the farm, went into my barn, and I had all sorts of different things for making all sorts of noises with, hoping they would, they would free themselves from the bonds of their instruments. But after a while, they went out and they got their guitars out of their, you know, boots of their cars, and they all went back to playing things that they'd learnt, other people's music, you know. I gave them a chance to be experimental, but, you know, they couldn't cope with it.

And were the musicians that you actually asked round on that occasion, were they sort of in the free music scene, or were they actually playing, you know, composing, just anywhere? Because there are quite a lot of free jazz musicians that do work in that way, don't they, without...

No, no. I mean, one of the guys plays guitar, he, he writes his own songs, but he still plays in a standard rock idiom, the songs are still composed in that idiom, you know.

Oh I see what you mean.

Whereas I want...I... It's just like I was doing, you know, with art students, trying to encourage them to free themselves of all the shackles of art, art tuition and art history and things like that.

It's very difficult, that, sometimes, isn't it.

It's very difficult, yes, right, yes. And you want to produce music, you go into that trap of learning how to play[???], but you then, then you're imprisoned by it all.

Mm.

You can't, you can't break away from it, you know. So, at the moment I'm trying to do this with music and what I call funny noises and things, you know.

Which we're going to see shortly.

Which you'll hear, yes.

Right. Is there any... What other things were we going to talk about just before we do that?

Oh, the Head in Glasgow.

Just before you do, the Whitechapel show, you were going to mention. I was just going to ask you really just to say how that came about. Because you were...

Well Jasia Reichardt asked me if I would like to have a retrospective on the complete... Have you see the Whitechapel Gallery?

This is... Yes, oh I know the gallery.

In the ground floor, the whole ground floor I took over, you know.

And this in 1975. Was this the first big sort of retrospective show?

Yes it was, that's right. And it went right back to my childhood. It had my bedroom that you went into first of all, with all my model aeroplanes I made. And then you fell through a door, it's a photograph of the big aeroplane, with swing doors, you went into this whole thirty-foot fuselage of a [inaudible].

So you reconstructed all that in the gallery?

Well I constructed it and then I transported it to the gallery.

Right.

You know, I'd got a real fuselage of a jet aeroplane which I also had in the gallery too, because I wanted a real bit of aeroplane, you know. And then you went from there, from my childhood, and then, you could fly this sort of aeroplane with all the clouds and everything across. And then you went to my paintings, and then to my assemblages, and then to other science fiction performances. But I used to go...I was in the gallery all the time, and I'd take parties of people round, as, like the, what do you call it, on a tour, explaining everything to them. And I found that people I'd known at different periods of my life, only liked the things I was doing at the time they knew me. And I realised how people become fossilised. You know, they have a flowering of a certain age between eighteen and, say, twenty-five, and then they become fossilised; they become fossilised in their clothes they wear, or their hairstyles, you know. You know, like, women who wore black eyes, you know, when Cleopatra with Elizabeth Taylor. I know a woman in Wymondham, she's dead now, used to have the same black eyes in her sixties. And there are women that have blue eye shadow when they were teens, and they still wear the blue eye shadow. And people are walking around inside these bubbles, you know. And then I'm aware, you know, you know, people, it takes them ten, twenty years to catch up. By that time, everything's moved on, you know. But people are living inside these, inside these, you know, these bubbles, you know.

A bit like a time warp.

Yes. And it's like art students that go to art school, and they produce art which is all produced from, not from the world around them, from their own instincts and feelings, but from all the other art that's gone on before, it just moves forward very gradually, very, very slightly, you know. And then it all recycles itself, you know. Like all work being done now by artists leaving art schools, a lot of things that I've done years and years ago, it all gets recycled, you know.

Mm. Was it actually filmed, this show?

No it wasn't.

Have you got photographs of it or anything?

No, no. I filmed the, the Marlborough Gallery. My friend I'd made the film called *Everybody's Nobody* with, he'd broken his leg so I pushed him around with the camera in a children's pushchair, you know. I've got a lovely film of that.

What about the Gallery One, have you got...?

I've only got, I've only got photographs. But then...

Because that was unusual, that gallery, wasn't it, really? It showed a lot of sort of unusual work.

I don't know what they show, I don't know. But, you had Gaumont British News, but you also had Pathé Pictorial, and Pathé Pictorial used to do funny little ten-minute, fifteen-minute films to go, to make up a film programme in the cinemas, and they came along and did a Pathé Pictorial.

Of Gallery One.

Of Gallery One.

Oh right.

And the narrative is hilarious, wasn't it, [inaudible] all these things, you know. It's only a short film, you know.

Have you got that? You've not got...?

I've got that, yes.

Have you? Oh right.

Because, because we had no video you see, and so either, if I couldn't film it, I'd buy, get a print, you know.

Oh yes.

From the people afterwards you know, for my personal use.

Right. So the, the Glasgow Head.

Well, this man, lovely man called Julian Spalding, which you've heard about probably.

Yes.

Yes? He's a bit of a maverick, you know.

I know.

Because he doesn't like... He doesn't like all this... He has a similar attitude to me about art, you know. He doesn't like all what the critics necessarily say. And so, I first met him when he was assistant curator at an art centre, or the gallery, in Durham, when I used to take up my robots and perform there, and then also I performed this thing called *A Journey Through a Black Hole to a Coloured Planet*, which was a huge inflatable you went inside. Anyway, about the time when I was... I told you about

when I was having a wishing ceremony, ritual, to do with having an exhibition, he'd come and bought one of my paintings, which meant I could hire my own gallery.

Mm.

Well he came back to me again, because his parents lived about five miles away, he came through the whole house, and we sat here, and he said, 'I'm now the director of all the museums and art galleries in Glasgow, and we're converting an old building, which is like a huge corn exchange, into a four-floored gallery called Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art, and I am the curator of that, and I've been asked to invite people to, commissioning works from artists or buying up existing works. I'd like to commission you to make a Bruce Lacey experience, in which you go inside...' And I visualised, oh, the size of the Whitechapel. And he said, 'No no, about the size of this room.' I said, 'Well surely, can I go up a bit higher?' He says, 'Yes you can go up a bit higher.' And I thought, well I'll make a room, and I thought, I've got here, which you can't see of course, which is like a box, you go inside, which has a big picture of my head on the front, and you might go in through the mouth or the ear. Side view there, back view there, top view there, and a side view there. And, you go inside this room, and there'd be things inside like, there'd be an armchair which is like a huge naked woman, and you sat in there and her arms came and she started sort of fondling you and playing around with you. And you look out of the window, and there'd be like a view of all the trees and the houses. But I'd gone into a thing in a fairground once where you sat in a room, and then, the whole room went all round and round and round. But then, you thought you were going round and round. But the room was going round and round. So you thought you were. So I thought, if this video of this landscape outside the room starts to move, do you think, well a room doesn't move... No, trees don't move, so you think you're moving. So then, he came to see me, and he said, 'This is all very well,' he said, 'but, wouldn't it be great if you made it three-dimensional?' Oh, three-dimensional, you know. Into a big, huge head. So, Jill took a mould of my head, we cast it in plaster of Paris, and then, I projected a series of vertical lines onto it, and then took profiles of all those cross-sections, and then by putting it onto acetate, projecting it onto plywood, cutting it out with a jigsaw, I erected this huge plywood head, which was nine foot from the chin to the back of her head, and... No, thirteen feet from the chin to the back of her head. Ten foot wide,

ten foot high. Made like you'd make a boat or an aeroplane, like a framework, but all covered in fibreglass, that you go inside, and then be taken on the whole experience. Well, I decided to go for a system which was called Phillips CDI, in which, on a CDI disc, you can have burnt all these different images. And then, so I had eighteen three-minute videos, digitalised, and burnt onto this CDI. You go inside this head, which from the outside looks like a head you might see in the Amazonian jungle, or you might see in a film with, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Glasgow Gallery where it is, in the basement, it has all marble columns down the side, and the head's at the end. And so, I built this head all in six sections, all covered in fibreglass, all covered in like, algae and lichen on the outside. And when you go inside, it's like being in a spacecraft, you're sitting in four, four pilot seats, and there's a control column in the middle, which has a thing like a mouse upside-down on a giant scale, very, very sturdy for children to use. This big, blue bowl with red buttons. And there's all flashing lights inside, they're all flashing at random, which is like all the sinapsies[ph] of brain going. And right in front there's a screen with a big blue ball and two red buttons with arrows indicating, and you press one of the buttons, and when you do, on the screen it changes to an aircraft instrument panel, like in a spacecraft. And where the eyes are, on the inside, are two other instrument panels. Well, a voice says, 'You're invited to move the cursor over the screen to select four of these three-minute aspects.' And there's childhood, there's art school, there's love, marriage and children, there's cabaret and theatre, there's films, there's assemblages, there's constructions, and installations. There's rituals; there's myself, today, talking; there's my paintings. Robots. And you can choose any three. So you go on a twelve-minute trip. And as it starts, these instrument panels in the eyes lift up like eyelids, and while you're watching that, at the same time you're roaming around on a twelve-minute long take, all around my orchard, and you come into the house, and you continuously roam from room to room. So you're having to watch all this at the same time. And sometimes it coincides, that when you're watching the three-minute video of the robots, you're in my room where you...the robots, there's all robots, and it's interesting how sometimes it coincides or doesn't, you know. Anyway. I go up for the opening, and we walk off to another artist's studio, and Julian Spalding puts his arm around me and indicates, it's me all enthusiastic, you know, I've made this fantastic thing, it's taken months, two years to build. I've sweated blood over it to solve all of the problems. And you know, it's like a, it's...it's...it's like a sort of, your

father's asked you to make something, and you proudly show it to him, and he says, and he says, 'Oh it's a little bit disappointing, it isn't quite what I expected.' I said, 'Oh why?' He was expecting it to have things like, well like, I suppose I told him about this, this armchair, he thought things will be moving, it will be like a mechanical assemblage of things. Instead, instead, you know, what it is, it's autobiographical. It's...it's a sort of, it's all the things, it's all the past, you know. I hoped that he would then fund for me to do another one, which had more things that I was doing now, or creative things, but he had left, and of course he...he's left that gallery now, so that will never happen probably, you know.

When did you actually make that? You took two years to make it, did you?

Mm.

Was it '80...

I can't remember now. Something like, '94 to '96, or '92 to '94.

Right. Mm.

I'd have to check up on my records and things, you know. But I mean, people go, and they're amazed. I've had letters from people that, a young couple, they said they went in at ten o'clock in the morning, 'and we had to be kicked out at half-past five. We kept going over it and over it again, you know.' And the sad thing is, that at the moment, they're having different exhibitions there, so it's all been boxed off, so if friends go and, they can't see it, you know. And when I went to Sheffield, and I said, 'Oh, when Julian Spalding was the director, he bought this painting called *Osmosis*, is it still here?' They showed it to me in a storeroom, hanging up high, you know. And then I thought, there's that in Glasgow, there's that in Sheffield; there's *Boy Oh Boy Am I Living?* in the Tate, which is not... I thought, three galleries have got my work, and nothing is being seen at the moment.

Mm.

And I had a, you know, I spent one night, the night after I think Chris left, agonising about this, and the following day I got this lovely letter from the lovely lady, the curator of the Graves, she said, 'We've now put your exhibition, your painting on exhibition.'

Oh I saw it, it was there last week.

'It's hanging up in the entrance hall.'

Oh it was there...it wasn't there when you went then?

No, no.

Oh right.

And, you know, they've awakened interest in my work from the *Womaniser* and the *Businessman* being there, and they've hung it.

Yes, I've seen it, it looks, it looks wonderful.

And that's an amazing coincidence again. The night after I agonised all night about that...

Mm.

...there's... It's...it's fantastic how these things happen, you know. And I thought, well that's really wonderful, you know, I felt very happy that day.

Good.

I don't know how long it'll be there for.

Oh it looks like it's been put up as a fairly permanent fixture. It's in a wonderful place actually. It does suit the place.

Because what I worry about, and I did check up, is that all my other paintings made with poles as the frames are all riddled with woodworm. (laughs)

Well no, it looks, it looked very good.

No, I don't think it's been attacked.

No, it looks, it looks good.

So it got away from Brentwood Farm before it got attacked, you know. But you see, that, that's called *Osmosis*.

There's no date on that one actually though. What is the...when did you make that one?

Well that was about, about '85.

Oh is it? I notice they've not put the date on.

But, *Osmosis* is about things passing through membranes.

Mm.

It's like, it's what happens in the lungs, where oxygen passes through a membrane to get into the blood stream. The blood doesn't go into the lungs; it passes through. It's called osmosis I think, you know. And that's all about these imaginary creatures, which are like humans I suppose, we're touching, and there's all wonderful magic and vibrations all floating through from one to another, you know.

Mm.

It's all about telepathy and love and things like that, you know. You see with my paintings I started doing in '85, they were because my marriage had broken up, and

my wife had been the Earth Goddess, and I no longer had a woman, and I decided to paint this huge Earth Goddess on the ground and make love to it in a symbolic, non, what do they call it now? Not a very, explicit way really, symbolically merging human fertility and earth fertility. And through painting this big woman on the ground, I started doing a painting of it on old sacking. And then I started painting my feelings about love, not love as an artist would do, people kissing, or like Rodin's *The Kiss* embracing, but love, not what you see, about what you feel. Almost like sort of, blueprints of the magic process, you know. It's like, if you were trying to paint, do a blueprint of how a radio works, you see diagrams of electrons and things, you can't see them. But it's all that sort of thing, it's trying to paint visual analogies of things, emotions and feelings you experience.

Mm.

So that's the head in Glasgow.

Would you still like to do something similar on a...?

Well, I don't think I could physically cope with anything on such a large scale really.

Who helped you to make that one then?

Jenny helped me to make it.

Did she?

She was my sort of labourer.

Right.

I had two friends that had been made... One friend had been making fibreglass boats, he came in for two days and helped with all the fibreglass and, you know...

Mm.

And then, because we wanted a likeness, so we only had like, a shape for the front and ribs stuffed with, with all this plastic, it all had to be sculptured and shaped.

Mm.

I went to Norwich School of Art, into the sculpture school, met a technician, and he said, 'Well my girlfriend called Sue, she's used to doing portraits.' So we paid her to come and actually sculpt the likeness of the face. And that ran for a year before it broke down. The lasers and the drive belts had to be replaced in the CDI machines. Those machines are now obsolete, so there will become a time when they can't be repaired, but this happens with any technology, you know. They'll have to go over to a new system really. But...

But it's been made as a permanent fixture, that, that piece?

Yes, and so they...they can't move it, they can't move it. It's all in...it's hundreds and hundreds of all sorts of electronic devices and cables that go under the floors and what... I'm the only person that knows how to take it apart, or put it together. And because they can't move it, they've just boxed it in, you know. And there was an exhibition on, which has then been extended, and now there's another exhibition on, so I don't know when it's going to be, when it's going to be shown again, you know.

Mm.

But...

Is that... So you've only got...have you only got three pieces in public galleries then?

To my knowledge, yes.

In this country.

But there are some things that were bought by people I don't know, through an intermediary, and they've finished up in different parts of the continent.

Mm.

So I don't know, I don't know where they are, you know. So...

The bits and pieces of filming that are in the Head, are they actually inside this house though, are they? Is that what you were saying? Some of them of the garden?

Oh yes, everything, everything is. I videoed the whole place, you know.

Right. So you can walk right round.

I didn't show you, but I've got a CDI with a copy upstairs, you know. If we do get a moment, you can play with it, you know.

Oh right.

I've got a copy of it, you know. The only thing I didn't make provision for, you see, at that time, and even now you see, you've got this thing called DVD, but DVD, you can only have access to it through a remote control. Which members of the public holding a tiny remote, it can get broken. But this thing, which was like this huge mouse upside-down. The only interactive thing you had at the time was CD-ROM, but CD-ROM, you needed a PC and a keyboard, but that's not suitable for, for computer-illiterate members of the public to operate. This had to be very simple. And so when these images come up on the screen, of things you can choose from, a little head of me talking says, you've got a minute to look at them all, and then you've got thirty seconds to make a choice. If you don't make a choice, it will select them at random itself. What I didn't allow for, that people then go on this twelve-minute trip, but they might get bored and want to move on to the next one, but they can't, they've got to sit through it all, you know. You can't opt out, you know. I didn't realise that at the time, you know. But most people seem to really love it, you know.

Mm.

But it was a crafty way of me, as there are no books written about me, you know; although I appear in lots of publications and magazines and articles and books, there's no book about me specifically, I felt that I'd got to do something myself. I've got to put myself on record, you know.

Mm.

And so that was really a crafty way of doing it you see. My own...it's my own archive, you know.

Mm.

But it's only the tip of the iceberg, because, so many things I couldn't put on, you know, I only put things on that I had images of you see.

Mm. What about where you're going next then, what you're involved in and...

Well, I come back to this thing, it dawned on me, after having tried to learn to play the guitar, although I improvise on the keyboard, I'm never quite sure what it's going to sound like till after I've put my finger on the note, and then of course it may all be wrong. At least I know with my voice, it's a musical instrument; if I want to go, da-da-da-da, I can, you know.

Mm.

And so I realised that I'd got to use my voice as sound source, as...so my performance is going to be called *Bruce Lacey's Vox Humana*, either research laboratories or sound experience, or something like that, you know.

Mm.

It's...in which I use my own voice, even the rhythm, all the background, all the harmonies and everything, use my voice. And I'm doing it live, I'm not over-dubbing, I'm not...I'm not doing it, you know, like, where I do a bit and then I re-record another bit. It's all being done live as I'm doing it, putting it all together, improvising it all, or some idea, having a rough idea. But what I am doing, I'm changing my voice in different ways, [makes twanging sound then growling/drainage] oh pardon me, all noises like that. But also I'm feeding my voice through different guitar processing, electronic effects, you know. So I can sing a note into it, and I get like a harmony come out, you know.

Mm.

And then I'm doing it into things that sustain that, so that can be, I can do something, that can be going while I'm doing something else. So I've got six microphones in which I'm, I'm moving, doing all different sounds. I don't know what I'm going to be doing in...

Are you just going to focus on sound though with this? There's nothing else to accompany it, [inaudible]? You haven't decided yet.

Oh well there may be, there may be.

Because you...you always...you're really talking about being a visual poet, and, the visual...

That's right. No. You see, Jenny has watched me do this and she said, 'It's hilariously funny.'

You've got to watch, to see it.

I don't know how people are going to be hearing, because they're going to be laughing so much, watching me do it all, you know. It's like my talk at the, at the art school. When comedians or, stand-up comedians do things, they've worked out all their jokes, they've worked out where their laughs are, and they pause, you know.

Mm.

Laughter, laughter, no? Oh. And, if they don't get laughter, they say, you know, 'That was meant to be funny,' you know. I just carry on regardless, you know. So, I mean that thing from the Things, the lecture, they've done a transcribe of it. That is brown underneath there, underneath that, you'll see it. That brown with a...

That one?

Yes.

Oh yes.

That's a transcribe of my lecture.

I've got, I've seen that.

But they've missed out about asking...

Did they edit it?

[inaudible] do a blow job and things like that.

Oh right.

Or the...or the...they've missed out about the hermaphrodite aspect of the *Womaniser*.

Ah.

Where, if I was a hermaphrodite, I could fuck myself, you know, by tucking my willy in my vagina.

Oh well you've got it on here now, so... (laughs)

They cut both bits out you see, they've censored me.

But you've managed to get it back in again Bruce, because it's on the tape, so...

Oh yes, I've got it in again, yes, so I've won out in the end, yes.

That's all right.

So, I am rather restricted, because, I sold my old van, in which I had unlimited room, for a motorcar that I got, an estate car, and so, I am limited about what I can, and the weight I can carry, in doing a performance. So, I...I might do things like... You see, when Jenny... I made the loudspeakers and the loudspeaker stands, and Jenny photographed me, standing behind with my head on the top and my arms sticking out. She said, 'That's like a sort of robot machine thing.' And I thought, well I could fit arms and legs and things in, and maybe I've got heads that move with the mouths and ventriloquist dolls, so that when I'm singing, I might... But I haven't got the room.

No.

So, I might...

You get to work through it, yes.

I might embellish it later, but I've got to start with just the sound, and myself. Because I'm pulling all sorts of funny faces to do all these things, so I'm going to be a spectacle really on my own really, you know.

So this is what you're working on at the moment, this is your, the idea.

But it's certainly not going to be in the realms of... You see, in the Sixties, the sort of avant-garde music was, I found it hilariously funny, you know. There was one I went to once where, there were these people, they had big metal tubes, two foot diameter, with big metal spikes at the bottom. They came up on ladders, and dropped television

tubes inside that make, boom boom, crash, and blast. But, while they're just getting ready, or they're doing it, if someone should cough in the audience, they stop, 'Excuse me, excuse me, can you stop coughing please, can you stop coughing?' All very pretentious, you know. And I once did a performance called *Silent Drumming*, where I had all cymbals and drums. I'd be playing them with feathers you see.

[End of F8508 Side B]

[F8506 Side A]

Yes, you were just saying about...

So this music thing, it won't be, I hope, a very pretentious thing, with like, all these different people stuck holes in, or cage, you know, where you get things like, you get...you get musicians all sitting around, and they've all, it's all been written, it's all been...the music, all looking at their music sheets. And one's going like, [knocking side of glass], and then someone will go, pa-pe-da-pe. Or, [knocking on hard surface]. There'd be a pause and then someone'll go, [knocking glass] je-je-je-je-je-je-je-je. It... You know, it won't be, it won't be like that at all, you know.

Mm.

It's going to be real gutsy stuff, what I call jungle juice. It's interesting that the rituals that I have done, where I've been completely naked, I've been covered in mud, all different patterns that people have painted on me, or body paint and things. And I'm doing things about fertility, about the earth. And I'm pouring water and seed on myself. And I've got a brand...a torch all with burning fire, and I set fire to things, and I make fire tunnels that I go through when I'm doing fire. And I did go to a witches' conference, which was called the meeting, the 25th Meeting of the Esoteric Society, and all these witches were in this room. Outside there was grass, and the sun was shining, they were in this sort of hall, and they were doing earth, air, fire and water. They were passing a glass round with a little bit of water and they sipped. They were passing a few grapes which they picked up and ate, for earth. And they were passing a candle round, which was fire. You know, this...and this... And they would come to my exhibitions, and they say, 'Well you're doing magic, but it's earth magic; we're doing high magic,' you know, which is all these, these very high, high sort of, you know, symbolic type things. And this is how I see art, you know, the world of aesthetics and relationships, you know. And people have exhibitions, you know, there was a thing in the Tate Modern with boxes all covered in mirrors and it's the spaces between them and the relationships and all that sort of thing, you know. I don't have much time for that, you know. So, I'm not really anti art to be anti art, I'm just anti art because, I suppose I just hate, I hate art really, you know, the way it

all...it's all in this ivory tower, it's all incestuous, you know. And, Tracey Emin. I mean that bed, I mean, I did a bed, but it had a, it had a meaning to it, it was all about war and people dying, the tragedy of it all, and she's done this bed with all these sheets lying around and the dirty knickers and things. I laughed my head off when these Japanese guys got on and started mucking about with it. And she sold it to Saatchi & Saatchi, for £120,000, you know. And I hated, what's it, Damien Hirst, you know. I love animals, I've been a vegetarian for thirty years, and he gets these animals and just cuts them up and... You know, and... You know. I did a, I told you about the pig didn't I, I did in Cambridge, outside a butcher's shop.

Mm.

All these bits of a pig, a protest about pigs and things like that, you know. To me, for me there has to be more than art to art, you know. Anyway, that's the way I...I'm very, feel very strongly about really, you know. You see, and, there's an exhibition on at the Tate at the moment called *Intelligence*, and there was a programme on television; Jenny said, 'Do you think you ought to watch that? It's going to make you very angry.' I said, 'Well it might not, it might not,' you know. And I'm out there doing rituals, you know, and there's a guy, he's got...he's got a video running, he's gone around thinking all folk art, people morris dancing, he's just running a film of morris dancers and people doing some of these different rituals they do in the countryside, you know. Like pancake races and things like that, you know. They're not his. You know. And, there's another guy, he's recorded all the different artists there, and he's got all different snatches of their words, and you sit on boxes with loudspeakers, you hear some of these things, and he's putting together other people, he's making art out of other people's things, you know what I mean?

Mm.

So I don't...I... I think art, if I, if I really think about it, I think art has lost its way really. It's really lost its way. It's lost its reason for being really, you know. Because it's fed on itself for years. It's like a creature that is devouring its own body, you know. Oh that's, I never thought of that before. It's eating up itself really, you know.

When do you think it lost its way? Recently, or some time ago?

I, I believe, I don't know, it's...I suppose it's always... It began to lose its way with Picasso I think.

Mm.

Because Picasso, I know he was inspired by Guernica, and that's the finest thing that he ever did, and probably that ever has been done really. But he got a lot of his inspiration from going to museums and galleries. African art. Probably not when he was doing, you know, Cubist paintings and stuff, but certainly later on, and he picked up on all the Minoan civilisations, things like that, you know. So he was gleaning from art that had gone on before, you know. I glean, but I don't glean, if I call what I do art, I don't glean from art; I'm gleaning from everything all over the world, you know. I'm gleaning from people, natives in South America being exterminated, the rain forest being destroyed, you know, and, people, for instance, people who are dissidents, being, like they did in Chile, put them all into a sports stadium and kill them all. Or when the world screams out in horror, then they're allowed to leave the country as exiles. And then gradually they're picked off one by one. So the world doesn't see it as the Chilean Government doing it, you know. I'm beachcombing science, you know, like I see, I see, I see things like, jellyfish, and then I'm seeing connections between this and that, and I produce something, you know. So... There is one thing also that came about which only used to be in the realm of graphic designers, where graphic designers, they'd be using the art world to glean from, you know. And artists are doing the same. And with lots of artists, I see them no more than commercial artists, you know; they set up as artists as a business, you know, they do paintings or sculptures of different things, then they do, then they do all their, all their lithographs, you know. And they're running a business really, you know. And, they're trapped, they're trapped in their own thing, you know. Whereas I am, you know, as I probably said before, I've realised that what I'm doing is that I'm, I'm also exploring my own identity and personality, and how the impact of everything has on me, you know, and expressing it all, you know.

Mm.

Anyway. I'm getting all carried away now. Not explaining it in a very easy way to understand. So for me, art has been a voyage of exploration. And, it's interesting that people say, they said to me, they see these, 'Oh you're ahead of your time,' but, I think, I'm of my time. I'm feeling, I'm sensitive, I'm plugged into what's going on everywhere, with everything, and what I produce is all to do with here and now. It's not that I'm ahead; I feel I'm in context. I feel that other people, they're all lagging behind really, they're like in this time, in this fossilisation thing, you know. There was something I was going to say then. Oh what was it? Yes. Oh I've forgotten. Can you put it on pause for a minute?

[break in recording]

Yes, it's like... It's like, it's like my whole house is like an assemblage, isn't it, really.

Mm

It's got everything for my whole life really, you know. And... Yes, it's, it's like, I'm very aware of my roots, you know, that my grandfather was a sea captain, my uncle was in the Royal Flying Corps, and my father collected junk and antiques and different things. But, they've only been like, ingredients; I haven't become, you know, I haven't become a yachtsman, you know, I haven't...although, the aeroplane thing is still there. I haven't, like, followed in any of their footsteps; I've just used these things as a sort of springboard, and they haven't sort of, they haven't held me back or trapped me. But, I probably said this before, but, they've always given me the assurance that if there are ingredients of my ancestors in what I do, then I feel it's in the genes, you know, it's always given me confidence that, I'm on the right tracks, you know. And I probably said this before really, that at the time I've done lots of things, like when I was at art school and I'm doing, I'm studying painting but I'm, I'm doing all sorts of light shows, and *musique concrète* at the time it was called. And making films, and I'm doing sword swallowing, saw a woman in half, knife-throwing, trapeze, tightrope walking. The staff were all saying, 'Lacey's playing silly buggers' you know. And it was years before I realised that that activity, which, I don't call it silly bugger activity, it's very serious for me, if other people think it's silly bugger

activity, and they say it is, then I think, well I'm on the right line, I'm doing all right, you know. Anyway.

What would you say is the most important thing that you've either done or been involved in or made, is there anything that you'd particularly, up to now, look back to and think, that was particularly a worthwhile thing?

Well I think the Head in Glasgow, I think the Head in Glasgow is, is something I, I'm very very pleased to have made really.

Mm.

'My finest hour', as Winston Churchill would have said.

Is it? Right.

My finest two years I suppose.

Mm. Are there any particular, particularly important things in the house that you've actually got that you would want to talk about, or...? [pause] You seem to have... I mean, [inaudible], I mean just...and obviously...

Well, I mean I...

The room we're sitting...

I used to, I used to cuddle a little toy monkey when I went to bed, and that, that is something, animals I suppose I've always loved. And then I used to cuddle a little North American Indian toy.

Have you still got these?

I've still got that. I haven't got the monkey any more.

No.

And I've also, I've got a jumping clown that my uncle made on the [inaudible] lightship, I suppose, I've still got that, and that represents the sort of clowning, but...

Mm.

So... And I've still got my fort that my father made for me as a child. I've still got my mother's Red Indian costume that she made.

Oh is that your mother's, the one that's upstairs, is it?

No. That is a, that is a, another one. But I have got the original... My mother was in an amateur operatic society I think, and she did take part in an amateur production of *Hiawatha* at the Albert Hall years ago, and she made this costume out of hessian. And I used to wear it to fancy dresses, and win a prize every time because it looked so authentic. And my sister would win prizes with it. And so there's been a North American Indian thing that has gone on in my life.

Mm.

And... The thing also is that, through having nine children, I realise that children are what people are really meant to be. It's like in Eskimo tribes, in Indian tribes, all the adults play with children, just like being children, you know. But we go to school, and we're taught to become adults, all our intuitive things are all knocked out of us and things, we've got to knuckle down and so some serous work. And I found that, my children would dress up, make funny noises, bang things around, and they'd go to school at the age of five. And it was rather crafty, because they would have a dressing-up box or a play, a sandpit, in the first year, and gradually that was all sneaked out, and then lessons. Every half an hour you'd got to stop and do something else. Whereas this school allowed children, without structuring the day, just to, give them raw materials, and let them play around and experiment. They'd be able to sort of, find out and express their own personalities, their own identities themselves. You could have teachers available to teach things like history, or maths or things, but only

when the child wanted to. Because you only learn things when you're enthusiastic about it, you know. My children weren't very good academically at school, but they've gone back to university and they've got degrees and things, at the time they're enthusiastic about doing it, you know. That, I think, they say education couldn't run on those lines. There are one or two schools that try and do that, aren't there, you know.

Mm. Well there was quite a big free school movement wasn't there, in the Sixties I suppose.

Yes.

Or early Seventies I suppose.

Then all these things, there's a big backlash that comes.

That's right, mm.

Yes. I used to think, looking at my children, different things they do, you know, what they could possibly finish up doing, you know. And you never know really, you know. My son Peter, who is just a boring old schoolteacher now, I was going to Bradford with him once and I said, 'What would you like to be when you grow up?' He said, 'I'd like to be an elephant.' I said, 'An elephant? Why's that?' He said, 'Because it's the biggest thing there is,' you know. I said, 'Well, something else then.' He said, 'Oh I'd like to be a clown, on the beach at the seaside, because, as a clown you can wear make-up and you can wear all sorts of glitter things, and things like that. It's accepted, you're not thought to be gay or anything like that, you know.' And so... But he hasn't finished up a clown unfortunately. But you never know. You see your children doing different things, you know, and you never know quite. And even then, you don't know what they're going to go on doing later on, you know. That they're not going, you hope they're not going to become fossilised. I mean the thing, when my children bring home someone and say, 'I'm in love with this guy' or this lady, 'I want to get married,' the first thing I think about, not about money or prospects or anything like that; it's, it's how, how is that partner going to restrict

them? How liberated, or how liberated are they going to be allowed to be? Because when you're with a partner, partners can impose restrictions on you which are their own restrictions, aren't they, you know.

Mm.

And so, that's, that's, that's what I'm aware of, you know. But... But, roughly I suppose half of them are OK in that respect, you know. But then you never know, they can get divorced and meet someone else, and have a whole new liberation, you know.

Mm.

So I never write anyone off at all, you know. Yes, my children are like a peer group, you know. They all get together and they talk about things, and they obviously talk about me. And one time my son Kevin, he said, 'We haven't decided whether we love you or not,' he said, 'it's on hold at the moment.' (laughs) Well I don't know if it is now. But as I say, eight of them came, and lots of the grandchildren came to my birthday party, you know, which was really wonderful. My first wife came. You see, yes, with the Head...

Oh yes.

With the Head in Glasgow, I had a section on talking about rituals and things, and I did use a clip of Jill, my second wife, only a tiny, minute, five-second clip I suppose. And whether she heard about this or not... And then, in talking about my paintings, I talk about how I am my own therapy, and about getting over my marriage with her, you know. And she, she wrote this terrible letter in which she accused me of, of like, infringing her copyright, and she wanted royalties or something. And 'I don't know how you can, in front of the public, like, in the Head, and also when I give lectures, talk about your personal life,' you know. And, because she's very closed-in, you know, she, everything is very personal and secret with her, you know. And, so she wanted all sorts of royalties. And my solicitor told her to piss off, you know. He's that sort of solicitor, you know. And I haven't heard from her since.

Mm.

But she, she went up to live on the Isle of Lewis, where this thing, over in the mountains, beyond the stone circle called Callanish, you can see this thing they call the Fairy Princess, this sacred, the hill is like an Earth Goddess there. But she's now gone down to Glastonbury, you know. So, I don't know what she does now; she's probably carrying on doing, doing workshops and things, women's workshops, to do with esoteric things, you know, but I don't really know.

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[End of Interview]