Brenda’s Story

**Summary:**

**Hello Brenda**

Hello there

**My name is Kemi, and I am with Brenda today and I am in Brenda's home ...and today is Thursday 4th October 2012, Um Brenda would you mind saying and spelling your surname**

Watkinson, Watkinson not Watkins

**OK - thank you very much for that and would you mind telling us when and where you were born?**

Yes in 1937 in Raymouth road in Bermondsey, three generations of Bermondsey people

**Wow**

B - Grandparents, mum and dad and me so that's a long time, it's over a century of Bermondsey people, Bermondsey residents.

**Thank you, thank you Brenda. OK, so as you must know already this project is about finding about local residents, finding out about their work life and how it's changed and how it’s changed how its evolved over the years, so, wouid you like to tell us about your work life**

Well I left school at 16 I was at the Alwyn Grammar school and I left with 5 and a half O-levels - the half being oral french, I failed the written. Um, for health reasons, although I was university material, I didn't go on, I'd lost an awful lot of schooling as it was through health problems and continually being into hospital so I wanted to just get on and work, I'd had enough of not only doing my own homework but catching up on other peoples' notes, so it was like a double amount of work for me and um I suffered very badly from migraine at that point at that time so I went out to look for work and er, [coughs] the only thing, I had already asked the careers officer when it came down, that I would like to work in Art, one of my paintings up there um er if not, if it had to be a scientific subject biology but it both meant ongoing training and he was absolutely against the art work, he said the only art work you could do that would be viable would be commercial art.

Well I had no interest whatsoever in designing things, I wanted to paint portraits actually so er I did the usual round of looking for junior clerk work and I found it eventually in um let me see, where did I start, where was my first job? Oh yes, in Lloyds insurance brokers in Bishopsgate EC3. As a junior clerk, I was16 and their name was Henry Head and Co and they had a lot of very upmarket clients. And Lloyds Brokers take on the work for the client and then take it round what is called the 'room' - that's the nickname for Lloyds um, Lloyds is filled with underwriters and then they tote round the slip until they get enough people to cover that risk, usually in percentages. Sometimes it's a hundred percent but usually it's in percentages. And I did the filing there for a year or so and then I got transferred to the claims department which I loved, very happy there and then decided to upgrade myself I went down to the typing pool - that was my first - by this time I'd been to evening classes in Fair Street in Bermondsey, um off the Old Kent Road, Fair Street evening classes, to learn to type on very old fashioned machines without electricity of course and um then I entered te typing pool and I learnt, which was a long job, I learnt the um, you might call it a trade of typing Marine policies, Marine insurance policies. And that covered cargo policies um and the other part was called a time policy, that’s when you're insuring the hull of the ship.

 And we had huge policies, this big, for fastnet policies they were called fastnet, they were for yachts and I loved it, it was such a big job to learn, it took about three years to learn because you had to do your own, you had to make up your own policy by reading the slip that the underwriters had done, a lot of clausing, deleting of clausing adding bits in, it was quite a performance but um, I loved it because it was hard, I like a challenge, you know it was good to learn it um, so I was there three years and then I did, so I did a move on I could probably get a bit more money by moving on. So we're looking at fifty three, 57, that's right, that was when I took my driving test, um, I couldn't wait to drive [laughs] I was, I was born with pedals coming out of my feet [laughs] and er, so I took my test in '57, so by then I was working for - do you want these names? I don't know if they'll be of any interest to you --

**Yes yes**

OK fine, in Houndsitch, a firm called Pickford Watson and Dawson, and I think they were allied to the Pickfords removal people probably. Pickford - Watson - and Dawson. The first one was called Henry Head and they had lots of titled people on their books and also the heads of their, like for example the Rockner fleet, we had the man working there who had married the daughter of the head of the Rockner fleet of vessles, all of which ended in the word pool, like it was Deer pool, Whirl Pool...so whenever I see Rockner(?) I think 'oh yes, I remember him' um, it was, that was a firm full of connections. The next one was much more downmarket and we did a lot of cargo work there, I didn't do any more time policies, but I just did the cargo and we often got spoilt cargo, I can remember having tins of trout, and grapefruit etc. [laughs] when they got dented you used to get them cheaply.

And I think I stayed there, oh I don't know how long, few years? Oh no maybe not more than about a year. Then I went to another, another insurance brokers back in Bishopsgate again by this time. Called um, Woods and Maslen (that's M-A-S-L-E-N) the building's now been pulled down but it was in Gresham House, which was just along by where Bishopsgate joins on to, oh I can't think of the name, anyway, it used to be a huge provincial bank on the corner, national provincial bank - I think that's still there but Gresham House is gone. And I was there for again about three years, carrying on doing my Marine policy work and it at all of these places we had non electric type writers, which is what you're interested in, obviously going up the scale in design but nevertheless, and it's interesting perhaps for you to know that when I learnt to type in Fairstreet evening classes we learnt to a wind up grammar phone.

We had a case, a casing put over our hands so that we had our hands in the keyboard - because this is touch typing we're talking about and she played this tune, I can remember it till my dieing day it was such a funny tune - I've heard it once on television - um yes and so she speeded it up and so it went [sings tune - dum de dum...speeding up] see so that's how you got your speed up, I can see her now, yes it was quite a thing! [laughs] And then you see she could increas the speed, with the old grammar phones you could increase the speed as you went along so that was how I learnt, and very good training it was too because I've been a touch typist ever since. So in '64 suddenly they changed the manner in which you made up your policies, they simplified it, they bought in something called 'slip signing' which I hated it meant that all that I'd learnt, got tucked under my belt in those years was suddenly being simplified and I don't like simple things, I like a challenge and I was basically just being a typist, instead of what I considered a Marine policy typist, so I fell into the law by accident, do you want to know how?

**Yes yes...**

OK right, on a Saturday morning and I had been off work with depression for a week. I didn't know I had depression but I couldn't breathe properly, I went to the doctor and I said ' I think I've got something wrong with my chest, bronchitis or something' and he said 'No no' he said 'you've got something on your mind' and I didn't even realise what it was, you often don't, and he gave me a week off work and some tablets and he said 'just do exactly what you want, go out, stay in, go to bed, go to the cinema, go to the seaside, Greenwich Park, just relax and at the end of the week it will come to you what's wrong'.

He was a wise old doctor, he was. And it did. It was exactly as he said and it came about because I realised then that I was very unhappy, the firm was going to move, my job was changing and the firm was moving as well, a bit more difficult to get at and my father decided he wanted to go over to Hornbrothers in the Strand and look for some clothing. Very nice gentlemen's outfitters on the corner of the Strand and Waterloo bridge, I went with him and as we walked down Fleet Street from the bus stop, I saw um, an employment agency and the magic word 'television script writing school' shot out at me, well always having been good at English, that was how I got to the grammar school, I got a special commendation when I was eleven from County Hall, um I loved the idea of getting into something artistic so oh God that’s for me so because of Dad and his suit or whatever it was I ended up going to this um agency the next week, and sure enough I got an interview at this television script writing school in Fleet Street, it was not what it was cracked up to be, sadly but it made me move, so probably there was a reason.

Er the, it was in fact a mail order service, a mail, you know posting lessons, they were by proper script writers, good script writers, I remember Ted Willis'(?) name coming up and he did the series called, oh dear what was it called now it was Jack Warner as a copper, I can’t remember now but it was a very popular series, anyway that was Ted Willis. And he did one of the lessons but all we were basically doing was putting, was mailing, mailing lessons. It wasn’t anything that I'd thought of; you were just, just a drudge. Worse yet, lovely girls - I was the ony English one there was one other English girl there - they from all the United Nations, they were lovely but the boss was an alcoholic so you'd come in some Mondays and find the place had been trashed where he'd gone back, is it on the wagon or off the wagon? I don’t know which one, you know what I mean

**Yes I know what you mean!**

Um and I couldn't stand him and I didn't like him anyway because he was a nightmare to work with because well he wasn't doing the right thing. So um I just trotted off to the next nearest, I think I was there four months, and I trotted off to the next nearest agency, I can remember that was called Vera Sugg

 **[laughs]**

No longer exists, Vera Sugg agency in Fleet Street and I said to her 'can you get me out of here, I'm a typist and I don't like working for an alcoholic', is there anything else going? And she sent me to a place that I'd never been in, well I'd walked through there and I'd wondered what it was, just South of fleet street there is an Inn of court, two Inns of Court called the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple, divided by Medieval lane, that's one of the four Inns of Court, the other two are the North side of Fleet Street, Greys Inn and Lincoln's Inn.

And I had walked through there once or twice and thought, 'what are all these names' and beautiful old buildings, houses originally, with lists of names in the doorway, painted by hand, I could -- I just had no idea what it was, it turns out, I was sent to one of these buildings for an interview as a typist. It was called 'Paper(?) Buildings', now this is where we get interesting. This is my entry into the law and this was the chambers it turned out to be of Quentin Hogg, who was in the um, conservative government and whilst I was there because they were only about a year, or eighteen months, something like that, they lost the election, so he came back and he'd been an MP, he'd given up his title of Lord Hailsham to become an MP and then they lost the election so back he came as a lawyer and I had no idea that it was his chambers I was going to work in but I was interviewed by a very nice man who became a high court judge later on called Warice Drake and he was the pupil master of Max Mosley

**Aaaah...**

So if you want to, these are names that you might like to - you won't read them in too many people who had rubbed shoulders with these people, so Warice(?) Drake was the pupil master of Max Mosley who was the most charming young man you could wish to meet. The whole chambers was lovely, I was so happy there, I can't tell you. Um and then Quentin Hogg came back and he was very noisy you know, if you put the wrong call through to him - because people were always ringing up and pretending they were the press or somebody he knew and they weren't, they were bogus and he'd come out roaring and the walls would shake...but he was ever such a nice man.

Sometimes, he drafted in ink, as they all did actually, there were no um dictaphones up till then, everything was drafted in pen and sometimes he would drift into Greek would you believe? Another note for you; I was still using a non-electric type writer, it was an Olivetti, I remember we'd moved onto an Olivetti. A new name then

**What if you couldn't read the Greek language?**

I coudln't! I went in and I said 'what's all this Mr Hogg?' He said 'Oh I'm so sorry', he said, 'I drifted off for a moment...' [laughs] well he was he was a great Greek scholar you see, like Boris Johnson is. So he translated it back again, beautiful handwriting as you might imagine but they were lovely people they were really old style lawyers, they always called me 'Miss Watkinson' and I called them Mr, and the clerk was completely mad, he was crazy! Absolutely, he was known as mad Sid throughout the temple and he was what my mother used to call 'more R than F'.

Now you won't have heard that expression, it sounds like it's something rude but it isn't, it means more of a rogue than a fool. So they put on a persona of being barmy, but they're far from it, they're very you know. And in the war, he had very bad eyesight, very poor eyesight but during the war, he couldn't be called up and so many men were, he ran four sets of chambers, singlehanded, how the hell he did it, God knows. There would probably have been fewer barristers as well because of the war, talking about second world war now.

And he um, [...] um yeah, um he made a fortune, basically and he's written a book called 'Under the Wigs' and I've got that and that covers my period when I was in chambers, if you like I can show you that at the end, um but he was also in show business - this is getting tangled up with show business [laughs] it was a very famous busty blonde, used to be on television in the fifties and he was her agent, he had a photographic agency down in Soho, so every morning at 10 o'clock, he'd say to me 'I can't stand it, I can't stand it anymore! I'm going to Lyons have a coffee', he'd be gone until 4 o'clock in the afternoon

**Oh dear**

Yes because he was actually in Soho with his showbiz pals, one of them used to come in regularly and he was the beadle in the first production of Oliver and he used to come in and chat and everytime I used to come in in the morning, they'd say 'you alright mi luv!' they’re allafter me. And the switchboard had dolls eyes(?) and once I came in and he'd got all the eyes plugged up with cutlery! [laughs] Forks and knives he had! So that he didn't have to answer the calls, if he did ever have to answer the calls he'd say 'hello, chinese laundry here!' He's was completely mad but he was wealthy, as he used to say, 'I live just next door to the queen love', which he did he lived in Buckingham place, so he did live next door to the queen! [laughs

He was a a wealthy man but he was a good actor at being the fool you know playing the fool, but making money at the same time, so he used to leave the running of the chambers to myself and the junior clerk, we did all the blooming rought stuff and he'd stroll back at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and pick up the pieces you know and the money so that was that, and then I decided upgrade yet again, I decided I needed to learn dictaphone, that was the incoming thing and I had tried shorthand at um, evening classes but there was no need for it because I fell into the marine policy trade I never used it and then I found I didn't need it becayse hello, dictaphones are around, so I looked around for a job that had dictaphone and that had a pension, I suddenly decided I needed a pension, because there's no pensions in the Temple you see because they pay you out of their own pocket –you see they call their rent and then they pay you a certaib figure out of that.

The rate there was very poor there I must say. So um I went to a firm of solicitors, they were just outside the temple, actually in what you call the Outer Temple and they were called Titmus, Sayner and Webb and they turned out to be Charles Claw(?)'s solicitors. So I found myself typing about conveyencing work for shoe shops because he owned Barter, Truefour and Solsis(??). I hated it, I couldn't stand the work! And Sid had said to me as I left [puts on a high voice] 'you'll be back love, you'll be back, once a Templ girl, always a temple girl.' He was absolutely right, you get the ink in your blood, you get the ink in your blood - [laughs] all these funny sayings! And um yeah, he was right because I was doing this damn conveyencing and I detested it, all these documents, and you have to sew them up and you know literally red tape and green tape. I only stayed there about again about 18 months, but I did learn the dictaphone work so that was a good thing and I never got the pension because I wasn't there long enough, and I decided Sid was right, back to the Temple I go - on another agency posting, and ended up in Kings Bench Walk, I don't know if you know the Temple?

**I do yes**

Oh right, then you'll know K--do you know Tudor avenue? That goes down from Blackfriars Bridge you pass all the newspaper offices. Then you'll come to a checkpoint charlie, and that first street, which is an old Georgian street is Kings Bench walk, and I was just number 6, I was just to the right, where I'd been is opposite you, opposite what is now the car park, it was all lovely cobbled stones, and that was where I'd been with Quentin Hogg. All of that was using the same equipment, just different makes of writer until I got into Mr Somerfield's chambers, until I got back into the chambers in no. 6 Bench Walk, a lovely clerk, I absolutely adored him, and I stayed with those chambers for seven years, probably one of the best times of my life, they were really really nice, again they were the old style lawyers, when I say old style that's because by the time I left the Temple things had changed but I'll come to that in a minute. When I say old style I mean they wore pin striped trousers and a black jacket and so did the clerk and you were called Miss and it was very very nice and yet the strange thing is the ones I like previous chambers who called you Miss, were much friendlier than people in years to come who insisted in calling you by your first name, it meant nothing, it was just an americanism and I hated it because you couldn't call them by their first name so that’s a put down, right?

And when one of the members was made a County court judge he actually invited us to a party at his home, I mean you know, really nice friendly people, genuine people but it deteriorated slowly, I was in the Temple nearly a quarter of a century and as soon as I got there Mr Somerfield decided he needed to move and team up with specialist chambers, specialising in divorce and probate so off we went with a wheel barrow, like you do and I remember helping to clean the chambers that we were going into with the bucket of the people - every set of chambers the top flat is from a retired judge or someone like that - Atlee for example - and above us was Michael Havers, now you all know Nigel Havers don't you, that beautiful actor, coronation street? You know, he's Louis. Well that was his mum who lent us his bucket

**OK, wow**

Because they were upstairs, because it was just a do it yourself move, we went over to pump court, so this is my third address in the temple, it's like a village the temple, once your in it you can sort of move about, people do this. So number Pump five court was the next stop off, we were there seven years in the chambers of Mr Law and Mr Temple, Mr Law was also in show business, it's been a theme in my life, you wouldn't think it with the law...but anyway, Mr Law was a great advocate for divorce - and he had a solicitor - I think you ought take note of these names, because they're important, they're part of our social history -and he had a solicitor called David Jacobs, nothing to do with the DJ and this solicitor David Jacobs got himself into showbusiness clientele and he had all these actors and actresses and film actors and actresses and what he did, he lived in Sussex and he would have beautiful parties where he would invite the hoi palloi of the theatre world and they who had already had his expertise, would recommend him to people they met there and it was a fascinating time because we were sort of sewn on to their chambers, we were what was called common lawin our chambers when we started which can be accidents, issues about rent, tenancy agreements that sort of thing and crime, also crime, where was - Mr Temple and Mr Law, Mr Temple did probate, one of the men who was there, an old man, a lovely old man called Cecil Oates, his middle name was Oates because he was descended he was the grandson or great grandson of the Oates who went outside at the big expedition, you know 'I'll just be a little while' or I might be sometime, and he died in the snow, and that was his grandfather -

**Wow**

So I was working with him, he was called C O Herd, Cecil Oates Herd. I've met a lot of very interesting people in my life, Mr Moore, went up and up and up while I was there and we had a lot of famous names, we had the Redgraves, the Massies(?), Anna Massie and Daniel Massie, we had the Redgraves, we had Spike Milligan, Ronald(?) Coleman, before I ever got there in days gone by. Because we had teamed up with the original old clerk of those chambers so we had two clerks running it together. It read like 'Who's who', Mr Law's clients, it was extraordinary. Erm, who else did we have, Spike Milligan I said yes, and various other people from showbusiness, oh Vince Hill - oh he was lovely er, Bruce Forsyth -

**Wow**

All those people came to our chambers, I don't know if you're making a note of this?

**We've got it on tape...**

Oh of course you have, I keep forgetting I'm on tape - yeah - so that was a very interesting part of life and I was always been in love with theatre ever since I was a kid, and film as well, I mean I was writing to Cole the City(?) when I was eight years old living in Delaford road

**Wow**

I mean I've always wanted, I've really always wanted to be on the stage, which later on I was - anyway by this time I'm doing dictaphone work and I've also am still using a non-electric type writer

**OK**

But eventually they changed the machine and we got these ugly eletric type writers and this nice dictaphone so that was fine, and we worked I worked on tape, I also worked part time as the clerk, when the clerk was out on holiday I had to do his work which was terribly responsible and I, I didn't like that because if you did something wrong it meant that someone was in court without a barrister and I did actually make a bilnding mistake at one point because I thought the two courts were very near each other and I, understood that the chap in the first one was going to plead guilty and he could work from that court to that court and he didn't.

**Oh dear**

Yeah, the list has only got to collapse and you're in deep trouble, the barrister can't get from A-B that was a stain on my character. But I did it with the best of intentions because most of my barristers were on holiday and I was trying to make sure that they, they covered themselves you see, so that was that and I stayed there until those chambers broke up sadly. And that was the last of what I call my really nice old style barristers and I moved on then to Goldsmith building, named after the poet playwrite and that is right by the Temple church, it's beautiful old church, it’s round, one of the last round churches, although the nave was bombed during the war, the thank god the round part was saved and it's got all those effigies of all the old knights in there as well, and I used to the situated just above the round part of the church and the famous organist was there then and he had played for Earnest Luff was it that sang 'Oh the wings of the dove', that little boy soprano back in the 30s, and I used to listen to the choir on friday afternoons and think like I'd died and gone to heaven, it was lovely, had the window open and could hear the choir practicing for Sunday.

And right along side us was Goldsmith's tomb and on his birthday they used to come - the society - and have a meeting and...celebration of his death and put flowers on his grave, that sort of thing, and that's right by Goldsmith building and there I worked for Mr Clothier erm who became Sir Cecil Clovier and he also became the Ombudsman of the National Health Service towards the end of my time there, I think I was there two or three years as well and by this time I'm into electric type writers and still on the er dictaphone and manuscript, both

**How did you find that change?**

Oh I loved it, it was much lighter I mean, those pre electric type writers were so heavy, the keys, you know, you ended up with muscles like, you know what's his name, pop eye...[laughs] so then I went and changed again, I had quite a lot of travelling didn't I? I went, this was only due to my mother's ill health, my father had just died in '75 my mother was poorly and I had done so much with her health, I was going down hill as well, I was finding it very difficult to keep going, working full time, it was, it was very onerous work, these were not the sort of jobs where people can sit and paint their nails or have private phone calls, which weren't allowed anyway. You were banging away you know, eight hours a day non-stopm virtually non-stop and it was tiring basically. So I decided to give two days of the week up and look for part time chambers and that was my last set of chambers, I went there in '77, and that was back to King's Bench Walk again, yes, and that was um, the chambers of the man who had been the Master of the Roles Lord Dowling and they were commercial court chambers, quite different from any of the work I'd done before, very high powered, very huge pieces of typing I mean you could get opinions(?) of up to 40 pages you know it was incredible. It was very interesting to me because most of the commercial work that they did turned out to be to do with shipping so I'd gone right round in a complete circle, by this time the golf ball machine had come onto the market so we had the American golf ball, very heavy machine to use, quite good. Quite a good machine, but hard work. And um that, I stayed there ten years, I found the work very interesting

**Ah, ten years**

yes - by this time I'd got my life balance endlessly in and out, she had so many operations I can't tell you but I managed to have breathing space two days a week to take her to the hospital, get her back, look after her operations etc. and er, stayed there ten years and er by the time I left, they'd gone on to Adler electronic type writers, electronic as opposed to electric, the electric one was the Olivetti - no, no the Olivetti wasn't the electric that's right, er, at Goldsmith buidling I was still on non-electric, yes, we went on to the golf ball...and then we went, we went electronic. Now electronic is not the same as electric, electric just means you've got a faster and a quieter touch, they already were using them in the very first place I was at Henry Head, I wasn't in that, the secretaries which I wasn't had Remington Rand machines and they were electric, but I never had them, I went down to the typing pool and had ordinary old fashioned ones, they were on the market but I imagine they were very very expensive and you know only the individual secretaries had them, so um, that was a different machine and then we changed from golf balls to Adler electronic and that means that for the first time you had a um, a lift off tape, corrector tape,

**OK**

You had a carbon ribbon, which was a one use

**Yeah**

Whereas always before you'd had silk ribbons, cheap ones were cotton, but the better ones were silk and they lasted longer and also you used to have the choice of half red and black and when you're in, when I was in these chambers that did er, civil work, we did a lot of amending of documents and the amendments went through a particular colour code, so your first amendment was red, the second one was black, no the second one was green, the third one was black and the fourth one was mauve which you had to do by pen underlining, these were like you might say affadavits, amended affadavits, reamended affadavit, re-reamended affadavits, and so on - so the ribbons were very interesting and the last place that I was at we didn't have much amendment so we didn't have...anyway you can't have read with carbon, a carbon ribbon is a lift off print, so the correcter ribbon works, you go back and they take it off. After about, well about half of my time there I suppose, within the last year they decided word processors were the thing, oh I know what else I leant while I was there, a telex machine, yes, so I learnt to type and I was sending telexes out to Hong Kong, Singapore and all sorts of things, it was very exciting, I don't suppose they even exist now because faxes came in after that but telex was interesting and yeah, I did that - again still to do with shipping you see, and of course what they did a lot of, Mr Wilmer there did a lot of um, oh I've forgotten the words now, salvage work, yes salvage of ships that had been, that had gone down,

**Ah OK**

That was very interesting work as well, yeah, I did that so then we went on, we had this, this particular type writer, could adapt itself, by having an interface put in the back the machine, and various wires went on to, a a - a what's it called, I can't think of the name now but I'll show it to you because I've got it here, I've got the sae machine, um, a word processor so you, you were typing still on your old machine but you were looking at a screen it was coming up and of course you could amend it much more easily than you could before and it did speed up the work, there is no question that it did speed things up and then in '87 so I'd been there ten years, I decided, why did I decide to do that?

 I can't really remember now, I left the law completely...I decided, oh yes I remember what happened, yes, I decided that I'd rather work from home, yes because mum's health had gone down worse and I'd met one or two girls who had passed through our chambers who had gone on to work the same documents from home and deliver them back, and I thought well I could do that and then I could look after mum even better, I'd be here then. And so I did all my market research thoroughly and made sure that I, I went round various chambers that we were friendly with and whether they would use me, got my cards made up, everybody said 'Oh yes' very enthusiastic because I mean I was one of the longest serving typists they would ever meet so I was, you know, I was in a good position, and I, I got, I won't go into all the details now because it's too, too long winded but, I managed to get redundancy from them because what's otherwise - that's what forced my hand, they wanted to work full time they were getting busier and busier, they wanted me to do full time work and I said 'I can't do that because I came here as part time and my mother is far from getting better' I mean you know she's really poorly now, I'll, I'll have to leave at which point, my lawyers brain came into action and I though 'a aah', my job has changed, ergo I am redundant, because the job I came here no longer exist, they hadn't thought of that...

 **[laughs]**

So I went, I'd actually been to A-Cas(?) before that and decided to go for, um, I've forgotten what it's called now, unreasonable dismissal - I can't think of the name

**Constructed?**

Yeah something like that. And they said, they looked at the chambers and they said, do you realise, you've got five silks in that chambers? I said, and you're willing to stand up in court against them? I said yes. Good grief he said, 'I take my hat off to you', this is the man from A-Cas, I said 'It's because I know I'm in the right!' [laughs] I said I'm being forced out, unlawful dismissal, so the time, before it came to the actual taking action on that, I suddenly thought, hang on a minute there's an easier way out of this, redundancy, so I went up to head of chambers, 'I think you'll find I'm redundant under the law' and he hadnt thought of it

Two to me, so far, 30 love! So I got some redundancy money, which wasn't a great deal because I was part time but nevertheless it was enough to buy a machine, like they had there, which was nine - hundred - pounds...that typewriter

**Wow**

And I have it here, a beautiful Adler electronic.

**Ninehundred pounds at that time?**

Yes in '87 but I got it in the sale, it was 500, so I could just about afford that. And I set myself up and nothing happened, this was one of the real smack in the eyes that fate dealt me. The work didn't come in. I phoned everybody up that I'd already been to and left my card with, where's the work? Why is it not coming through? It turned out that I couldn't compete with the rates that the other girls working from home were offering and that was simply because nearly all of them were married to taxi drivers, so they worked, they gave the work out and somebody else delivered it. I had to position myself to cover my costs of going backwards and forwards to work and I found I couldn't compete, I only had a few pieces of work, some of it from my old chambers, luckily, just about kept me going a bit.

 So I knew then that I'd really got to pick myself up by the boot straps and I advertised all over London, you could not move, in any college, teaching hospital or wherever, without seeing my card up there you know? I rode in our car all round London, and it paid off. I had um, the next period of my life was all medical students coming here and doctors and um, nursing sisters, that sort of thing, so I did a lot of medical work, I loved medical work I enjoyed that, and people who were trying to become novelists or write their first play, because I advertised also in the national film theatre and places of entertainment like that, so I had a wide mix of clients but very little money because I was only charging a minimum rate because they were students and this was a very bad scene, I didn't know what to do, Mum was still alive, she was paying the rent and up until that point I'd been running the family car and um, my plan had been to continue to run the family car and supply the food so we had a balanced income

**Hm**

It just wasn't working out and I was living on my own savings, which was very bad news, erm and all of a sudden, mum was dieing. The last few months of her life, erm now did he see my? Yes that's right, Jerry Epstein, who was an ex-film producer, but going to go back into film, he, he saw my advert at the national film theatre, I'd already had a few students from there and he wanted me to go over and work, work, I said to him, 'I only do freelance work, I work at home', that's all I ever intended to do was be an out, what's the word, freelance typist. I went over there, he was another mad man, I seemed to have attracted them all my life! Hogg, mad Sid, and now mad Jerry.

 **[laughs]**

Gordon Bennett, it gets worse as we go one...um, anyway, it was, it was coming, [?] That's right he was working with Simon Callow

**Really?**

Yes, he was doing a screenplay with Simon Callow of a book by, the lady who was always winning the booker prize, God wha'ts her name? We're talking the late 80s, Oh god I can't remember her name now, she won it more than once, anyway she'd written this book called 'At Freddy's' it was about a drama school for children and they were turning it into a comedy play, Simon and Jerry, so I started off by typing the script of this play, it was all written out in manuscript and it looked like Chinese. And I came back less than two days later and he was astonished at the speed with which I'd typed the 60 pages of this undecipherable, indecipherable rubbish - 'how did you read that?' I said 'because I've spent a quarter of a century reading lawyers'writing, I can read anything!' It was terrible writing, he was left handed and he wrote upside down, do you know what I mean? When left handed people write like that [motions] have you ever seen them?

**Yes my brother's left handed -**

Yes, sometimes, some of them right properly but some of them, they do this jabbing thing, anyway I did it and he was very very pleased and he couldn't believe his eyes, my god, this is perfect, so just you know I'm a professional typist! I'm not one of these, you know, someone, I've taught myself at home and I'll do some work for you, I've been doing it all my life, so this was a real step down, because then he wanted me to go and work in his home

**OK**

And I said no! So there we had our first big battle, he showed me the machine. I said 'I'm not typing on that rubbish!' Which it was. He had a key missing! Ridiculous. I said where's the typists' chair? He said, we haven;t got a typists chair. Well I said Ive got a bad back I'm not sitting on anything other than a typists' chair, I've got everything at home that I need.

**Mm**

Correctly proper typing chair - I haven't got a desk, I was typing on a 1930s cupboard, [laughs] during the time that I was with these students, this year leading up to Jerry, probably about nine months and I used to open the door, stick my feet in of the cupboard, you had three drawers down and I'd stick my feet in the cupboard which if the telephone rang was a bit of a performance to get out and answer the phone! [laughing]

**I can just picture that! [laughs] I was going to say when you said you were working on a cupboard, well where did you put your legs!**

Well my legs was in the cupboard, which I've still got, it's in the other room there. Because I had to move that in the end...anyway, there I was at battle drawn with Jerry and I said no I'll take the work home, he said what I want you to do is a book - he was very pleased with me, he said that the next year 1989 is the centenary of Charlie Chaplin's birth and he had been a lifelong friend of Chaplin and he had produced the last four of Chaplin's film, he'd lived with him in Vervet Switzerland as well, he was a real Uncle to the whole family, very in, you know, and he wanted to write a book to produce the centenary, which would be the time to sell it, would you like to put the light on because I can hardly see you there you're against the light -

**Yes sure**

Just by the door there, don't fall over where Vincent Square Westminster, in his beautiful home, he had been a film producer and he had kept his identity from me, I didn't know when I started doing the work the screen play with Simon Cowell in, that he had any connection with Chaplin, it was 4/5 months in until he did this book, and I still didn't, funnily enough I thought he was a retired business man and I wondered what's, when he started doing this book, I said have you ever had anything published, is this your first book? And he sort of grinned a bit, and I said what did you do before you did this freelance work? And at that point, I was into healing, and he had asthma which was really pulling his life down, he'd nearly died before I got to him, in hospital as emergencies several times.

 It was nervous asthma, and he should really have retired, but he couldn't, these geniuses can never retire, they're driven and he went downstairs to his basement where he had masses of photographs and came back up with a studio portrait from America, and he said 'who do you think this?' and I said 'well it's an old photo, it looks like you, is it you? He said yes, turn it over, and at the back it said executive producer to Charlie Chaplin, he's moved up, a little bio of him, and I suddenly realised who he was! And then he pointed to a photograph on the piano and there was the Chaplin family. You see I went - I was not nosy, I went in there to work, I sat with my notepad I worked, I came home and that was all, but I knew that wasn't his house, I knew he didn't own that house, because it wasn't a rich person's house, and I thought this man's a tenant, but how? I was right. That was all that was only going into the kitchen. Anyway he eventually persuaded me to go over and work with him, in house, and I said I'm not using that rotten old machine, so I bought myself a Carrera type writer, electronic again, portable, beautiful machine, which I still have -

**Did he pay for that though?**

No, nooo I was self employed so I paid for it

**Why didn't you bring the one from home or would that be too much**

Oh you haven't seen it yet, it’s enormous it's an office sized machine, it's enormous the old adler! No this was a Carrera, it was very heavy though and of course I'm supplying my own ribbons to go with it, he was doing well wasn't he, and he had a nice machine and his own one, as far as I'm concerned you can throw that out in the dustbin it's rubbish um and I was half way through this book, my mother had died and I had decided I needed a break, I'd been through hell with one thing and another because it had been a terrible time you know, leaving my work, finding myself destitution facing me, my mother's death in some peculiar circumstances, and one thing and another, after about six or seven months with him, I needed a holiday, I decided to go to Israel because I wanted to go to Elat which I understood was a very nice resort um and a friend of mine from the choir that I was in, because all this time since '73 I'd been singing, I'd been in choirs from '73 right up until '04, the choir that I was at for the first ten years was a big choir with its own orchestra and we went all over the country and abroad as well, but the second choir was smaller and the girl I had met at the tea break said about holidays and I said yes I must have a break, and I want to go to Elat, somewhere warm

**When did you go on holiday, what year?**

This was eightyy, mum had just died, eighty eight, the beginning of '88

**Was that your first holiday in how long?**

Oh no I'd had English holidays, mostly with my friend who lives in the Isle of Wight, she was doing catering anyway, so I was going to her, but this, I hadn't been abroad since oh, '81 in the, when I was in proper employment with chambers I started going to Italy quite a lot, I went all over Italy, much of it on my own, which I loved, I learnt Italian as well in evening classes, so that was, that was a good thing. Anyway this girl said I'm going to give up my cafe work, she said, I can't stand it, my legs are playing me up, she was a bit older than me, she said, would you like me, would you mind if I came with you? I said no, smashing, I was going to go on my own, and we went off to an agent and we didn't go to Elat we ended up going to Natania, um which was a nice seaside resort and very near Jerusalem. So I left Jerry for two weeks and he went mad, I'll come with you he said. I had a friend in Devon who was running a hotel and I had a week or a few days with him, just after I met Jerry and he said where are you going? I said I'm going to Torquay, where's Torquay? In Devon. Where's Devon [laughs] he was a real Yank, you know [laughs] I'll come with you he said, you'll n--I'll come with you! I tell you I could have had money there, if I'd prostituted myself, but I don't do that...but people - but you'd be surprised how many people have said that, well 'why didnt you make up to him, he was single', he'd been married once before, I said because I didn't connect to him, he was a work person, but it is surprising the way women's minds work and women that you would ill consider, church women! One of my friends, supporter of the church, and she, she even said that, you should have, you should have and I said 'well I'm not getting into bed with someone I don't want who do you think I am!' but a lot of women do, throughout history, I call it prosititution.

**Yes I can see why**

Do you know what I mean?

**Yes**

...anyway, off I went to Israel and he was doing his nut he wanted my telephone number while I was out there - how am I going to manage? - I said you'll manage for a fortnight with this book. While I was gone he got angry and he advertised for another typist and who turned up but the girl who was a stage manager at that theatre in Islington, that very famous theatre. You must know it you two

**Sadlers Wells?**

No no no, not um,

**Almeida?**

Yes that's it Almeida. She was stage manager there, she was doing typing freelance, when I got back, she had bought him or she had made him buy a word processor, an amstrad! I was furious because I had been typing on my lovely Carrera and now suddenly I was forced to learn Amstrad, which was the most complicated thing, awful. Awful. It was Alan Sugar's?

**Yeah**

Dreadful thing I was furious, I thought if I had had that sort of income I would have left him then and there and said well get on with it but anyway, somehow or the other I stuck it out, I was with him '87 my mum died, they overlapped each other, and he died in '91

**What Jerry?**

Yeah of asthma, by this point - we finished the book and um, I went back to Israel six months later because I'd met a boyfriend out there and he wanted to come over here and live with me and I decided I needed to be with him on my own to see how it felt, so I went back again and Jerry was doing his nut, he couldn't bear the thought of me leaving him, even for a short while, um, so we finally finished the book but again he had another typist who came in for a little while, she was very nice girl and she was a translator and, and um we had our book launch at MOMI, the museum of moving image, which is attached to the national film theatre and er we were actually on BBC television - we were on the nine o'clock news -

**Oh right**

Yeah, and um one of the chaplins came, Eugene, yes Eugene came, and the book was a great success, it was called 'Remembering Charlie' and um, it went into, I think it was translated into twelve languages

**Wow**

Um I have a copy here obviously with all the Chaplins, I've got to know all the Chaplins while I was there, a smashing family, and Christopher came to see 'Blackbirds',

**Aw that's nice**

Yeah, yeah it was nice. I see Vicky everytime she comes over here, I know a few of them now, but I'm particularly friendly with Vicky and Christopher so that was a very nice time, I met a lot of showbusiness people, like Simon Callow do help yourself to some more tea] and um, and um oh Claire Bloom she was part of Jerry’s hitory in Limelight with Chaplin, that was her big breakthrough and Jerry as I said produced a [?] of Chaplin's films which were 'The Chaplin Review', 'A King in New York', 'Limelight'...and 'A Countess from Hong Kong', with Sophia Loren and Marlon Brando. They were last four of his films, of Chaplin's films I'm sorry, he didn't make anymore after that, he became very frail but Jerry had had his own career also in America and England and France, so he met Chaplin in his theatre in the 40s, um, a place called the Circle Theatre, which was really just somebody's front room, it started off like that and Chaplin came to see his son acting at Jerry's theatre, and was so impressed with the classic work that he was doing that he decided to stay on and direct for nothing, he said 'my fee is a cup of coffee'

**Wow, how generous**

Yes, so that started a lifelong friendship with Chaplin until he died and of course an ongoing friendship until Jerry died with all the family because he was like Uncle Jerry, so that was a fascinating part but also Jerry as I say came to Europe, lived with the McBevy(?) for a while but made two films in France, which I managed to get one of them on a video before the firm collapsed and two in England, excellent films like, and when he had died they had a thing, like a sort of birthday celebration called, Desert Island Films or something, Desert Island Flicks at the National Film Theatre and, um, I arranged a big er, sort of um, a celebration of his life because being Jewish he had to be buried quickly

**Quickly yes**

And he had no family, the niece came over from America, and they did that quickly and he was part of BAFTA and he should really have had a proper memorial service, which he never did, he should have had a memorial service, because he'd been part of entertainment in three different continents you know? Anyhow, I did it myself, a year later after he died, I did it myself, I've always had plenty of initiative and confidence, that I can do this, and I had no money, my my savings were disappearing because he, he didn't pay very well and I was almost getting to the end of my life savings but I did a memorial service for him, at Stephen's Street which is the headquarters of the BFI and it was all done from the other side of life, I had no money but I just went in flying by the seat of my pants as they used to say during the war, and er, I found films that had got lost, no one knew where these films were, but I found them, I got hold, and they waived the loaning fee to me, the studios that had it, for no particular reason, I was just lucky, I also got the premises, the boardroom, I said could we hire your premises, how much will it cost? For a, a a spread afterwards, and I made an exhibition there of his work as well, again they waived it...on that, before we went into the boardroom, I hired their theatre, their private theatre which holds 30 and I invited all his showbiz and publishing people and um, in fact Claire Bloom rang me here, amazingly I can't believe it myself now, and said 'I'm filming with ITV this afternoon', she said, 'I don't know if I'm going to get away in time' I said that's a pity, but we went ahead and again it was about £90/hour and again they waived it, no one knew why but I knew why, because Jerry was watching over me

**Aw**

And he was always doing deals- If he could get anything cheap or get it free! And I knew, well I'm a spiritualist you see - so I work with spirit, not sort of sitting here airy fairy having, what you call it, ouija boards and all that but just an awareness of what's happening in life and once I'm on the right path, I can feel those vibrations helping me along, and I just took it that someone will pay, in the end Christopher paid for all the food and wine and we had a lovely afternoon, I showed the two films that I'd made which I got for free, I managed to get the, um, the camera man, they call him the director of photography, that's it, the 'DP', who made one of Jerry's films, we didn't even know if he was still alive but we managed to track him down. He turned up and he hadn't seen that film since he made it, he thought it was a lost copy - so I reunited him with his film

**Aw**

And he's still a friend, he's an Oscar winner

**OK**

And he's still friends with me, I've got his letters in the bedroom, he came over a few months ago for the fiftieth anniversary at the National Film Theatre of the, 'A Taste of Honey' with Richard Pashingham and he's always kept in touch with me, in fact he invited me to go out and stay in his villa, on the beach, he, he decamped, to to Crete, where they made the film, the film which he got the Oscar for, which was, oh, it was all the Zorba the Greek, you know the music, everybody knows the music of Zorba the Greek - you do...

**I'll recognise it when I hear it**

Yeah well it's a lovely film with Anthony Quinn and Alan Bates and Walter M[?] did the DP and he got the Oscar for that, and he was a very big noise, still is, in the in the film world, Anyway that was the end of Jerry's life and the end of my, my connection with him but by this time, I was very confident that, because I'd been working as a secretary, which I'd never done before but just muddling along but using my own intitative, and by the time he died I was doing all his accounts, which again I'd never done before but it his papers where he nearly died several times from being in hospital, I never had proper staff, it was freelancers coming and going and coming and going, cash in hand and off, and it was just chaos in his home and I tidied it all up because that's my sort of role in life, to tidy things up - um I said to him when I typed his first script, I said 'well let's put it this way Jerry, I was put on this earth to unravel muddles'

Well I believe that's true! It's one of the things that I do, so I sorted out of, he just had polythene bags...full of receipts [sounds astonished] going back four or five years, of course you can't do accounts without doing receipts but they were all in, nothing was filed, it was in chaos. So when I finished this book you see he said I'm going back in to film production, I said well OK, wahay, and he wanted to go back and film Big Maggie, which was by one of Ireland's foremost playwrites, and I said well I won't be doing it with you, what! He said we're going to start on this now, I said oh no we're not, and he couldn't believe his ears, I said no, you need someone here to tidy up your affairs and keep things running like you know - your insurance is paid in time, keep mending the house, I was always calling in builders to mend the house, I mean once I went over there and I said 'don't start' because I was a few minutes late, don't start, I've had a terrible journey here because the seat had given way on my car and as I was driving around the Elephant and Castle because I used to park in Westminster where he lived, you know parking meter, the seat gave way and I disappeared! [laughs] under the steering wheel [laughs loudly] there was a huge lorry...bearing down on me [laughing] from the London Road [laughing] One minute I'm like this and the next minute I'm...

**Youre gone, how did you manage to keep driving?**

I don't know! With God's help [laughing]

**Aw amazing**

I know, I know, my life honestly, I got there and I knew he'd be pacing up and down, where is she where is she, so I said 'don't start on me I've had a terrible journey here! my seat's given way!' He said don't talk to me I've had a terrible night, I said, what happened to you in the night [laughing] He said, you, there was this huge crash - this was the time of the IR, IRA bombs,

**In london**

Yes. I...and of course he had people like Judges and what have you living in that same area because he's near the houses of parliament, and he said my god, there was a crash in the night, and I thought the bombs are back the bombs are back and instead it was his roof, and his roof had caved in [laughs] Poor Devil! [laughs] So he had no time for me and my car, quick get some builders! And I was supposed to be a freelance typist, I ended up being --

**Everything!**

He bottle washer everytime we went driving he said we're going in your car, he said you're the best driver in London, tell everybody, Brenda's the best driver in London, he had a huge rover which you couldn't see over [laughs] and he had terrible eyesight, he needed his cataracts done, whilst we were driving along, the pavement, I said do you realise you're on the pavement? [laughs] He was very short and the car was too big for him. So er he um used my car after that and um he got some other staff and I found myself, and again the new girl was watching over me because as soon as the book was finished I thought now what I need is a part time job, I looked in the evening standard, the first time I looked I found a two day a week job, exactly what I wanted, and I said to him, I'll take all this rubbish, this table has, has loose leaves and it was in use of 6 months, I coudln't use my own table or floors, because all his papers, because when you do accounts you have to have all different sections of your outgoings as well as your incomings, and the sections are about nine and you've got six years of those you couldn't see the floor, I did it, I did all his accounts and it was absolute chaos where he had, one of these typical americans you opened the wallet and there was all this string of...credit cards, yeah, he was continually playing one off against the other and, where he kept me there were great gaps in like petrol expenses that sort of thing and I sort of looked at other years and made up figures that fitted the bill and when the accountant saw what I'd done, he said this is wonderful, he said, who taught you to do this? I said, nobody, he said, what you've done - there's a name for this you know, I said oh, he said it's an analysis, you've done an analysis, I said I didn't know I was just making it up but it was, I sort of darned them together, he said yes this is marvellous, he said this is pre-accountants work, and I didn't realise at the time I should have got a lot of money for that, something like £18/hour

**Wow, I can imagine**

I was only getting three with Jerry he was paying me the same as his Char lady, by the time he'd died, I'd got him up to, I think '5 or something (?) but it was ridiculous because he was piling all these different jobs on me you see well, anyway he found another person and I got two days a week in an Insurance Brokers - back full circle in the Borough, called AIB Brokers, Allied Insurance Brokers and they were in the Borough and, corner of Newcomen street, very very nice people and I was back where I started from more or less, by this time --

**Were yous till with Jerry for three days then?**

Yes, yes so I was doing well whatever he needed, a couple of days, three days and two days at AIB and there, now let me think, um, yes before I started there, and when the book was finished I still had very low income, I only had two days' wages a week and I remember saying in Jerry's kitchen to theboys who were coming to work on the film with him, what I need is another client and praying to God through the ceiling and saying 'Bring me another client!' God I need another client, and he found me one, just like that, faith is a wonderful thing, faith in action I call it.

And a friend of mine who had worked for Jerry and became very friendly with me passed he was a, an outworker, home typing, and um he got me Time Out and he said look he said, there's an advert in here for a, a two day a week typist, I said Oh right OK I'll try that, so let me think, we're talking about equipment, I'd had um...i'd got my Adler type writer here, right yes that's it...I got my Adler type writer the big one, and I used the Amstrad at Jerry's that was the first word processor. When I left there, I went into AIB and we had a new system that was just up and running called word perfect, more, word processors and with that came the keyboards, you didn't have a separate typewriter it was all one, and that was a lovely system, they gave you a day's training, and that was a lovely system, I did all their correspondence, that was a nice place to work, very nice people and um, I applied for this job,

I rang up an agent number and I thought it was an employment agency naturally and it said Limehouse and I thought oh it's some young chap who’s just starting out writing and that sounds perfect you know, a couple of days a week, typing his work up and blah di blah [laughs] I dine out on this story [laughing] I sent him my CV to what I thought was an employment agent, which turned out to be a literary agent, she rang me back and said 'I've got your CV, thank you very much' she said 'I see that you say in it that you've been working for a writer, can I ask, may I know who?' I said 'No', I’m in command now. Why not?

I said I don't think it's appropriate at this stage, I always remember saying that, which was the truth - it was none of their business, and I never did divulge Jerry's name to any other client, until he was dead because that is the confidentiality that should go with a secretary, so she said, I said um it's immaterial I said, I've been doing the work and if I'm not suitable for an interview then we'll leave it, oh no she said, we'll leave it for the moment, I'm gonna get a taxi to go to AIB one morning, I used to start at 10 and the phone rings, so I get the notepad, yes, Ah Miss Watkinson, yes, he said, I've read your CV put in front of me, I'd like you to come for an interview, Oh yes I said fine OK, you're the man in Limehouse right? Yes, OK, do you know where to get here, he was giving me instructions and it was a difficult place to find actually, because of the one way system, anyway, I got an interview set up for the following Saturday morning,

**I - What year was this?**

Er this would be 1990

**OK**

1990, October, I remember distinctly it was October because I had my legs operated on just after I went there, and he was very impressed by how quickly I was up and running again - another Jewish man, they do like people to be strong and hard working. laughs] I do laugh now when I think about it, I said, because the taxi was outside by this time and I could hear him tooting, so I said and the name please, like over the counter in a shop! The name please - And he said er Berkoff- er no, it can't be Steven Berkoff this is Sid Berkoff or something, a young Jewish man, and then the silence hit him you see and he said 'as in Steven', [laughs] I said, oh what an illustrious name! [laughs] Because of course I'd been passing his adverts for all his plays that were on in London, I remember driving down Charing Cross road and Jerry said, 'that bluudy maaan' he said 'everywhere you look it's Steven Berkoff with Greek and' all these plays that he'd written, he had two plays running in London at the same time in the west end, and um I'd only seen him once on stage, but totally unrecognisable on stage in the Mermaid Theatre, I used to belong to a theatre discussion group and I had seen him in a Kafka play, 'Metamorphosis' he played the dad, um in years previously he’d played the beetle, you know the son, and um but I shall never forget that moment and I always say to people, so I put the phone down, completely in command and then passed out [everyone laughs a lot] I dined out on that story for years, it was so funny!

**Aaaw After Jerry, now Steven Berkoff**

And it was the only person I can think at this point of who didn't what he looked like, so when I went over there on the Saturday morning, and of course I'm a middle-aged lady by this time, I'm 50 years old, I lied on my CV of course and I knew I lot a lot younger than my years...so er of course I had an ordinary overcoat on and like Jerry he must have been used to these sort of girls who, are in the back end of showbusiness if you know what I mean like this Rachel who we worked with the stage manager, and the, another one that helped him out a bit with that book was a rock group girl, you know and they all come int he jeans and their leathers and all this, so I trot over there in my nice grey overcoat and my tan hat, [laughs] my wooly hat with the pom pom on [laughing] and [laughs a lot] [?] I looked at him and he must have got such a shock because I'd never seen a photo of him before - you know who I mean don't you? He's a very powerful man, both in looks -

**Really**

B - and charisma, you know who I mean don't you?

**Yeah I know of him Steven Berkoff, yes**

In the films he always plays a russian spy or the German villain doesn’t he, always and he is terrifying and I sort of opened the door like that, oh my god you know! And I was completely unprepared, and I'm trying to assess now, what is he, what sign is he, i'm looking around the home, it's all black, oh Saturn, he must be Saturn, he's a hard worker, everything's black [laughing] the colour of Saturn, [laughing] he turned out to be a Leo, same as me. but anyway there's the acting you see,

**Strong**

Yes he's a very powerful man physically, as well as mentally and he interviewed me and he said well I'd like you to do some typing I said yes fine, what do you charge? I said well I either charge by the hour or if it's a long job, or by the page if it's short, so we sorted that out and to this day I can remember him, I'm standing up, he didn't bother asking me to sit down, and I'm standing up and he's walking round me, looking at me from all angles! [laughing] and he must have thought what the hell have I got here, who's this, curious middle aged woman who's appeared from Bermondsey! [laughs] the other end of rotherhithe tunnel, he's at one end, I'm at the other [laughing] His wife used to say, 'this is a very Freudian connection' [laughing] ...I came home, typed it on my beautiful Adler type writer

**Ye-eah**

And back it went, and he couldn't believe how quickly he got it back, he said 48 hours, I said yes, well I told you I do a quick service and you're nearby, well this is excellent he said, so I said thank you, I'd like you to do some more, so we went on and I did one play after the other, which was one of the most exciting jobs I'd ever had because those jobs I was in at the birth of the play and then I saw it performed on the stage and I can tell you that was one of the biggest thrills of my working life, even though I've worked with all sorts of titled people and important situations, but to see, it appealed to the creative side of me to see something actually taking birth, and then seeing it performed - with him in it in one of them, it was a play called Sturm and Drang, one of the first plays I did for him was Brighton Beach Scumbags which is still performed he does one man shows now, and he's been doing those for quite a while and he's very very funny in his one man shows, I presume you've not seen them?

**No I haven't**

It's a pity you ought to look out for them they're coming to London occasionally the last ones I saw were at Reading, that's a big art centre, there, and um but he's very very funny, I remember him at the Garrick, the place was absolutely rocking with laughter because he always plays these poweful menacing people on film but in comedy he's really very good, yes, so for the next five years, I did all his plays, he said 'go and get me a dictaphone will you' just like that, no, this is how they worked, again I was supposed to be an outwork typist no way, again I end up as the secretary, I had to work in Jerry's home with him all the time and this is what I had, I still kept my independence with him and I kept taking the work over there, but I had to do all the correspondence, all his er, articles for newspapers, the big Sundays, sometimes an epitaph, for somebody, when Sam Wannamaker died for example, he happened to see how it all links together like a web, I always used to talk about the web, before we had the web, but Sam Wannamaker was the patron of the choir with the orchestra that I'd been in so I met him as well, so it all comes together at the end of your life, it's very strange but very interesting, and um, and he said I'm going to start now what was it he wanted me to work on, was it his biography?

No I think before he started the biography he wanted to, he said I can only work with you if you've got a word processor, I said well I haven't, I said I bought the machine I was using in Chambers the last Chambers I was in, so that if my work ever took off and I got a well paid, regular client I could do what they'd done, get the interface put in, and buy the word processor, so I said I could do that now, if you're going to be with me indefinitely, then we could do that, and that;s what I did, and that's what I used right through, until a couple of years ago it was irreparable, such an old machine, it was second hand when I bought it, it cost me over £1000, second hand! How computers have come down in price you see but this was two pieces of machinery together -

**wow**

But um then I did

**What year did you buy that?**

Er 1990, yes I worked with him in October, and I would have bought it just after I went with him yes -

**And that was a, that was a word processor and -**

Just the word processor, the interface and the wordprocessor, second hand, can't believe it can you the prices how they've changed -

**£1000 in 199-**

Eleven hundred and something I paid for that -

**Wow**

In 1990 yes, and I found myself again doing, being and he said can you do Ietters? I said yes if you'd like - can you do letters he said? I said yes if you'd like to do a tape, I'd brought my dictaphone from chambers, I said would you sell me my dictaphone, it was all there you know, yes alright then we don't need it, so i had that here, and of course he needed one the other end, and the tapes and I remember going out and just getting that for £90 - he never bothered to say here's some money go with and - you know get a receipt - oh you've got the old ninety pounds knowcking about you know, phiilips we used the little Phillips tapes I did all his correspondence, I did about five books with him, he did a journalistic type of book, when he went to film abroad he would write a daily journal on how the rehearsals were going um either with filming or more often with his stage work, which he took abroad, and then also about the country he was in, and was most fascinating book to deal with, they were beautiful, one was in Germany, one was in Japan, he actually credited me in the Japanese one which he never done before, he also let me use his flat down in Brighton, he was a very generous person -

**Steven?**

Steven yes and I used his flat for holidays, and and there's [?] when I went to work for him - and he said oh if you would like to come and stay anytime, when he wasn't there of course, and I used to joke to people I'd say when I've stopped working I'll start writing for the News of the World, 'I've slept in Steven Berkoff's bed' and I thought oh I wouldn't mention, of course he wasn't there at the time!

**The small print!**

Exactly! [laughs] We had some smashing holidays at his home, he was a decent person to work for, you knew he was going to boil over at any minute so you know you were walking on egg shells, he like me so much because of the work, he liked the standard of mywork, he was very impressed with my, er -

**Work ethic**

And my education - we'd both been to grammar school we were born only eight days apart, we were level pegging, there was a lot of um empathy between us and I er could see where he was coming from and because of my interest in film all those years ago from the 40s, the people, of his age, that he was referring to back then, I knew how to spell all their names, and when I didn't know, I had reference books [?] so consequently, he was home and dry because he coudn't spell anything, another one who used to type in Chinese, he had an old fashioned machine, he used to type it out but again it was like deciphering chinese, because he just spelt as he thought, so maybe he had dyslexia, I never thought of that before, perhaps he had dyslexia, anyway, that um worked very well with that machine and I had other clients as well, Heather who you've seen last night, at the Big Toad(?) who I wanted to try and get out before you left, um and about five books with him and then I did his biography with him called Free Association, and um, he was, he was so wedded to me, but he'd taken my life over, like they all do, if you're single you've got no life, you haven't got any

responsibilities, you're my property, it's like that, you know, and um I've always had a busy life like in theatrical interests and music, singing and um, but no they want to take you over and so he bought this studio next door to his converted warehouse where he lived then, and he bought it for me, he said, now I'm going to have this studio, it's just here by the river, I said yes yes, he said we're going to have that as my office and you don't have to come to my home anymore you see, alright OK, because after all it was a bit intrusive, turning up to his home, working in his home and when he had builders in we had to open his bedroom one night, so it was very you know informal but he bought this other place and he wanted me to be in there, more or less full time, well I could see that he was buying more new equipment, and I was getting too old to buy anymore new equipment and my legs were terrible, my legs were playing up, no one knew what was wrong with them I'd already typed a book for the doctor, in Remed Road, did you see the streets of London? You saw the Doctor at the end, Doctor Gammon? I did a book with him, at the National Health Service, just as my mum was dieing, I found him because my mum was being neglected at Drummond Road and trying to find a new doctor for an 86 year old woman is no joke, believe me, but my parents had done the work, which you have seen, no you haven't seen it right -

**No**

When you see it you'll hear about me, my parents working for that same surgery in the 40s, working in the community, in a sort of voluntary capacity, and that is the same surgery I found for my mother when she was dieing, I didn't know she was dieing but I knew she was very ill, and he took her on, very nobly, and I think the fact that we had worked there as a family generations passed, probably swayed and I also know that the receptionist, had been in my confirmation class in St Crispin's, so there's a couple of connections and again, psychically, I said to my mother, he's a writer - she said how do you know? I said I just know, I can tell by looking at him, I can see what's in his face, you know, and thinking astrologically as well, I said I bet he's a writer and I thought I'm going to work for him and I was dead right, within a few weeks we opened a daily [?] I said Mum he's your doctor! He's written reports on the National Health Service and he had something called St Michael's Foundation with another doctor and this was the second time he'd issued a report on the National Health Service, next thing I know he's on the phone and he's asking me to go round and take over his home

**Were you still working for Steven at this time?**

Um...no before Steven, this because Mum was just dieing, she died while I was with Dr Gammon, that's right and that would be '87 and I didn't meet Steven until October 1990 - so, um, I went round there and I handled all his cheque books and everything because all the people like, matrons and other doctors etc etc, were phoning in for a copy of this report, so I had to - he completely trusted me and so he should, we had that connection, I thought as soon as I met him, I like you - and er, next thing I knew he said I'm going to do a book on the National Health Service, so we sent copies of the report to people like Prince Charles, the Prime Minister, all sorts of people, again up the top of the hierarchy again, I keep banging up against it, but not from design, it just happens --

**Happens --**

Anyway and then he did this book on the National Health Service and basically it's still relevant because it's what's wrong with the National Health Service - and what's wrong with it he did in the 80s with this book, which was a very technical book but sort of graphs and everythign and his delineation became known, he was in the press a lot, there were all these articles about him, it became know as 'Dr Gammon's black holes' where the money comes in and it goes--

**It goes --**

And I could tell him why that is astrologically -

**Mm**

Because the chart for the setting up of the National Health Service was done at the wrong time, so you've got a bath tap on, plug out situation, which you find in individual people's charts, they earn money but they can't keep it - where's it gone? No idea. Earm it spend it, earn it spend it, and that's how the National Health Service has always been, and if it had been done four hours differently the situation would have been different - but one that has a very good chart is Medecins San Frontiers, they've got an excellent chart and they're much more succesful, but we'll never be because it's set up, the natal chart is wrong, but of course you can't tell anybody like a doctor that, I know, because I'm on the other side of life you see, I've got one foot in the spirit pool and one foot in the real world

[people talking at once]

I said I can't work here, actually I didn't want to work with all this technology [must be talking about Berkoff's studio] I said I can't work here, um, he said why? I said look my legs have gone very bad you can see what's wrong, one of them was hugely swollen, the other one had developed arthritis in the knee, and I could hardly bend my legs to get down, when I worked from home, I suit myself the hours, I work and when he overlapped into the AIB work, I was working night and day, I used to do his letters in the middle of the night starting about midnight, and then go to work the next morning, and I remember him saying to me once, you look ever so tired, and I said well I didn't go to bed till four o clock, what the hell were you doing? I said, typing Steven's letters - I could go over any queries with the Carvers[?] which I took to work with me and did it in my fifties, I worked harder and harder as I got older, I'd always worked hard but this was ridiculous.

**Yes, how long did you do that for then?**

That was five years,

**Wow**

I know, it was a crazy time really when I think about it, I don't know how I did it,

**No I don't know how you did it**

But I suppose the answer is, I did enjoy it, that's the bottom line, anyway he bought me this blooming thing and I said no I can't sit here eight hours a day, as you want me to, you'll have to get someone else, I said what I could do is continue with your books from home, which you know I did a lot of research from the to edit them, you know, which I did all this editing as well you see which he loved and so did I, I used to go over there and have an hour with him on a Saturday morning and we'd go through the through the draft and I'd polish it up, that's what I called it, polishing it up, and he loved that - he wasn't above taking advice on how to improve his texts --

**OK that's a wise man --**

It is , he was very good to work with and we achieved a lot together but um, he eventually had to leave and I don't think he's ever forgiven me I think he felt that I just walked out on him, you could see my legs, and I went out, and unfortunately I didn't complete my full term of office with the National Insurance, the last two or three years I was on sickness benefit, because of my legs, and I did finish of the book with him and I finished off Heather's book with her, and the only person I've worked for since then again I just did it the one off, I worked for Christopher Chaplin who translated a book from French which is his first language into English, it was a book by a mystic, you know a mystic person, it was very very convoluted thing to do, it was enjoyable for me because a lot of it I could translate back to things like to astrology and meditation all that other part of my love I could sort of, so that was, that's my working life, there you are

**Wow, so you stopped in 19 - 97?**

Um 19 - um I finished off Richard II in New York in '95, I finished that off for him, or again, this will make you laugh, I must make you laugh once more, before [laughing] '95 he was filming Fair Game -

**Steven right?**

with Cindy Crawford, that was the period when I got Jerry's memorial together because I had some time and I found his films and all that, and er, all of a sudden, he came back now he'd got this poor young girl, she was a gymnast, she was only doing secretarial work but she knew the modern equipment but she really was, totally out of, she was only 21 poor soul and I mean he's the same age as me, and he's talking people, she didn't know who the hell he was talking about, I mean for example, when he talked about a dray horse, I mean she's obviously on the, on the dictaphone, and she's typed it as a 'grey horse' because she wouldn't know what a drey horse was...but I would because I'm the same age, it's brewer's dray, have you heard of a brewer's dray? DRAY, hughe cart horses that towed the brewery lorries around, um and that sort of thing, so anyway and of course, all the time I was doing that, I'd forgotten, I was still working but for no money, for eleven years I was sorting out Jerry's archive for the BFI and California in America, because I mean we had a four story house to sort out and they wanted --

**That took you eleven years?**

Yes, I gave up in the end, I couldn't do anymore on it, I mean I didn't really give up it was done but his family were terrible to work with, his uncle and niece and nephews they were awful people, and I was trying my very hardest and I got it all right at the BFI, in the end, and it's all set up, it took them eleven years to do me a catalogue, and I only forced me to do that because they fell into a criminal act, one of them who shall be nameless, actually came over and raided Jerry's front garden, with the papers we had decided would be destroyed, we'd paid westminster council to come and take them away and burn them, these were personal things - but no, this person who should have known better came, he said he was just out for a walk, oh yes really? And with his secretary, went down and raided the bins and put them into the archive, at the BFI and I only found out because I was invited to an anniversary dinner and showing of the film Limelight and I was sitting at the Cafe Royale and talking round the table and suddenly heard this man, he said something and I said you've got chapter eight! He said what? I said, you've got Jerry's papers, that;s the countess from Hong Kong file! That's right he said, I said, how did you get that? And then I knew who had taken the papers, that was the second time Jerry's home was raided, the first time, as soon as he died, it was raided and someone came in, kept them for a year, came on and dumped them on the counter at the BFI and said he'd found them at a skip, ha, no way, so we were always subject to criminal acts and I was so furious, I wrote the worst letter I've ever written, I was absolutely incandescent with rage, I wrote to the BFI and told them just what I thought of them -

**Because they should know better really shouldn't they**

Of course, of course! Absolutely disgraceful behaviour. I wouldn't want - we'd already given him tw van loads of stuff, the same man at the BFI, he had taken two van loads of archive stuff, and yet he'd done that and not bothered to tell me, if he'd told me I wouldn't have minded so much [voices] anyway because of that they finally did a catalogue but only because I forced their hand so I did that work, in my own time all the while that we were drifting on through to my sixties -

**So I've got you working for Steven Berkoff for five years -**

That's right from 1990 - 1995 yes

**And then the last two years you said you were,**

Well I think we finished Heather's book around about the late 90s I can't remember - I mean she only does one chapter a year, just like you know, it's money in hand, but we did finish it just in time for the word processor to be irreparable

**And then you said something about Christopher Chaplin?**

Oh yes I did a translation of a book, well he did the translation and I typed that -

**When was that?**

Well I haven't got the flo- I've got the dates in the album, you'll have to come back really, I've got nice photos taken in the garden, which is rather nice to see. Erm, oh dear, well I'd stopped working for Steven, but I still needed a few more clients and I could just work well at home so my legs were OK< I couldn't be under pressure anymore, eventually I did find out what was wrong with my legs, and I've had three different kinds of treatment, one of which is wearing one of these wretched compression stockings, and the knee eventually got better thank god, it was awful for three years, but no I'm trying to think because earlier it would have been um '95, the second half of the nineties, yes, I can't I could tell you when I get --

**It's alright -**

I coudl tell you -

**I - So -**

I think that's that the first, by the time we'd got to 2000 I think I was finished, in more ways that one

**Probably officially, you were probably doing other ones you know, socially**

Oh socially I've always been very active yes, well the next thing, I knew I fell into the Bubble didn't I? By accident, I don't think that's by accident - local history group, Michael(?) said would anyone who can remember the blitz please stand up and educate the children and give them an interview so I did, and I thought that was the end of it, they went to the Imperial War Museum, and then six months later I discovered there was a play being written about it and funnily enough I'd had a very bad year you know '09, four of my friends died, four of my lovely friends, my companions, not just friends, I've got friends elsewhere but these were my companions, the choir had stopped in '04 and in '09 my lady friends, well three lady friends and one man friend, [?] they all died within a year and I was so lonely, I remember asking Marigold at the Bubble, I heard that it was going to be a cast of 40 with 20 children, I love children, and I said, could I come along and watch the rehearsals, just for something to do, and the next thing I knew, I was offered a part, as a grandmother -

**Yes -**

I loved the children, I just loved the children, lovely kids, smashing - haveyou met any of them?

**Is Connor one of them? The guy I met?**

No Jasmine and Jody

**Oh yes, I've met two of them**

Jody was me. That was a surreal moment, sitting on the stage in what was supposed to be the railway arch shelter, listening to my voice talking about entertaining at 4 years old, entertaining with the - enter - I always wanted to entertain you see, on a platform, public speaking, singin or acting - anything, to have an audience out there [laughing] That's how Petula Clark started in the railway, in the arches, so I said, it's a nice story, if you look at the BBC website, the People's War, my story covering that period, is in there, it's called 'Our Life Saving Cat', it's a true story, under care of bombed out children, two of them interwoven

**So just quickly -**

Yeah

**You've told me a lot about your work, and it's been fascinating, really inspiring [laughing, inaudible] well how do you think it affected the community, you know the work, your profession, how do you think it's affected the community at large** -

Well you see most of my life was spent out of this borough, wasn't it it was spent in EC3 and eventually in WC1 with Jerry and then in Limehouse with Steven, the only work I've done locally is funnily enough, when Jerry died, I went to the Bubble, I was on the dole for two or three months, I coudln't find a job that was suitable, so I said I had my clients, something that would fit around, so I just knocked on doors, and one of the doors was the Bubble, and I worked there for a few months, on the computer, which I didn't know how to use -

I - You learnt, as you've done all your life

B - I know - and they said I was very good at it, I don't know whether I was but anyway, I was doing mailing lists for funding, for cardboard citizens it was called, for homeless people doing acting, I knocked on his door, the solicitors, I worked there, I knocked on all sorts of doors, and um so I've forgotten what your question was, oh yes community, so those were the areas in this borough that I worked in, of course the year that mumwas dieing and actually on the date of her death, the doctor Gammon, I'd forgotten before this project came up that I had worked locally, of course I did a book with him, and I worked in his home dishing out all of these reports -

**Dr Gammon's black holes**

Dr Gammon's black holes [laughing] you've got a good memory - you won't meet another one like me will you? I think I'm going to be a one off!

I **have no doubt!**

And of course Heather, eventually, and I did several books with her, quite a few books, and the last one was the piggy, and she'll show you tomorrow night - are you going?

**I'm not no**

Not going tomorrow night...Heather Walker, she said she met you last night and she's registered with you

**Yeah we haven't got a date yet**

Oh you haven't got a date yet, I;m sorry - [talking about other interviews] - 1.45.33 1.45.42 And yeah I did a lot of books with Heather and the last one I did was a biography of James Elroy Flecker, a poet who was a poet of Rupert Brooke - a lot of people don't know Flecker, but he was thought of at the time to be a better poet than Brooke, and yet Brooke has gone into the consciousness of the nation, really, whereas Flecker, still a lot of people's favourit poet, often on poetry please, on Sunday afternoons, but nevertheless it's Rupert Brookes prose that people - If I should die, think only this of me/ that in some far corner of a foreign field/there lies a place that is forever England. No one will ever forget that, and it's always brought up at Armistice, er, celebration and er I think, he's remembered for nothing else he'll be remembered for that, strangely enough he didn't fall as a wounded soldier in that war, he died of a bee sting, amazingly, he did die but not as you'd imagine, but you see it was such an emotive time the first world war that - do you know that quotation?

**I've heard it yes, I think I've heard it on radio 4**

It's very noving yes, very moving quotation, so I think [...] it was a very interesting book to write, [...]

**Just as we round up, there are one or two areas that we need to be a bit clearer about -**

What I also did in the ocmmunity was entertain - you see I was in a lot of amateur dramatics you see -

**That's good**

So all my own life I was working in the community but in entertaining, Michael Barrymore down the road, in the Catholic Centre I was in, I was in amateur dramatics in 1950, in 19 -several times in the 50s and then the was a break and then it was the 70s down at the, oh god I've forgotten the name of the hall now adjacent to the [?] just by the Catholic church, Feltham, that's int Feltham school, and I was singing, a lot of the choirs were in the borough, so my community work which is what you're honing in on has been entertainment, we did a lot of services, my choir used to be hired out to churches to have a choir for a special festival, a lot of choirs don't have festivals now, we did all the big choirs down in Deptford, Princess Margaret used to open, I've sung to Princess Margaret and the queen and in Westmonster Abbey on German television, to Prince Michael of Kent, I've done everything, you name it I've done it --

**And all over the world as well**

Notre Dame in Paris, a whole weekend,

**Wow**

I know, incredible, so my really interesting life creaive life, which is another part of me because I'm a bit of a two, half person, one half likes doing challenging work and getting it right and doing it be, the correct punctuation and grammar and all of that, the other side of me just wants to be on stage, singing away

**Just have fun**

Well yes

**amazing, it's a a beautiful combination, absolutely -[inaudible] beautifully read -**

She comes from another world

**I can feel it before when you were working in the inner chambers, before you became a free lance, what was that like in the pool house(?) in terms of socially, did you socialis with people that you worked with, outside of work?**

Only that first chambers, they were very friendly, as I said we went over to Mr um, I can't remember his name now, Gordon Friend, he lived in Kensignton, and one of the younger Barristers brought me home in his sports car! [Gasps] [laughing] but no you didn't socialise, it was very much them and us, like upstairs downstairs, really - but I loved it, because I knew my place, I've always known my place when I'm in that situation, you know because I'm not on show, I'm background girl, as I've been with all these people's books, Steven's books and Jerry's books, it was only Jerry really who brought me into the publci light because um when we had things like um ...the Chaplin centenary there was Diana involved in some children's charity and the big showing of City Lights in Tottenham court road, was done as a charity thing and he took the stall downstairs with all his books again promoting them and because he had these social times, I got to know a lot of people there and involve myself in executive work really, yes, you could say that, arranging parties and inviting people to to th-that particular time, I spoke to many well known people in those days, so he brought me out of myself, and he really helped me to find myself, I'd gone in blind, as I say with two very powerful psychic um promotions, to say this is where you're going and it's going to work but it was terrifying I wouldn't suggest it to anybody else they do it because I just think my guardian angels are watching over me and they worked it out for me, where I was going, God obviously knew where I was going but I didn;t know [laughing] but I didn't know, I thought I was going to be sitting here typing legal documents - [inaudible]

**What about holidays and sick pay, how did that work?**

Pay for your own, simple as that, once your self employed, that's what I became, by 1995, I'd run out of money. I remember saying to Steven, oh yes that's what I was going to tell you, he came back, this poor young girl, who had got into a bit of a muddle

**Cindy**

No not Cindy, Cindy Crawford's a film star, no this girl called Valerie, who'd taken my place at his new establishment, she, [laughs] heard he was coming back and she had got behind with her work, so she fled in terror, they never saw her again, well he is a terrifying man, when he's in a temper, it was only once he got in a temper with me and I walked out - and he couldn't believe his eyes - 'don't you walk out while I'm talking to you!', and I just strode on and my face was scarlet and so was my neck, and I thought keep going girl, keep going girlm so I went down to my car, you've worked all your life, you've worke before Berkoff, you'll work again, after Berkoff [laughing] telling myself like a mantra and his voice is following me [laughing] but I kept going, three days later he came on the phone and apologised, [laughing] I'd won!

**Yay!**

Yay! Girl power! [laughing] I don't argue, I don't bail I won't [inaudible] phone him back, I said Jerry what you said in front of Christopher tonight was - you've got your affairs in a muddle and you've started to blaim me in front of him to put me down, and don't speak to me like that again because this is my idea of an argument, this is how I conduct myself so certainly don't speak to me like that again, he said, why?, I said I know you've rowed with e-v-erybody who's come in front of you, I've heard the rows, you know, huge rows, he loved to row, he liked it, he got off on it, I said you're not rowing with me, and you're not going to talk to me like that, I said if you ever talk to me like that again, you won't see me anymore, is that clear?

**Oooo, go girl! You tell him!**

He was absolutely [inaudible] talking from someone from Bermondsey, who the bloody hell are you? Well I am who I am and you need me -

**Exactly**

You need me, more than you know you do - underneath it all you do know you do, he never did it again,

Good for you

And neither did Berkoff, and his literary agent, the one I thought was an employment agent, he said to me, he's never apologised to anyone before! [laughs] Including her. Yeah - so this poor girl had vanished, and he came on the phone to me, bearing in mind I'd now stopped workong for him, he said, did you ever do a play for me called Revenge? He couldn't remember because he lives in the now, the past has gone, I said yes, is it on your comupter? I said it's on the word processor yes, why? Well I've come back and I'm going to turn it into a screen play for Channel 4, I said oh yes, and it was based on the classic Agammemnon play, but set in Dylan Land(?) in the East end, to my mind it's the best play he's ever written, well I really loved it and I was casting it as I was going along you know, I was casting it in my mind...and he said Valerie's vanished, I thought am I surprised, not really, so he said and we can't even get into the computer, because she's taken the password with her, [laughing] ...the biter bit

**Absolutely**

Because you see he used to traumatise her by coming early to work before she arrived he'd be sitting at her desk, that's not good, that's not fair to any secretary, especially a young one, especially a young one, you don't do that, they completely throws them, of course it does, so anyway he said could you get that out? I said yes, it's on the word processor but I said I'm not working for you now, I know he said but could you do this as a favour, he said, I've come all the way back from the USA I'm only here for the weekend, this is Friday afternoon, I said well how am I supposed to do it, when do you want it done by, Sunday morning? Gordon Bennett! I said, no I don't think I can, he said why? I said well I've got to go out, he said what do you mean you've got to go out? what have you got to do? Well my laundry tomorrow for a start and my week's food, my shopping, what do you want food for? I said I need to eat, he said don't move, we'll send food to you, [laughing a lot] and he did...he sent food! He was an absolute character!

He said, I've sent it over to you now, by taxi, it's in manuscript on top of the original that I'd typed with all the new camera directions, and I said am I going to be able to read this? And he said yes of course you can, well I got it by taxi and I said I'm not going to say I'll do it until I see it, when I saw it I can't do this, I don't [?] I can't do this, Oi! What do you mean you haven't even started yet? He said, what you mean you can't do it! [inaudible] [laughing] This is him in temper [...] I can't read your scruffy writing which we haven't got time to go over and do editing with, you'll have to come here, and dictate it to me, oh I can't do that, I'm much too important, to Bermondsey.

Well I said I don't know how we're going to do it then, it's up to you, he said I'll tell you what we'll do, you read three pages, [laughing] underline the bits you can't read and get back to me on the phone, I'll stay at this end and we'll translate, and every three pages the rest of Friday night, I had some fish and chips brought in on Friday night, and on the Saturday Sunday, he sent me over the most beautiful Chinese meal I'd ever had, it really was delicious, and I finished it and delivered it back 10 o clock Sunday morning for him to catch his train back to the USA, and he was absolutely delighted and I remember saying to him, I'll have to have this cash in hand, because I'd now closed my account with the tax people so because I'd always pay by [?]

So I said I can't do this anymore, this is my savings book I had £235 left in fluid savings, this is the downside of being self emlpoyed and heading in the wrong direction financially, it was a very very good creatively, very enjoyable but moneywise, the, never do it as a a a aproper job, I should have had a husband bringing in a wage and then I could have done it, but to try and live on it was hopeless and I didn't see, I thought I was going to have lawyers' money and they would pay, especially after 25 years' experience they would pay decent money, on a regular basis, I could have lived on that but instead I came right down to nothing,

**Under cut by the women, the wives of the taxi drivers**

Yes exactly, well their husbands,

**Could deliver them**

B - And of course I had my mother but she died in 6 months, by the time I left the Temple, she died from 6 months from neglect, too late, Dr Gammon found that she had cancer and nobody knew, so I was on my own and all the savings, right up until now, is because I applied for the disability living allowance, didn't get it, and when my back joined in the fray, I applied again because I'd been to a clinic and I got it, and they back paid, again God was watching over me, I stepped to the edge of the abyss, I would have been homeless, this was a private tenancy, I ha, had three lots of money invested that was waiting for me at 60 but I was only 56, going on 57, my state pension, my 30 year endowment, and my private pension but none of them were ready until I was 60 and I had, I couldn't say to my owners, will you wait four years and I'll pay you back then, can't do that, so I would have been homeless and God watched over me, I have great faith and rightly so because that month, I couldn't have paid the next month's rent cheque, I hadn't realised I was signing cheques and drawing money from my savings and I hadn't really looked at how much was left, but the next month the money came through and I've never really looked back until now, it's may be that now they might withdraw it or lower it because they're going to reassess everybody in 2014.