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Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahony (speaker, female)  
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Transcript:

0.49

I had a small part in this (Derek Evans' story). I was his first assistant, the very first assistant. My sister Veronica worked on the Hereford Times with Derek, because I think Derek was a freelance photographer then, and I wanted to leave school – I lived in Hereford then – and he was setting up and he asked me if I would like to go and work for him. Two pounds a week! Brilliant. Riches. I was in school at that time, desperate to leave school.

2.00

I didn't know anything about photography. I was at school and Derek and my sister came to the school for some reason I can't remember – it was a school called Broxwood Court, which then became Lugwardine, which is still there – and I don't know, I must have just been talking to them, and then, as I say, he said would I like to go and work for him, and I persuaded my parents that.....anyway, I must have been about 16, or maybe I was only 15 when I first met him. I can't remember to be quite honest. Anyway, he asked me at some stage, and I can't remember exactly how, it might have come through Veronica, and of course I was delighted and my parents let me leave school and I went to work for him.

To be quite honest I wasn't particularly interested in photography. I didn't know anything about cameras. We had a Box Brownie at home and that was it. It was an escape from school and a wish to grow up and be a grown up basically.

3.43 So, when I went there first he'd only just moved to this place in Broad Street. And everything was derelict in the building except his top floor suite. And he had no furniture or anything and we went around and bought furniture and started working. And he gave me a camera and told me to go out and take some pictures.

They did something called 'Hidden in Hereford' then and it was anything, chimney pots or anything, and the Hereford Times published them and the winner, I don't know what the winner got. So that was my job to do the 'Hidden in Hereford' and that's how I learned I suppose. And I don't think the camera even had a range finder on it, so I had to learn how to gauge how far things were.

5.02 He used to say, 'that's rubbish, and that's good, and things like that. And he taught me how to print and I spent a lot of time in the dark room and that was it really. No, I hadn't considered photography as a career. I'd always wanted to be a teacher to be quite honest, but then I began to hate school so much I just couldn't bear the thought of going into a school ever again.

5.35 but then of course I wanted to be the best photographer in the world, and I thought he was the best photographer in the world. And he was a good teacher. He was quite charismatic and he clearly was a good photographer and he taught me what I needed to know for his purposes and he discouraged me from going and getting any qualifications or anything. My parents always said, 'go and do a course', because courses were just starting in photography, but Derek thought they were rubbish and you were only as good as the last picture you took.

It's wonderful, if he's up there I think he would be really

pleased [with the project]. I think Keith has been fantastic. I left his employment when I, just a minute, just before his third child was born. I must have been there for three or four years; I mean not enormously long but long enough to become a competent news photographer.

Well, I've always managed to earn my living from photography. I went to work on this great newspaper call the Merthyr Express.

9.29 When I first went to work for him he had his dark rooms in his house at Bodenham Road, because of course it was all happening in Edgar Street and it was good fun. We covered everything that was going on and worked for the national papers and he taught me to drive, which was very good.

10.10 If there was a big story – have you heard about, Keith was reminding me – about Foster and Impey? Well they were another agency that set up fairly soon after Derek I think. And my only memories, because I was asking Keith whether it was true or not, my only memories are of racing along the road to try and try and beat Foster & Impey to some thing or another to try and get the pictures before they did. Tearing along the country lane. And I just used to cover anything that was going because it was a news agency.

He had a studio but I don't think he ever used it. We were just building up contacts with the national press and later of course he started doing film for TWW. Because I've got a picture, or a negative rather, of him taking pictures in the studio down in Cardiff.

And then I went to work in Merthyr and then I got married.

12.14 And I just continued freelancing after that and I worked for the BBC as a sports photographer actually, for some time. There weren't many women in the field then and I should have gone to London you see. I was offered a job on the Daily Mirror actually just as I fell in love. The big choice, but it wasn't a choice for me, I was more interested in babies really. I was quite a curiosity, shall we say.

I think Derek took me on because he knew Veronica and maybe she knew I wanted to leave school. I was there when he set up his news agency on Broad Street. And his father was there. His father was a big entity. He used to come and sit there watching me all the time, really suspiciously. It was just me and Derek all alone. It was fantastic training really. He taught me a lot of things but of course you don't appreciate things like that when you are young.

I suppose he taught me things like composition, but I mean a lot of the stuff when you're doing press photography is very straightforward. But if for example I took a photograph of

someone with a telegraph pole sticking out of their heads he wasn't very pleased. I spent a lot of time in the darkroom. I became a very good printer.