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Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith
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Evans Studio 1950s-80s
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Interviewee: Marcus Hart (speaker, male)
Interviewer: Julia Goldsmith (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith
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Video Format: MPEG-4
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Transcript:

I'm Marcus Hart and I'm Derek's son-in-law, was Derek's son-in-law. I just met Linda in a pub and from then on just gradually got to know them I think. He was quite a larger than life character probably. Always got plenty to say and also, yes, he was a charismatic character and years later I took up tai chi, I've practised it for years now, but what Derek had was a huge amount of chi and that's what made him charismatic. I've only ever met one other person like that and he runs just like thirty schools, he's that sort of person, very special. And also a lot of celebrities I imagine have a lot of chi. So that's my contribution on that.

[When first introduced] had the thirds degree all the time for months and months. We were a couple for three years I think. Politically we were apart and obviously as a Liberal and a very pro-European person and that's reflected in his work well. It's crossed my mind in recent times is what he would be thinking as events unfolded. But yeah, we were politically opposed. But one evening, we used to do a lot of drinking and smoking, because he was a heavy smoker and I was, and, you know, that was long into the night we did that. And one night we sort of all stopped, and after that we got on really well. Bonded over the drinking and smoking and he had a love of wine and I certainly had a love of wine. Oh, he introduced me to the wine society, which he was a member of for years, that was forty years ago he introduced me to that. Yeah, those traditions are still going on I think.

He talked a lot about his influences or on occasionally he talked about his influences because obviously there were specific influences. Bert Hardy a photo journalist, who really dominated much of the fifties in some of the colour material he produced; Cartier Bresson, Robert Duano, so again a very French influenced and again his material kind of bridges those different styles and that's why it has a really strong enduring quality I think, a lot of the work has that. And I love the look of country people as well. You know, because, certainly I'm from Herefordshire so, and grew up in Herefordshire, went hop picking as a child, all those things, and again, conjures up memories I think, all those photos do. A lot of intense experiences really.

[What do you think he captured of Herefordshire life?] I think the vitality of it. His observation of children is on one level, particularly good. The hop yard pictures with the children running aroundmy memories of it were the children were completely out of control, it was just an opportunity to enjoy

yourself. It captures all that, and again the pictures of the May fair captures Hereford people out and about doing things and just participating and interacting in a manner I find difficult to describe really. If you look closely at the pictures there's a guardedness to people, which I think comes from rural areas or peasant societies. I think that's why Derek's work was liked in Europe. I think that people understood his work and in the fifties of course he was one of Europe's rising photographers I remember reading that in one of the magazines, his back copies. So yes, I think he captures levels of people in his photography.

[His life beyond Herefordshire] well what I understand of it, I'm sure there are many others who know a lot more about him, well what I understood of it he was a committed European and was obviously very pro-market and I think he'd probably have some reservations about what's happening today. As a pro-European he saw it as a way of establishing peace across the continent and I think that was a priority. Certainly, things he bought, his purchasing, he had a German car, he drank French wine, I don't think he was sticking two fingers up at the past but he wanted a more stable environment. I think his work is the work of country people in the county. In a way, there's a kind of universality in relation to Europe. You can peasant people, you see country people, ?????, Italy, France, German, and he actually sells that notion that people are remarkably similar.

I'm not an expert on this, however, the conversations I had with him, I began to realise that his contemporaries were leading photographers, just as he'd been. He didn't quite step onto the national stage in a visible manner, but when he talked about all the people he knew, I mean he had a huge network and he was a networker and he had a lot of mates. Terry Donovan was one of his mates and he told a nice story I remember about David Bailey in Cologne from just being left on the street. Mr Bailey might have had a few drinks and I know that Derek helped him into the back of Terry Donovan's Rolls Royce and they drove off and took him back safely to his hotel. So obviously they always do a good turn for their friends. Yeah, he did know a lot of people. Bruce Forsythe, all the people that are dying now of the last ten years. There was always a story to accompany his reference to a name. those sorts of connections were the sorts of things that helped him make money because what he liked to do was make money. And you know it was a priority. He never thought photo journalism should be undersold. I think he was active in the NUJ for a while. He wanted to protect standards of journalism and the quality of journalism and with photography he was a working photo journalist as well as a person who make movies, he shot films.

Obviously, he got quite an array of talents or talents that could be utilized. And he'd be out and about and certainly as a leading Liberal knew a lot of the stories that were going around and scandals, the Thorpe scandal, the whole thing. And he gave

me all sorts of background on all those stories, which probably weren't available at the time. Yes, he had an immense knowledge. And obviously the other thing about it was he had true journalistic imagination and I think that counted for a lot and that's why people used to ring up to get him. Certainly, my daughter's answered the phone to Esther Rantzen when we were visiting. There were all sorts of things like that that really made you realise the quality of his work and the way it was valued.

There were times when he wasn't so popular with certain newspapers as others but he always had contacts with what was basically Fleet Street at the time. I think from the stories I heard it's difficult really to assess everything I suppose. There are so many bits and pieces that come back. But it is difficult to evaluate all those things, but what I know is there was a journalist with credibility, integrity and what he did want to do with those who worked with him in his practise, was develop those people, who would go on and have great careers.

He knew Dave Brubank apparently. Obviously knew Brubank and a whole range of different jazz musicians but of course going regularly to Nice in his later years he kept up contact with them and he was able to gain access to stages as any photographer would do, he got access. There are great pictures. I've got two on my wall back home. I love them, moody and there's all sorts of interesting qualities in there. I think he captures not just movement but a sense of the person is there and also a sense of use of the instrument, becomes a part of the person, the performer. And yes, I thought he got a lot good qualities which he bought out with people. and of course, the things was, because he would always engage and was a raconteur himself, others would become involved in things. I remember he told me Sammy Davis one night had bought him a wardrobe because they had been joking about this wardrobe and they'd been filming and one turned up in his office I think. You'll have to verify that with his partner but I believe that's the case. Certainly, I did spend late nights, but we did drink quite a lot so there we go, I can probably just say that. And he went out and about with his mates who were journalists in London as well.

From what I gather by the end of the forties and into the fifties he was working in some of the studios around London. I know he worked with Bob Monkhouse, Frankie Howerd, Joan Collins and a series of rising stars really. And a little bit later, I think by the seventies there was some offer to him to go to Hollywood and get into movie making but I don't think that was something he wanted to do. At heart, he was a photo journalist and loved his region.

The point about the archive is it's not just about Derek. It's about the shire itself and the history and recording of people and as a Herefordian I think it's great, I really do. Because

certainly I've got a wealth of stories but wouldn't necessarily want to tell them or bore people with but it's lovely seeing people giving their little clips and just a flavour of it really. Because it's a very special place and not only is it a special place in terms of natural beauty but the people are special as well. A little bit different possibly.