The Connected Histories of the BBC

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START AUDIO

Interviewer: Robin, can I first ask, you're a Duff, where do the Duffs come from and what's the history?

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Robin Duff: Well, Aberdeenshire in Scotland is often known as, or used to be known as, the Duff ridden county because there were Duffs all over the county. That's where my family come from, a place called Hatton Castle in Auchterless, through a family called Urquhart at Oldmeldrum, which is in fact where I live now.

Interviewer: You, I believe though, had your schooling in England.

Robin Duff: I went to school at Winchester. Doesn't one call university school, then I went on to Trinity College, Cambridge. Where I did work quite hard and got a reasonable degree, but I really spent of most of my time there acting. To my delight I eventually became president of the Amateur Dramatic Club and of The Marlowe Society. With the result that I spent an extra year at Cambridge, which was great fun.

I had every intention of becoming an actor until I started doing radio plays while I was still an undergraduate. I remember very well… I won't tell you who they were, well, yes I can, Jeanne

de Casalis and [Robin Farquharson], and they were both so friendly to me and absolutely wonderful to this young man taking part in this play, and I thought they were tremendous, obviously.

Then afterwards, about three weeks later, I went to a theatre and I walked up to Jeanne de Casalis who was standing in the foyer and said, “Miss de Casalis, it’s lovely to see you,” and she gave me an absolutely icy stare and said, “Have I ever met you before?” That and various other things made me think that perhaps the theatre wasn’t quite as friendly a career as I’d been led to believe.

I then started thinking towards The Bar, because I’d read law at Cambridge, and then I was acting in a production of Hamlet which was being done in the new Arts, the then new Arts Theatre in Cambridge, directed by the famous George Rylands, with as the king the man who The Times decided was the man, whose name began with a ‘B’ and had five letters as the fourth or fifth whatever it was. Well, of course [Donald Beavishead 0:02:36] was nothing of the sort, as was subsequently proven, although it was indeed of course Anthony Blunt who we all knew equally well.

Anyway, I was acting in that and [George Barns], who I’m not quite sure what his title was at that time at the BBC, he later became director of the spoken word, but he came round to my dressing room and said, “Would you like to be an Empire announcer at the BBC?”

Well, I hadn’t decided on a career and any one of the careers that I was thinking of was going to mean that I needed an allowance from my parents for years and years and years, and they hadn’t very much money, and so I thought well this is an opportunity, so I said yes and I went down for an audition and

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got in. I still have the letter which I thought was the promise of untold riches, because they offered me £5 a week.

Interviewer: Just before we leave Cambridge, nowadays I think we think of undergraduates often with an eye on the West End or a career in television acting or writing, rather a professional approach, what was the same true in Cambridge in the '30s?

Robin Duff: No, I don't think it was. No, it certainly was not. To begin with, television didn't really exist, there were not nearly so many plays on on radio because there weren't so many channels. Alistair Macintyre, Marne Maitland, Paul Stevenson, those three come to mind out of, what, I suppose altogether a hundred in my day.

Above all Fanny Rowe, who was the first woman ever to act in our productions and who is now still acting on television, and a very fine actress she is. In fact, that cushion over there is covered with the train that she wore as Cleopatra in Anthony and Cleopatra.

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Interviewer: It's stood up pretty well.

Robin Duff: Stood up quite well.

Interviewer: You mentioned Anthony Blunt, and to a later generation Cambridge in the '30s sometimes seems to stand for an undergraduate population keen on Communism. Does your memory coincide with that view?

Robin Duff: Not in the least. John Cornforth was I suppose the best-known Communist to that, and he of course was killed in the Spanish Civil War. I think we all realised that Guy Burgess, who was a disagreeable person at the best of times, yes, I think everybody realised he was a Communist.

I don't even know for that matter where Anthony Blunt ever was a Communist. He decided to, I think, give rather than sell, as far as I know he never sold anything, I think he did it entirely through belief, but I've always had the impression that he thought that this country was wrong rather than Communism was right, and I think there is a valid difference between those two things. Certainly, no, I didn't know that Anthony was a Communist.

I was more or less in the arty sector and I suppose generally thought you find more Communists there than elsewhere, and that's certainly all I know of, and most of them I think are solid Conservatives today, of my particular gang, ___[0:06:15] more solid than I am. (Laughter)

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Interviewer: You mentioned BBC meant untold wealth, of course when you joined it was a much smaller organisation than today.

Robin Duff: It was really very small. To begin with it had tremendous glamour just joining the corporation. I joined the Empire Service which occupied half of one floor in Broadcasting House. I mean, I say untold wealth for the simple reason that £5 a week was far more than I'd ever expected to get.

It was quite extraordinary in fact what one could do on £5 a week, because at that time an Empire announcer had to do

everything, I mean, you've got to compare variety shows, you've to be witty when announcing the BBC singers with Lesley Woodgate. You've got to do everything, you've got to do the interviews, you read the news, so really you had to do fairly all round. In order to do your interviews without any assistance you've got to go to theatres and cinemas and so on, ___[0:07:24].

I rented a flat close by the BBC, which was not a particularly cheap area, because I was working all hours of the night, and as I say, I did it on £5 a week. I didn't save much, and if I took anybody out to the Berkeley or something like that then I had baked beans on toast for the next week.

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Interviewer: Of course nowadays there are over, what, 20,000 in the BBC, what would have been the sort of figure, how many people worked in those days?

Robin Duff: God, I don't know, but as I say it was all in Broadcasting House. The Empire Service, as it was then called, I can't believe that there were more than 40 people in the whole service. Well, now of course you've not only got that service but you've got the whole of Bush House.

Interviewer: You said you had to be an all-rounder, I mean presumably you found some areas easier, more entertaining, more interesting than others.

Robin Duff: I enjoyed it all as a matter of fact. Incidentally, you had to have a reasonable knowledge of at least one of French and German

and Italian, and you had to be able to announce things in all three. There was one unfortunate occasion when somebody announced a song, as by [anon 0:08:40], but basically, yes, I mean I think we were fairly all round educated at that time.

I'm not saying that they're not now, but nothing was written for us. We didn't put on an interval signal, and I remember on one occasion I found myself with about four and a half minutes to fill, and I'd just had two days off and I'd been up to Newmarket to stay with a friend, I was very keen on horseracing in those days, and I'd been all round the… What the heck to they call them?

Interviewer: The stables.

Robin Duff: The stables, yes, and talked to people, and eventually filling in I gave my one, two, three for the derby. Well, because people in the building heard it and people overseas, and on the morning of the race I happened to run into the owner of the two horses which I'd put first and third, and he said, "No, no, it will be the other way round."

I'd held my bets so and I made my bet like that, and it was somewhat galling went I went into the BBC to go on duty that night, was met in the hall by all the commissionaires and the lieutenants and everybody else, because they'd heard the first one and backed that, I'd lost money on the race. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Before we come onto the Second World War, you had a summer in Yugoslavia, didn't you?

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Robin Duff: Yes, I did. Summer in Yugoslavia, but the employment longer than that. I had always felt that I did not want to remain indefinitely an announcer and said so right from the start. I didn't want to leave the BBC a bit, but I did want to get a little hand into production and so on, or writing some news, and the rest of it.

When the time which I had said was ended I went to my controller and said, "Time's up. I'm leaving." They were rather surprised and said, "Well, you can't really." I said, "Well, I can because it's the end of my contract and nobody's asked me to re-sign at the moment." They said, "Could you stay on two extra days? I said, "Yes, on condition that I'm paid peace work."

I got two months' salary for those two days' work, which I rather enjoyed. Then I left and I went down to stay with my parents in Sussex. My mother who I met at the station said, "There's a telegram for you from your old tutor at Cambridge saying would you be interested in tutoring two imminent young men in Yugoslavia?"

I rang him up, and he said, "I'm terribly sorry, I can't tell you any more but use your loaf, it's pretty obvious who they are." It was obvious they were in actual fact the prince regent's two sons. I said, "Yes," and went out there. The boys were charming, and I became extremely fond of Prince Paul and Princess Olga, who was Princess Marina of Kent's sister. Then I brought the boys back, one to go to prep school and one to go to Eaton.

Then the next two holidays we couldn't go out because of… Sorry, no, we went out for one holiday later on, which was when the war started, but in between while the boys came and stayed with my parents in Sussex because of the Albanian War.

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Then we were out there when it was obvious the war was going to start, and the Duke and Duchess of Kent, or the Duke of Kent had just gone back to London to stay with Queen Mary before he and the Duchess went out to Australia as governor and governor's lady.

At dinner one evening butler came in and said to the prince regent, "His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent is on the telephone," and of course the Duchess rose to her feet to go to the telephone, and there was a horrible silence when the butler said, "He's asked to speak to Mr Duff." Everyone had a pretty good idea what this meant.

I went to the telephone and he said, "Would you please break it to my wife that the King says that she must leave tomorrow morning?" So I had to go back and explain that this was necessary, and so the next morning we left, the Duchess of Kent and her maid and her detective, the prince regent's two sons, and the King's two younger brothers, we set off in the Royal Train.

I've since learnt that, or rather knew then but didn't know where it was going, that we brought out also some gold for the late Queen Mary. It wasn't a very funny journey because the car was in the middle of the train and the restaurant, relaxing car was bang in the middle of that, so everybody from the other end of the train who wanted to get to the restaurant had to walk through the coach, and Princess Marina was always a very, very shy woman, and she absolutely hated this.

I remember actually one moment which made me laugh, because she'd been informed that she should not leave the train, because nobody knew whether Italy was going to come into the war or whether the war was going to start and we had to go through Northern Italy, and we stopped at Verona and I was told that some people were waiting outside to present

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flowers to the Duchess and so she said would I please go and receive them, and I went out and I found it extremely difficult to keep a straight face because they were two very elaborately dressed gentlemen, and one couldn't help thinking of The Two Gentlemen of Verona. (Laughter)

Interviewer: How long did it take to get back?

Robin Duff: The normal time really. When we arrived at Boulogne, Wing Commander Fielden, who was the king's person pilot, was waiting there with a very small aircraft, and he came on board the train and said that he'd been sent to fetch the Duchess back to London.

She took her old nanny who'd looked after all those children, who was a very, very remarkable woman, Miss Fox, indeed she helped to support the three young princesses in exile from her savings in Paris. She and the Duchess went home leaving the Duchess' ladies' maid who had all the jewels in a little case, [Miss Snutch 0:15:39] and myself and the boys, and another tutor, of course the detective went with her.

Eventually we got onto the train, and it was all quite simple except that the Yugoslav ambassador had called for police protection when we got to Victoria Station, otherwise of course me arriving with the four small boys nobody would have paid the slightest attention, but actually called police protection.

There was an enormous crowd there and the Yugoslav Embassy whisked off the four little princes and left Miss Snutch and myself standing there on the pavement. The blackout had started, and we couldn't find a taxi or anything,

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so we solemnly walked to Belgrave Square clutching the Duchess of Kent's entire jewellery. (Laughter)

Interviewer: I presume you then went back to the BBC.

Robin Duff: I had agreed beforehand to do so and did go straight back. Then when the war started it was considered that Bog Dougall and myself were the two announcers who should read all news bulletins. Between us we read all the news bulletins, and we did at that time start a system, which I understand now goes on, but which was completely new then, and that was we asked that we should have a news reader's desk in the newsroom.

Excellent though the sub-editors were in many cases, they really didn't know anything about broadcasting whatsoever, and we found that we'd been given stuff to read which really was absolutely impossible to read, or still more impossible for the listener to understand what was coming. For instance, frequently the absolute crux of the matter was put in the first three words which as you know is nonsense for radio. I think that was a very valuable step forward in news presentation.

We didn't of course attempt to give the impression that we had written the news or that it was our theory of the news, which is why I still prefer it that the few news presenters, and I hate that word presenters, on television, one or two of them look at their script, which gives the impression to me that the news comes from a qualified news room and I get very bored with the ones who just read it all from the prompt and give the impression that they've thought all this out on their own.

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As it is, I think they are far too apt to give us their inflections and their eyebrow raising and give us the opinion, but at that time, and I remember this was the last discussion I ever had with Richard Dimbleby before his death, what the announcer thought about it was of absolutely no importance whatsoever and it was absolutely vital that he conceded, and that incidentally is why Bob Dougall and I were asked to read the news because it was thought that we could read bad news with a fairly level tone.

Interviewer: Here you are reading the news but possibly with a desire to do something more active.

Robin Duff: Yes, very much so. Anyway, it was decided by a variety of people, in particular Peter Pooley, who made a greater contribution to broadcasting than I think anybody will ever realise, he decided to start a programme called Radio Newsreel. Which now I think it's either 44 or 45 years later is still running and which is referred to in all the American books on radio as the first actuality programme ever. Which I think it probably was.

Peter wanted to start this programme and he had a very small staff for it, and he asked me if I would produce and narrate the programme on the first night, and I did for a short time with Peter Thompson who eventually became sports reporter for the BBC but at that time was one of the chaps who spun discs.

Eventually he and I finished up working for three days and nights without stopping to get this programme ready, knowing that we'd get all sorts of stuff coming into us right at the last minute. It duly went on the air to America, to North America, and went down extremely well there, because apart from

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anything else we could use recordings and of course American radio could not because of the Musicians' Union.

We went on producing the programme like that. I can't remember at the moment how long it was before I was talking in the canteen one night to Arthur Phillips and Lewis who was known as Lou, one was a recording engineer and the other recorded programmes, and I told them that I wanted to go down to Dover and do some broadcasting because Charlie Gardner who had been doing broadcasts from there had joined the air force.

And these two nobly purloined a recording car the next morning and off we set for Dover. Drove down there. By the grace of God the Germans came and machine gunned the car and us, and all the rest of it, and we got some very, very good recordings.

I noticed that actually the Borfors gun is still used in all sorts of totally different [protections 0:21:29]. We rushed the stuff back to London and it was broadcast that night in radio newsroom. We went back again the next day, and this went on for five days and nights including another day when they shelled a convoy.

At the end of that I went in to see Peter Pooley and I said, "Look, this is great but I can't really do both." He said, "Well, I was expecting you to come and say that," and said, "I think we can more easily find somebody to produce the reel than to go and do that reporting." So from then on I became a reporter. I sometimes narrated the reel after that, but I became a reporter and stayed a reporter.

Interviewer: You were obviously involved in the Blitz; it must have been very tiring-

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Robin Duff: Well, I don't know, I suppose it was, but it was so exiting. The 90 plus, whatever it was, nights of the Blitz I did a broadcast or several broadcasts every day about it. The first night I found so frightening just wandering around with nothing official to do, so the next morning I went and joined up as an auxiliary fireman, which was commonly known as the lowest form of animal life, at Whitechapel Fire Station.

That meant not only did I have something official to do but also of course that I knew where the big fires were. That's what took me to the House of Commons fire. I forgot the next morning, I was so tired, I went home to bed and then the BBC rang up and said, "Weren't you out last night?" I said, "Yes, House of Commons." "It is probably the only newsbeat you'll ever have in your life so you might as well come in."

The other of course tremendous night was the night of the city fire. Churchill kept sending messages to the fire service, "Save St Paul's." Anybody would think we weren't trying to. That night of course the water supply had been sabotaged.

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Interviewer: Really?

Robin Duff: Yes, an awful lot of the hosepipes had no water at all. It was a miracle that everybody got through that night. Incidentally, a little, very small side thing, but it shows the incredible memory, thoughtfulness of Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, that night of the fire in the city I spoke of a small child who I carried from an underground station because a bomb had fallen there and I said how frightened the child was and so on, and about five years later I was presented to the Queen Mother, or she

was then the Queen, and she said, “Mr Duff, I’ve always wanted to ask you how that child got on afterwards.”

It was absolutely incredible. She again referred to that about four years ago in Glasgow when she came up to open the Scottish Ballet’s headquarters. Her memory is incredible. It’s not surprising that everybody adores her.

Interviewer: You were fully aware how important the role of explaining what was happening was at that time.

Robin Duff: Gosh, yes. I mean after all frequently newspapers didn’t get to run. I think perhaps one of the things ___[0:24:50] to me more than anything else was sitting in a bus going along the King’s Road and I heard the two women behind me talking about something, and one of them said, “Are you sure?” The other said, “Yes, I heard Robin Duff say it last night.” Something like that makes you really realise just what path for good or evil you’ve got.

The same thing occurred later, because I remember Dorothy Thompson, the great American newspaper woman, she asked to see me after a small, as we thought, buzz-bomb raid. She was staying at Lambeth Palace. She said, “I can't understand it, Mr Duff, you’ve underwritten everything. I’ve heard your broadcasts in America describing Blitzes but after all last night everything was let – hell was let loose.”

I said, “Well quite frankly that was a little raid and if every time there had been a raid on London I’d said, ‘Last night all hell was let loose,’ we’d have had a might lot of panic.” Our phrase for it was, “It was rather a noisy night last night.”

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The same thing later on when you were with the troops in France, what you had to remember was in the old days a war correspondent sent back by telegram or pigeon or what have you his report, all right, he could write more or less how he liked, you try doing the same thing when you know perfectly well that the chaps that you're describing and with whom you're working are going to hear what you've said that night, it's no good overwriting then.

I can't remember his name now… Ernie Pyle. Ernie Pyle who was a tremendously read American reporter, or columnist, Ernie could get away with it because it was thousands and thousands miles away and he was sending it by despatch to London and then on and so on, but he says, "I gazed down on that dead soldier's face and thought of his mother and his fiancé," my God, if I tried to do that I'd have been recalled in five minutes or lynched by the troops.

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Interviewer: You were very close to the American forces, weren't you?

Robin Duff: Yes, very. I was up in Iceland at the time of Pearl Harbour. I enjoyed working with them very, very much. Although I did put my foot in it as a matter of fact. On the night of Pearl Harbour when I was the guest of honour in the marine corps mess, because at the end I had to give a talk and then after dinner the general said, "Well, I do hope, Mr Duff, you've enjoyed yourself."

I said, "Well, I have enormously, Sir, but I couldn't have done without your intercom impersonating and mimicking my voice all through the evening." Whereupon of course the general and everybody nearby roared with laughter, because he wasn't

doing anything of the sort, he comes from [Harvard 0:27:58]. (Laughter)

Interviewer: What were you doing in Iceland?

Robin Duff: Well, the BBC wanted, well, in fact radio and the press wanted to send people up there. In particular the BBC's attitude on it was that the troops in Iceland were getting very depressed because they were there in a safe place and their wives and children mostly not, being bombed.

And on top of that various brilliant reporters had written stories about the natural hot water there and all the troops sitting there eating bananas off the trees and making love to the locals, who were about the coldest fish incidentally you ever saw in your life, and they felt the morale was pretty bad.

They decided that, I think something like 25 war correspondents should go up. They weren't too sure of some of them, and of course Iceland was the only place where we had gone without being asked and we had just landed, and so it was needed to be a little bit diplomatic. So they picked The Times, Reuters, ABC of America was then called the Blue Network, and the BBC, to fly up there and the rest were to go by sea. We were to get there first, do all the official things, keep the president of Iceland happy, and all the rest of it.

Well, we landed at Prestwick, where we stayed for nearly three weeks on account of weather, and when we eventually went up to Iceland we flew over the ship which was bringing all the other correspondents back. ___[0:29:40] into Iceland but of course it's a strange place, this was the winter so it was

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practically never daylight for more than just about an hour. It was a very strange place.

I lived, well, first of all with the air force and then with the Kensington Regiment. Then finally I went a great deal to the Americans. After that, when I came home, the Americans were by that time in the war, and the BBC wanted somebody to take charge of all coverage of American forces, and a certain amount of other stuff such as relief supplies and so on, and nobody seemed very keen to do it, and I thought it was a very good idea and was going to keep me as it were in the war.

The Blitz was, the real, the original Blitz, the aeroplane Blitz was over by that time, and so I said yes and enjoyed it enormously, because of course one used to go to Londonderry a lot, and a lot of work on the bomber airfields. I really did enjoy the whole thing enormously.

[Break in audio 0:30:47]

Interviewer: ___ with the American forces which of course continued really until the Liberation of Paris.

Robin Duff: It did indeed because first of all one did quite a lot of training. I was actually sent to train as a parachutist to go in with the American's by parachute. I have no head for heights, I never sit in an aeroplane other than in the aisle seat, I never sit in a window seat, and I think probably the best day of my life was when I was due to go to take my first jump and I was told I was to go in with the troops instead of going in as a parachutist, I've never been so happy in my life.

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Then one sat and did various other training and eventually I went in with the American troop ship with American troops. We had in those days, it was a new thing to use, a portable grammar phone, in fact, which recorded when it felt so inclined. Of course, one of the things it did not do was record if it was wet in any way at all.

Well, by the time I'd landed and one thing and another the likelihood was that there was some water on my equipment and it just wouldn't work at all, but we did actually have a playback, I recorded everything on the beach and then played it back and of course there wasn't a sound on it, so eventually I hitched a lift on an MTB coming back, came back to Portsmouth, did the broadcast there for the BBC and incidentally also for Columbia Broadcasting, and then went back again.

Of course, going back again was much more fun, I went back on a very small boat. By that time the Germans didn't know we were all around, and they hadn't the night before, and I remember a black lad on the little tiny boat I was going back to France on, when everything started and there were ships on fire close by, he kept on saying, "Oh Lord, come the day."

The stupidest thing I think I'd done on most occasions, I took off my signet ring and my gold watch and tied them up in my handkerchief and tied them round my wrist, what good that was going to do I don't know, it was much more likely if we ended up in the water to get lost. Then we arrived over there and eventually started getting in land.

We were on the American beach, which was relatively easy. I started working with three French broadcasters, and [Piaf Renee 0:33:36], and in particular [Pierre Bourdon]. With whom I eventually arrived in Paris.

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I remember that first night we went into a great big chateau not far, only a few hundred yards from the beach, and asked if we could sleep there. They were an old, old couple who owned the chateaux with no staff left of any kind. They gave us delicious bread and butter and camembert and cider and calvados.

They gave us that night a real rich calvados. Then next morning we asked if they could fill our water bottles, and they filled them, and later on that day we each took a sip, or rather a swig from our water bottles, and found that they'd filled the water bottles with calvados, and not the old mature but the roughest rawest, I don't think I stopped coughing for about half an hour.

Then I stayed with them, as you know things went very, very fast for a time. Then slowly, it was extraordinary the childish, looking back on it, feeling between the various armies. I was with Patton, and I used to have to go to Bradley's headquarters to record the thing, sent it across eventually, well, once we'd stopped sending discs and tapes. No, no tapes, there weren't any.

I disliked the idea of Bradley so much that I always insisted on taking a packed lunch. I took my K-rations across there and ate them in his headquarters, because of course he and Patton didn't get on.

Interviewer: They were also rather anti-British.

Robin Duff: Bradley was, I think. No, Patton wasn't. Patton was only anti-anybody who he didn't like. Of course the extraordinary thing about Patton was that, which he rather appreciated in

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___[0:35:35] particularly of course in ___ although he didn't work with ___, was that Patton was a great classical scholar, he was a tremendous scholar of Greek and Latin, and when you stood with him in his mess of an evening all the time he was referring to Greek battles a few years before. He was an extraordinary man and not just the blood and guts that he's been made out to be.

No, the only thing which I find very disquieting working with American forces was that as we drove on frequently people would bicycle through the ___[0:36:15] towards us, ___ First World War, would bicycle towards us passing Germans on the way and offer us information about spots where the Germans were hiding and where they were going to fire from, and unfortunately practically never would the Americans believe them.

I was usually the only one who spoke fluent French and so I used to pass this information on and it was absolutely heart-breaking because so often enormous number of lives could have been saved if really the Americans hadn't been taught to believe that every Frenchman was on the other side. It was really heart-breaking when you saw them coming through, God knows there were enough collaborators, but a large bulk of the French population were not.

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Interviewer: How early did you get into Paris?

Robin Duff: On the morning of the day. The night before Pierre Bourdon and I had gone off to look for – everybody thought that perhaps Ernest Hemingway had been killed or something, as a matter of fact he was having a whale of a time with some French resistance folk.

We thought we probably had a guess where he was, and Pierre and I went off and found him and spent the evening with him and the rest. Next day we went back to General Leclerc's headquarters, and it was all very quiet round his tent, and the equivalent of knocking on the door and went in, and he looked at us in total astonishment and said, "Haven't you heard what has just happened?" Said, "No, I haven't." He said, "Well, I've just hit a correspondent on the head with my stake which I shouldn't really have done but really they are such a nuisance."

Came clambering at me to go to Paris, and this is a war, and forgetting of course that he'd been sent there so the French could go in for propaganda purposes, but anyway, Pierre who'd been broadcasting to France the whole way through the War, said, "Well, there must be some place in your tanks." He said, "Actually there is, and you can both go in with the tanks tomorrow morning." So we did, in separate tanks.

I went down the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The tank was knocked out, our tank was in fact knocked out, and so there was a big porte-cochère just beside, and a German soldier lying on the pavement dead with his rifle beside him. So I picked up his rifle, which I have to admit I was not allowed to do, it was the only time that I did ever break the war correspondents' code, and there was a German opposite who was sniping at us, and I went on firing at him, not very expertly, but eventually, whether he was dead or whether he gave up, but anyway he no longer fired.

I retired back into the courtyard where there was a collection of French old ladies, and they were applauding every time I fired, and eventually they gave me glasses of champagne and so on, and the whole thing was exactly like a René Clair film.

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Interviewer: Rather more dangerous.

Robin Duff: Rather more dangerous, but it was thrilling beyond belief, because of course the French were streaming out onto the streets. Eventually I got to the [Scribe 0:39:46] Hotel, and at that point a complication arose, although I did not realise at the time that it was a complication, I had been broadcasting to the French during the war fairly regularly, and somebody from the French Broadcasting Service recognised me, and also Larry LeSueur, but in particular myself, and he said, "We are desperately anxious that Parisians should not, who've left the city, should not come pouring back because the water supplies have already been cut off."

The Americans were quite convinced that the water supplies would be, if not poisoned, bad, and in actual fact it turned out that they were considerably purer than the New York waters. They said they wanted somebody whose voice would be recognised by a certain number of people to say, "Please don't come back to Paris, stay where you are."

This seemed, A, one was very excited, B, I was still quite young, and I thought this seemed the most natural thing in the world to do, so I did it. Subsequently the correspondent of NBC of America protested about Larry LeSueur, [Howard Marshall 0:41:14], I still don't know what Howard Marshall did or didn't do, and myself, and said that we had broken security because we hadn't been censored. Well, it was perfectly true, it had not been censored, and I have to admit that it never entered my head that it had to be censored.

Some people thought, and I think John [McVain 0:41:33] who complained, thought that this was my inconceivably subtle way

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of hoping that the BBC monitoring service would pick it up and realise that I was in Paris, and this was my method of doing it.

Well, it really was not, I perhaps if I was a better newsman or if I had been that would have happened, there was a matter of fact that the Daily Express thought that that was true and hired me on the – or offered me a job on the spot. At any rate Larry LeSueur and Howard Marshall and myself were suspended for I think a week.

My controller, Patrick [Ryan 0:42:11], gave me total support. We went together to see General Eisenhower in London. Who I knew already anyway. He said, “This is really not very serious, but as there has been this complaint, and as a technicality it was not cleared by census, we have to hold you back here for a time.”

I started doing a little bit of work for the BBC for a few days. The Savoy had very kindly had given me a beautiful room overlooking the river, because they liked several broadcasts I did, and I got a telephone call one day saying, “Mr Christianson is in the hall.” I went on the telephone, he said, “It’s Arthur Christianson from the Express, we haven’t met for far too long,” I thought well there is something in the air because we’ve never met.

I went downstairs and saw him, and he said, “We would like you to come work for us.” I said, “Well, I really don’t know if I can because I have tentatively been offered a job with the…” Incidentally the BBC was not saying in any way that I had to go, and didn’t want me to, but I thought this was quite a good opportunity, it was other people were offering me far more money.

There was tentatively a suggestion from Gerald Barry that I should go and work for the News Chronicle. Well, that did

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appeal to me tremendously because my maternal great uncle had been editor both of the Daily News and of the Daily Chronicle. That really did appeal to me, and I knew my family would be so thrilled if I went back to that paper.

As it was of course the paper folded after not so very long. Anyway, I said, “Yes, I would like to come.” They were offering me approximately one-fourth of what the Daily Express offered me. I’d named to Christianson in the hall of the Savoy a figure which I thought was absolutely more than the king got sort of thing, and I said I would have to go back to Paris as bureau chief, and that I wanted unlimited expenses and so on.

He said, “Well, I can agree that without going back to the office.” So I said, “Well as a matter of fact I have given a time of three o’clock tomorrow afternoon to the News Chronicle, and if I hear nothing by then the answer is yes.” The next day I telephoned, I waited until about quarter past three, then I telephoned Christianson and said that I’d be very pleased to accept your offer. At about five o’clock Lord Layton got on the telephone and said he hoped that I was going to work for them and I had to say well unfortunately I’m not.

Then I went back to the BBC and told them, and Patrick Ryan said, “If you’d done anything else you’d have been absolutely out of your mind, because you can't start thinking of a pension at 27 years old. Go on, go and do it, and good luck.” So I went back to Paris and reopened the office. I stayed there, did all the collaborated trials, the [Pétain 0:45:26] trial, the Laval trial.

Both those cases I sat next to them at the trail, which was terribly exciting. Well, ___ exciting, Pétain, it was grotesque.

At the end of the first day he turned to me and said, “That was very interesting today, wasn’t it, Sir?” Of course, Pétain half the time was not in the trial room, because he was sent out

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because he kept shouting. I think he had every right to shout because the [Proculore Generale], the man who was prosecuting him, had worked for, under him, Laval, all through the Vichy Government days.

The old man's only claim to fame was that he prosecuted Mata Hari in the First World War.

The trials dragged on. One of the things I hated about them was that, not the French, because I love the French, but about the trials, was that it was assumed, as is the French habit, I think, that anybody over 80, well, you had to forgive him, and anybody under 20, off with his head.

The ___[0:46:37] was that various people, old men, including Moorhouse for instance, who had had an enormous influence on the youth of France and persuaded them to be in effect followers of Hitler, they were all shot age 16, 17. Whereas many of the old men, all right, perhaps Pétain was excusable because he'd served French so well in the First World War, if he did, but I thought it was deplorable.

As far as Laval was concerned, I mean, I said then and I say now, that it depends what is the definition of treachery, of treason. If working exclusively for the wellbeing or benefit of your own country and your own countrymen is enough in a war of that nature then I think Pierre Laval was probably second to Joan of Arc, but if you think, as I do, that at that sort of moment, or indeed as Nurse Cavell said, "Patriotism is not enough," then he was guilty as anything. But he did work for the benefit of France and he'd sell everybody else down the river, allied prisoners or anybody else, for the welfare of France.

Interviewer: Did you come across de Gaulle at all?

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Robin Duff: Yes. In fact, there was an evening just after the fall of France when I was told that it would be as well to meet a Frenchman in the hall of Broadcasting House, this was just on, I mean I wasn't told personally, this was just on my board, saying it appeared that he had an important statement to make. He came with various men and one woman, and I came to know all of them very well later, and quite know why, I mean I had to announce him, but we all pushed into the studio together and de Gaulle made his famous declaration of free France.

Of course, needless to say, as is the occasion often in the future, the only two dry eyes in the room were de Gaulle's eyes, all the rest of us were quietly mopping our eyes by that time. I was the only non-Frenchman there. I met him an interviewed him several times during the war when he was in London. Subsequently went to some of those extraordinary press conferences which he was to hold in his residence in Paris.

He was the most extraordinary man. I think I still believe that he had an immense admiration for this country and for the people of this country. Obviously, he didn't always get on with Churchill, but I think that his ["No, no, no" 0:49:54] was 95% because he thought we were a stalking horse for the United States of America and the French never have liked the Americans. I think he liked this country.

Interviewer: Was it important after the war that I think you said a cousin of yours was the British ambassador in France, Duff Cooper?

Robin Duff: Duff Cooper. You mean important to me or to the war effort?

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Interviewer: I mean in the sense of the war effort.

Robin Duff: I think that Duff had a fantastically good relationship with de Gaulle, which was witnessed by the fact that after his death his widow was, Lady Diana, was offered a magnificent residence for her lifetime just outside Paris. Yes, I think that they both did a tremendous job there. I mean, really de Gaulle was determined to rebuild France's self-esteem and as such I suppose really had to be pretty bloody minded to the rest of the world, because you've got to go on saying, "La France, La gloire 0:51:08]," and he did.

Indeed, it seems a little strange to some of us who were there then, and looking back at that time, to think that it's reasonable to suppose that Monsieur Mitterrand is at the moment more powerful than anything that we can do.

Interviewer: It must have been a very difficult time, Paris, after the war, the recriminations.

Robin Duff: Yes. Most of the recrimination happened in the first few days. The well-known people who had their head shaved and so on, I mean, that was pretty quickly done. It was a terribly happy place because people were so thankful to be liberated.

I was of course extremely fortunate because I spoke French, also because I'd arrived with the American forces. Really there were not very many British in Paris and we were at that time, well, then and now, much more popular than the Americans. My recording engineer, he for some purposes did better than I

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did because he'd brought his kilt and of an evening he was to be seen parading through Paris in his kilt. He very nearly married a French film star.

Interviewer: You were working for the Express at this time, which meant-

Robin Duff: No, not at the time of the liberation. Post-liberation. Yes, and of course for the trials, sorry, all that part of course I was working for the Express. At that moment other than my newsbeat, or not beat but my eyewitness story of the House of Commons, I did have I suppose the biggest in a way newsbeat, not in time but in content that I ever had.

I got a message on one occasion from Lord Beaverbrook to say that I obviously was not maintaining the prestige of the Daily Express in Paris, or in France generally, because my expense account was much too small. Well, I of course was used to the fact that – I remember the first time I had to give an expense account lunch for the BBC, I had to take Brigadier Jean Knox to the Savoy Hotel and give her lunch, and her drink before lunch just about was covered out of what I had been allowed to pay for the whole kaboodle.

At any rate I thought after that, "All right, okay, we'll in a way play with the old man." So I gave a big lunch party every week at a restaurant called [La Mediterranee 0:53:56] and we had a private room, an excellent lunch, excellent drink and excellent company, but nothing transpired as far as I knew for the benefit of the paper.

Then eventually after Laval had been condemned to death, and of course it was clear that no reporters would be allowed anywhere near at all, but on the other hand his lawyers would

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have to attend the execution, and you probably remember that it was all pretty graphic because he tried to poison himself that morning in his cell and then was eventually tied to a plank and so on in order to be shot after all of half the best nurses and doctors to be found had stomach pumped and all the rest of it to recover him.

Anyway, one of my regular guests had been ___[0:54:48] Albert Naud who was his principal lawyer, and the day before of the execution Albert telephoned me and said, “How many hours beat do you want on the description of the execution?” I said, “Four hours,” and that was what I got.

I must say, the American in particular correspondents who were all terribly senior and very brilliant were very, very long suffering when they had been sitting on the stairs of Albert’s office for some time when I walked slowly up the stairs, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick who was one of the most distinguished of them, from the Chicago Daily News and a great friend of mine said, “I thought it was going to be you.”

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Interviewer: Can we move on, because I think the next-

Robin Duff: Nest step was India.

Interviewer: How did that-

Robin Duff: ___[0:55:35] rang me one evening and said, “Do you want to go to India?” And I said, “No, I don’t.” “So well then you’ll go to South America.” I said, “Well, if that’s the choice I’ll go to India.” My father had been born in India and my grandfather

had served the whole of his life there and ended up as commander and chief.

He said, “You’re going on Friday,” and I dug my toes in and I said, “I’m not going until Tuesday,” I didn’t go until Tuesday. I flew out, which is terribly interesting actually, because I felt out on the first flying boat trip of, I suppose it was Imperial Airways still, we landed in Karachi.

I can't remember who on earth the woman was, anyway some woman was having a formal dinner party for New Year’s Eve and invited me to this party, and I’m afraid I eventually walked out of the party because of course we had everything to eat and drink that you could want, and this woman turned to me and said, “I really think all my fellow women back in Britain are such idiots to put up with rationing.” I thought, “My God, you silly so and so.”

Then I flew on to Delhi. The British Airways people had booked me into the Cecil Hotel, which was at that time much the nicest hotel the Swiss run in Delhi. I remember there the wife of the British Airways representative obviously had thought she’d got to have to dinner a reporter, “My goodness.” Just happened to begin with that all her family had been to Winchester and she was Winchester daft.

By the end of dinner when she discovered that I was a Wykehamist who had some education, and had a few H’s in my vocabulary, by the end of the evening I was able to turn to her and say, “I do hope it wasn’t quite as bad as you expected.” (Laughter)

Then I met my old form master who used to teach me French at school. He was working as military secretary to the commander and chief who was Field Marshal Auchinleck and so he invited me to meet [the Auch 0:57:44] and the Auch said

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"Well, why are you not staying in my house?" I said, "I never really thought about it, the commanding chief's residence being a boarding house."

He said, "Well, I lived in your grandfather's house when I was his aide-de-camp so I don't see why you can't come and live in mine." Which I did. Which was tremendously interesting. Though of course really the Daily Express should have forbidden me to do it because thereafter I was quite unable to print most stories because I had to wait until I'd heard them from three or four other sources.

Interviewer: Auchinleck a great man?

Robin Duff: I think a very great man, yes. I think without any question history will say that he was. I mean, the tragedy was that all the work which he'd done in his time in India was undone and in fact he had a help in undoing it.

Interviewer: He had to wind up the Indian Army.

Robin Duff: He had to break it in two and he had manged to weld it into one, well, the races and religions into one. A number of us who were fairly intimate with the Auch tried to persuade him to leave a little earlier and not divide the army, because of course the Indians all thought, or the Indian government thought that he'd favoured Pakistan the whole way through.

I don't think he had, although I think probably he did have more sympathy with the ___[0:59:11] than with the Hindus. Not on a religious basis.

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Interviewer: The speed of events leading up to independence must have been very difficult to keep up with, a very exciting time.

Robin Duff: Yes, I mean, I'm amongst those who think that it went too fast, who think that Mountbatten had worked so fast because his experience was largely really that of a command operations commander rather than as a statesman, and I am certainly amongst those who think that the speeding up of independence before the boundary commission had reported was a tragic mistake, and I think that far more people lost their lives because of that.

Interviewer: Did you see the results of some of-

Robin Duff: Yes, saw quite a lot, because by this time I was working in an Indian state, the state of Bundi in Rajputana, as it was then called, it's now Rajasthan. We were very, very proud because we received both Hindu and Muslim, it happened to be a Hindu state, but the Maharaja always said, "I am a Maharaja who happens to be a Hindu." Actually, his bodyguards were all Muslims. We received people from both religions into the state and that we were very proud of.

Interviewer: Was there any violence in that state?

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Robin Duff: No, none. Delhi of course a tremendous amount. We didn't travel by train because a tremendous amount of the slaughter was on trains. It was a pretty ghastly time.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you thought the path to independence was too fast, and of course Mountbatten was determined to stick to this timetable.

Robin Duff: He didn't stick to the timetable. He made his own timetable and got the British government to declare independence considerably earlier. I mean a matter of months earlier than had originally been intended. That I think was the great mistake. There will obviously always be arguments over Mountbatten. I personally don't think that he will be helped in history by the somewhat over rosy picture, which he himself painted, of his own qualities and his own achievements.

I think that one of the things which still doesn't seem to have been fully recognised, and particularly because of this ___[01:01:36] about a romance with Pandit Nehru, but I still don't think that Lady Mountbatten has ever had the full credit that she deserves for the independence of India.

I don't know how genuinely it's known that, well it's known that she was trying to meet all the leading women politicians in India. She wrote to Mrs [___ Asfali 01:02:00] whose husband was in the open and working, well, was a minister in fact, and said that she would very much like to meet her and perhaps she would come and see her at Viceregal Lodge.

Mrs Asfali wrote back and said that she appreciated the invitation but that she was unable to do this because she'd sworn that she would never enter Viceregal Lodge whilst the

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	British were still there. Which Edwina thought was very understandable, and so she wrote back and said she absolutely understood her point of view, and she understood that there were some excellent cafes in New Delhi and perhaps Mrs Asfali would like to meet her there for coffee one morning. Where apparently Mrs Asfali wrote back saying in effect you win and went and saw her. I think that the work she did was absolutely phenomenal, enormous. Personally. I don't believe for one moment that there was any romance between her and Nehru. They had enormous respect for each other, and I think had enormous regard for each other, but I just don't believe the rest of the story.
Interviewer:	I think you were with the Mountbattens at the death of Gandhi.
Robin Duff:	At the cremation, yes. Yes, the Maharaja of Bundi and I were actually in Karachi on the night when he was assassinated, and we flew on, and Lord Mountbatten invited the Maharaja to stay at Viceregal Lodge, which we did, with Mrs ___[01:03:33] and all the provincial governors. At the funeral we were of course on the front row beside the bier, which incidentally was guarded by firemen which seemed to me quite odd or amusing anyway. As soon as the fire was lit the crowd just started pushing forward. It really was the most extraordinary and very frightening moment. The Maharaja and I picked up a tiny little woman who was the wife of the incoming president and made our way eventually through the crown, but it meant everybody was walking home, there were no official cars anymore and so on, and it really

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was a pretty frightening moment. I think there have been other official stories told but I do assure you that was the true one.

Interviewer: You were an advisor in Princely State for what, some ten years?

Robin Duff: Yes. I did all sorts of jobs. I was a minister and I had all sorts of departments. I was responsible for the zenana, for the ladies' palace, amongst other things. I was very close to the Maharaja himself.

I hadn't really intended to stay for a very long time but then came all the negotiations and all the rest of it and the Rajputana Princes were working very closely together for the most part. I was at all the meetings, and I suppose because I was British it was thought that I had a worthwhile point of view to put.

Was fairly close in the discussions, and as a result was in fact the only European negotiating on that side. They were long and difficult. It was rather interesting in one way because so far as the Maharaja of Bundi was concerned, I advised him to, when the division of property came between the state and the ruler, I advised him to whittle it down to what he was prepared to stick at and, like in advertisements, open to no offers, we were not open to any offers as to who what we had stipulated. I think we were almost the only state that did in fact get what we had stipulated.

Not that it made much difference because as you know, and as is history, eventually Mrs Gandhi tore up the treaties. She had a fairly reasonable precedent for doing it because of course the British crown had torn up the treaties with the

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princes. Those princes who were treaty states and the state in which I was happened to be a treaty state.

Interviewer: Was the court fairly exotic, I imagine it was fairly large?

Robin Duff: You mean Lord Mountbatten's court?

Interviewer: No, sorry, yours.

Robin Duff: I'm wicked, I'm sorry. No, it wasn't. I mean, there was an enormous number of people around, there were servants and so on and hangers on, and elderly gentlemen, but it wasn't no.

We had a government. In effect I drew up a new constitution. The Maharaja and I drove down in a Jeep to the offices every morning, and the Maharaja used to drive around the state every evening, always in a Jeep, so that he could stop and receive petitions and talk to people and so on.

I suppose my most colourful duty was handling the funerals of [Daja Maharanis 01:07:32], because the Maharaja, when I went there at any rate, he had apart from his own mother, because he was adopted, he had two Maharani mothers and five grandmothers, and I can't remember how many other ladies there were of concubines of his grandfather.

That palace was my responsibility. A grizzly moment happened at eventually one o'clock one morning, I was sleeping on the roof of the palace round the lake where I lived, and one of the [ADCs 01:08:10] came up and said, "Sir, I greatly regret to inform you that ___ is dead." I thought what in

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heaven's name do I do. He said, "I think you have to ask his highness because this hasn't happened before since he became Maharaja."

So I woke him, and he said, "Well get on with it." "Oh, I see." I said, "Well what do I do?" He said, "Well your father's alive so you wear a khaki turban, if your father was dead you wear a white turban, let me know when I'm required to come down." It has to of course start off not later than eight in the morning.

I went down with my personal staff which was one Goan and one Hindu, or Rajput, and I don't really know how but eventually we managed to find out from all these old gentlemen what was supposed to happen. Of course, it all has to be done by tradition.

I may say that when they all arrived if you'd lit a match there would have been an explosion because they'd all had good drinks of Indian liquor before they went to bed. Some of them I don't think had been yet to bed.

Eventually we started off, all the wood was collected, sandalwood, and saris for the mourners, and the rest of it. Eventually we started off, and one of the things I'd had to do was to arrange for the state band, military band, and I did get a slight surprise when we started off to the tune, "Oh, 'tis my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year," So we trundled off behind the coffin to this. It was an extraordinary procession.

I eventually had four of these processions, so eventually I became quite expert. I also learnt another thing and that is that all the clothing that senior members had worn on the four separate days of the funeral had to be given away to the poor, so both the Maharaja and I learnt after the first one to keep all

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our old clothes and we could wear them on these occasions. The first time I ended up giving away a good suit.

Interviewer: How do you set about drawing up a constitution? Rather hard.

Robin Duff: Well, I sort of read the American Constitution, which was a bit pompous for a small state the size of Wales. I think it was rather a good constitution as a matter of fact. It gave people the vote, and if I remember rightly the Maharaja was only in power to nominate two members of the cabinet, which wasn't bad. No, I think it was a very good constitution. As a matter of fact, in that constitution I curtailed the privy purse rights. That's to say the Maharaja had to have a certain percentage of the revenue.

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Interviewer: Then you came back to UK.

Robin Duff: Yes, I came back when I inherited some family property in Scotland. I came back because I thought it was going to be difficult enough to run it from Aberdeenshire leave alone from India and so I came back and went up to Aberdeenshire.

That particular place, Meldrum, had been let by my aunt to some people who'd opened a hotel. It wasn't very good. I thought the only thing to do then with two years to run of the lease, so I moved in and booked a room in the hotel.

It wasn't a very happy time. The day I arrived the lady who was running the hotel said, "Do please treat the place as though it was yours." Well, I had the impression that it was. At that moment I wasn't even very sure that I wanted it to be mine.

Anyway, when their lease finished I decided to see what I could do.

I knew nothing about it. Then if I had a sober cook, he or she couldn't cook. I knew I had one very good cook, and I went into the kitchen to tell him something and he threw a steaming dish of sweet breads at me. I decided then if we'd got to have a cook who liked the bottle it better be me so for the next 22 years I cooked all the meals. I'm thankful to say that we got a leading place in the Good Food Guide and so on.

Interviewer: Hard work.

Robin Duff: It was incredibly hard work. I nearly killed myself in the end because I also became a county councillor and chairman of the health and welfare committee, and general purposes committee. Sat on various committees in London representing Scottish county councils.

Then I was asked to go onto the board of the Scottish Ballet, and I've always been mad about ballet. I went onto the board and the next thing I found was that with malice of forethought they'd asked me to go onto the board in order to make me chairman, which I have to admit I did not have time for at the start but eventually I gave up the cooking and so on. I did it for eleven years and loved every minute of it.

Then eventually I thought, about two years ago, I thought that it was time I let somebody younger do it and they very kindly made me president. I've just come back two days ago from America for the company performing in America.

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Interviewer: What were your main jobs in those eleven years in terms of the ballet?

Robin Duff: I didn't do it all, I mean I had to sort of weld people together and so on. To begin with we had an administrator and an artistic director, neither of whom were senior to the other so that any disagreements between them had to be dealt with by the chairman. In fact, of course the chairman works very, very closely with those two.

I think I can say justifiably that during those eleven years the company went from being a small provincial company into a very definite international company. For instance, this year the company is dancing in three of the great dance festivals, Hong Kong, Spoleto in Italy and Spoleto in America. They also danced in Western Australia.

That's quite as much as we can do with Arts Council permission outside of the country in the course of one year. The company is in fact 40 dancers, but we break it down into 2 companies to tour the smaller theatres and then we break it right down into 3 people and a piano for church halls and schools, small schools and so on.

I think we really do provide a very good service there. People often say to me, "Who are the stars?" Well, our whole aim is to be a company so in actual fact you can see looking round this room nearly all the greatest dancers in the world have danced with the company as guests.

It's interesting that Rudolf Nureyev has always liked dancing with the company, and he told me particularly he likes it because when the stage is dressed with all the dancers they look at him when he's dancing instead of painting their

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fingernails or picking their nose or what have you. I’ve always loved ballet ever since I was a small boy.

Interviewer: You were with them recently, you were saying in-

Robin Duff: I was with them-

Interviewer: And you’ve got a house in the States.

Robin Duff: I’ve got a house in Florida, which sort of all came by chance. I’ve gone very often to Sarasota on the Gulf of Mexico for holidays to stay with friends, and then a very, very sweet old lady who now alas has died, she persuaded me that I really wanted a house there.

I’ve done quite a lot to the house. It’s right on the water. I went out the last January with the intention of selling the house and ended up by approving plans to build on three extra rooms. (Laughter)

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Interviewer: Civil Aviation Board, I believe.

Robin Duff: Civil Aviation was terribly interesting, that was somebody in this block of flats, [Swan 01:17:02] Court actually who persuaded me to send in my name when they applied over eight years ago for, I think five new members of the board. Over 400 hundred people applied and surprisingly I was one of the five who was chosen.

I then did three and a half years as deputy chairman and just over a year as chairman. My year as chairman was an extraordinary year because all those very big smashes came during that time and all the debate on a fifth terminal, the question of the fourth terminal, whether there should be a second runway at Gatwick, or in fact the whole future of civil aviation in Great Britain.

Certainly, the [AUC 01:18:01] is very much more powerful than it used to be, and I think right at the present moment we have a civil aviation minister, Michael Spicer, who is doing a tremendous job. Britain is very European minded on civil aviation, for instance it was through the AUC that a thing with an extraordinary title, the federation…

Well, anyway it's called [FATURIC 01:18:28] which it's in fact a European community association of representatives of users, and of course when one says users representatives everybody immediately thinks that you're just ringing up because Mrs Smith's lost her luggage, but we're not and it is a much more important thing than that.

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Interviewer: Also, although you left the BBC some time ago you did Round Britain Quiz.

Robin Duff: I did Round Britain Quiz, yes, for a long time. Various other things occasionally. I do it at the drop of a ha, anybody's only got to say, "Yes," and I say, "Please."

Interviewer: Pretty full life.

Robin Duff: Fairly. I enjoy it.

Interviewer: Robin Duff, thank you very much.

Robin Duff: Thank you.

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