

The Connected Histories of the BBC

Provenance:	<p>The file reproduced here was provided by the BBC to be made publicly accessible through the Connected Histories of the BBC catalogue hosted by the University of Sussex. It was selected in 2021 from one of five collections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Oral History • BBC History of North Regional Broadcasting • BBC Horizon at 50 • BBC World Service Moving Houses Project • Alexandra Palace Television Society Oral History
Clearance:	Interviews have been reviewed and edited to comply with GDPR and other requirements.
Copyright:	<p>© BBC</p> <p>© Alexandra Palace Television Society</p>
Conditions of use:	<p>This interview is available for private research. If you wish to use any of the interview in a published work or for a commercial purpose, permission must be requested from the BBC at</p> <p>historyteam@bbc.co.uk</p> <p>apts@apts.org.uk (for Alexandra Palace material)</p>
Partner:	The Connected Histories of the BBC research project was led by the University of Sussex, 2017-2022, funded by the AHRC.
More information:	The project's public resource including more information on terms and conditions of use are available at: https://chbbc.sussex.ac.uk/

File: LR003212 - James Casey (interview 13).wav

Duration: 1:22:50

Date: 11/08/2016

Typist: 715

START AUDIO

Trevor Hill: A history of North Regional Broadcasting, interview number 13, James Casey. There can be few better showbiz backgrounds in this history of North Regional Broadcasting than that of James Casey who's with me now.

Father, the celebrated comedian Jimmy James who toured the Music Halls and did both radio and television series for the BBC. Mother, so am I told, a chorus girl who also played parts in Number 3 Reviews before giving birth to a son between engagements in the year 1922.

0:00:47 Jim I would like to say that you were born in the proverbial theatre trunk but it is true to say that as a baby I believe you spent some time in a dressing room basket?

James Casey: Yes, well the theatre basket that everyone had in those days was always filled with clothes of some kind or other so it was pretty soft. So, they used that as a sort of cradle. When one was on stage the other one was minding me in the dressing room but one night, apparently my mother went on stage, so my father's on duty and I'm in the basket and some of his mates in the show came in and they're chatting away.

My mother comes off the stage and after a moment she said, "Where's the baby? Where's the baby?" And she suddenly

screamed because one of the men was sitting on the closed basket, they'd dropped the lid and she pushed him off and whipped the basket open in a terrible state, discovered that I was all very warm and happy and sound asleep.

0:01:51

Trevor Hill: This is why you've turned out to be 5 foot 10 instead of 10 foot 5, yes?

James Casey: Yes, 5 foot 6, yes.

0:01:59

Trevor Hill: Tell me about your early childhood, having a famous father in showbiz?

James Casey: Well at a very early time, from say 5 to 7, I toured with them. I mean obviously I'd been touring before that but I didn't remember a lot about it. But I went to a different school every week so I learnt nothing of course because for at least 3 days I was a novelty. I was the boy whose father and mother were on at the local theatre. When I was 7, I think it was, my mother retired from the stage, I went to a proper school and my memory of my father in those early days was him arriving home at, you know, 3:00am or 4:00am in the morning because wherever he was in working in London, anywhere, he drove home on Saturday night after the show.

Burt Flanagan used to call him 'dash up the coast James'. I mean if he was in London for 2 weeks consecutively, he'd

come home on the Saturday night and drive back to London on the Monday morning. So, he was the one who always arrived at 3:00am in the morning on a Sunday. They sent me away to school when I was quite young for a little while and then more or less, sort of permanently, I went away to boarding school when I was 14. So, I was really away from showbusiness except in holidays.

But of course, I always wanted to be in showbusiness, my father didn't want me to be so I was going into law and I actually did three days at Cambridge before I managed to join the Army in 1941. When I left the Army, I came back and of course was into showbusiness.

0:04:04

Trevor Hill: You say into showbusiness. You went under the name, stage name of Cass James.

James Casey: Well I started, when I first left the Army I started with my father just supposedly looking after his business, which meant, really, trying to stop him gambling. That's all and attempting to save some of his salary. After a while, I think in about 1952 one of the stooges was ill and left the act and my father said, "Oh well you'll have to come on for a couple of weeks until we get somebody else." I in fact stayed there for three years.

Before that, he'd done a thing which is of some interest, I think. We went to do some shows abroad, for the troop shows. This would be in 1951, about, and I was just going to supposedly write some scripts when we got there and have a nice time, a nice little holiday you see. So, on the first night the German in charge, area manager, whatever they called him, said to my

father, "I'm sorry we couldn't get another comedian on this show, we should've had because it means the girls do their opening number and then you'll have to go on. And then you're doing your two acts - the drunk act and the stooge act later on. So, we should've had another comedian." And my father said, "Well that's alright, Jim will do it."

Now I'd never been on the stage in my life and I just went white and I said, "What do you mean I'll do it?" He said, "Well he said he only wants five minutes, don't make a bit thing out of it." So I was petrified. Then I said, "Alright, I'll compere the show," because I thought if I compere the show I can do a couple of jokes and then introduce an act and walk-off. He said, "Well, do whatever you want. Don't mess it. You're making a big production out of this, it's nothing." I thought, "It's nothing to you mate."

Anyway, I did this, I was violently sick before I went on and I managed it. I got the bird as soon as I walked on because there were five girls dancing, the curtain closed and I walked on and all the soldiers started shouting, "Get off and bring the women back." I mean they started giving me the bird and they didn't know I was bad. I was smoking a cigarette you see and I was coughing and I said, "Excuse me, I've got a terrible cold." I said, "Got it in Hamburg last week." I said, "Well it was 30 degrees below when we were there. Well you can tell what it was like, on the way back we pulled in at a garage and a fitter was doing a welding job on a brass monkey."

And of course, the troops, "Ahh." I thought, "Oh well if it's going to be like that well listen." Anyway, I survived this night and I'm talking to a ventriloquist who was on the bill, after the show had ended and he's asking me, "Had I played [Attercliffe 0:07:04] or somewhere, you know, Wigan or...?" I said, "I haven't played anywhere, that was it tonight, you see." And he

was most impressed and my father came over and said, "You know that joke you did about the beer?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You ruined it." I said, "Your mad." He said, "It's a miracle I went on and you're talking about a joke that I didn't do well."

He said, "Oh if you don't want to do it properly forget it." And walked away. I mean just presumed. Then, he got pneumonia. So, after three weeks he's ill and my uncle who was [Hutton Connors 0:07:47] who was in the act said, "Well what we'll do, we'll do the drunk act. We can't do the stooges act, we'll do the drunk act. I'll play your father's party, you play the small part and Dick Inston, Dick Carlton, he can play the policeman." I said, "Alright." And we did it and it wasn't very good.

The next morning I'm walking up to see my father to his room and somebody said, "Oh your dad's looking for you, he's a bit angry." I said, "What?" I went up and there is the boss German man and my father in bed, my father's got pneumonia and he said, "What was wrong with you?" I said, "Nothing." He said, "Well he tells me it was terrible." I said, "Well it wasn't very good." "Well why? What was wrong?" I said, "Well I was alright, I mean I played..." He said, "Wait a minute, didn't you play my part?" I said, "Of course not." Well he said, "No wonder it was no good. You send Hutton up to me, I'll tell him. He plays the policeman."

"Why didn't you tell him?" I said, "Oh yes I should've said, now listen uncle, you've only been on the stage 25 years I've been on 3 weeks, you're not good enough." He said, "Don't give me that rubbish." He turned to this German and he said, "He'll do it tonight." He said, "You know the stooges act, they'll do the lot." So, for the next four weeks, for the rest of that tour I compered the show and did his drunk act and did his stooges act and threw up every night but he couldn't understand it. He just thought, "Well it's easy walking on a stage."

0:09:31

Trevor Hill: Well I've seen you on the stage doing your father's act. Your name appeared in the Radio Times for many years as both a writer for some of the top stars of light entertainment and Jim as a producer. When did it first dawn on you that James Casey, the writer, had a better future ahead of him than Cass James, the performer?

James Casey: Well, I was writing while I was working for my father in his act and it was becoming a bit silly because I was going on in the evening and writing all day. At one point, I was writing a show for Norman Evans and I was writing a show for my father. They weren't both on every week but they alternated.

I'm sitting there, at Plymouth I think it was working from first thing in the morning until it's time to go to the theatre and I thought, "This can't go on?" I had wanted to leave my father's act and actually go out performing myself. I was going to do a double act with a man who unfortunately was killed. The problem was my kind of comedy was my father's. My humour and I've discovered my style was entirely my father's. So, I thought, "Well I can't do that." So, I'll have to do something he doesn't do and I'd started writing. So, I thought, "Well now he's a wonderful, creative comedian for himself but he couldn't write for anyone else. So, I'll start doing that."

Eventually, as I say, I was doing a lot of writing and I said to my father, "Well look, I'll just have to leave because I'm going to be a full-time writer." I finished at Southport, The Garrick at Southport. We did the six weeks season which closed the theatre for good and I also left showbusiness at the same time.

0:11:37

Trevor Hill: You weren't that bad, were you?

James Casey: Then I was writing for a while and then Ronnie Taylor who was the boss in Manchester Light Entertainment and I wrote a lot of things for Ronnie that he produced said, "We've got a vacancy for a producer, why don't you apply for it?" After a little thought I did, I thought, "Well I won't get it, obviously. I mean I'm nothing to do with BBC. I won't get the job." I believe there were about 18 people or something on the shortlist, something incredible, 11 or whatever it was.

My father had rung me up and said, "The other stooge is ill, you'll have to come in next week." I rang up and said, "Could I have my interview at 9:30am, which was the first time because I've got to Glasgow Empire." I mean everybody hated going to Glasgow Empire anyway and I had to go there and work the week with my father, just the week. So, I did play Glasgow Empire and had the wonderful thing of silence, you know and it was frightening to go on in this act that used to get roars of laughter. To go on, to total silence for about 10 minutes, silence. And he did a wonderful line at Glasgow Empire, after his drunk act which had been greeted with silence and it was a wonderful act. He put his dressing gown on, went through the curtains and it was just like one of these old actor-managers, not a Music Hall comedian at all.

There was this splatter of applause and he said, "Thank you and tomorrow night we will play East Lyn." And I was on the side just falling about and he said, "Well it was a drama, wasn't it?" I said, "Yes, it wasn't a comedy act."

0:13:38

Trevor Hill: Well after that baptism of fire, Jim, did you hear that week whether you'd been successful in your application?

James Casey: A couple of weeks later and I said to my wife, "They've offered me the job, what are we going to do? I mean do we really want it or what?" I said, "The money's terrible." Then I thought, "I know, if I take this job for a couple of years, I'll learn about production which will help me as a writer." Also, it would be nice to do a show that I've written and cut out the middle man, the producer, you see.

Because Ronnie Taylor was great but there were other producers who I didn't think did the best thing with some of the stuff I wrote. I thought it would be nice to cut that middle-man out for a while.

0:14:34

Trevor Hill: Go on, mention one or two of the middle-men?

James Casey: Well there was one, great successful producer but it wasn't with me and that was Jonny Hammond. I mean we didn't recognise what was funny together but Ronnie Taylor was great to work with. Because I think the fact that Ronnie was a writer so you could say something, suggest something to Ronnie and he could see the possibility of it. But many other people I wrote for - all over, in London and everywhere, you actually had to write the script before they could decide whether they thought it was funny or not.

Whereas with Ronnie he'd say, "Oh yes, oh that'd be great."
Then the woman, "Yes, that'd be marvellous." He was mentally writing it himself.

0:15:24

Interviewer: He was a great encourager wasn't he of talent?

James Casey: Oh tremendous.

0:15:28

Trevor Hill: And even if you hadn't perhaps got a good idea he would still say, "Well go ahead and try it."

James Casey: Yes, and the thing about Ronnie was, two things. I mean he was a pretty hard-headed businessman Ronnie but he had this great love for people of talent. I remember when my father was having a bit of a problem financially, one time, which was not unusual because he backed horses all his life except at night and then he backed greyhounds. But he rang Ronnie up, when Ronnie was working for television, commercial television and said, "Is there any chance of doing a programme?" Which Ronnie was overseeing at the time and Ronnie said, "Of course Jim."

Rang up the director and said, "Book Jimmy James next week." And the director said, "Oh I don't know that I think I want him." And he said, "It isn't a suggestion this is a decision. You book Jimmy James next week." Fortunately, my father went extremely well and the director thought what a good idea it

was he'd had to book him. The other one was Normal Evans who was a wonderful comedian and a most generous man and abstemious man and he didn't gamble and I don't know how but late in his life he was in financial trouble and Ronnie was using him on television and Norman rang him and said, "He was rather pushed for money. Was it possible to ask the booking people to let him have the fee in advance?"

Ronnie said, "No Norman I wouldn't do that. I would not allow them to think that you were in that situation. I will send you my cheque for your fee and when you get paid you send it back to me." I thought that was a beautiful, beautiful thing to do.

0:17:46

Trevor Hill:

Going back, you've been talking about television but sticking with radio, in the 1950s and '60s you were producing Jim and sometimes writing for many who were starting out on their careers. Some I think had their very first broadcast on [Barker 0:17:59] Andrew's Variety Fanfare followed by half hour series of their own with you. Today their names wouldn't be amiss in a line-up of stars for a Royal Command Variety Performance - I'm thinking of Ken Dodd, Les Dawson, Roy Castle, Jimmy Tarbuck, Des O'Connor, Mike Yarwood and that's naming not all by a long chalk.

Let's start with Knotty Ash?

James Casey:

Oh, Kenneth Arthur, yes well, I first came across Ken at Southern Empire and we were... I was working with my father, we were top of bill and Ken was the second spot comic and he was great. I then worked with him at Glasgow Empire where he actually went well, I mean he did sing. After five minutes of

silence he sang and then they liked him but he did it and I saw him do it at Brighton, everywhere. So, when I joined the BBC as a producer I said to Ronnie Taylor, "I don't know what you'd do with him but the funniest man in this country under 50 is Ken Dodd. I don't know what you'd do with him on radio."

He said, "Well find out, do something." So, we did do the odd broadcast with him like Blackpool Night and things like that and, I mean Ken as you know is always late, everything he's late for.

Trevor Hill: I have heard.

James Casey: When you offered somebody their very first broadcast in a variety show and said, "Come at 10 o'clock to Manchester and we'll help you with the script." They would be on the door at 6 o'clock in the morning. He arrived at 11 o'clock and the car had broken down or something and of course we believed that then.

So, I've said to people since, if he was late for that he could be late for anything. Anyway, we did this and then, finally, I did a pilot, half hour show which I wrote and produced and subsequently we did a different one and that took off but there was an interesting little anecdote about that. I went through to London for our sort of annual or half-annual meeting, I don't know which it was.

0:20:33

Trevor Hill: The offers, programme offers?

James Casey: It's something like that and we were with Light Entertainment and the Assistant Head of Light Entertainment mentioned Ken Dodd and said, "Of course, you can't use him on radio, he's too visual." I said, "Well it's a funny thing because last night I recorded a half hour show with him which shows one of us must be an idiot and time will tell."

Anyway, I did three series with him and then I think two years later he started doing his series in London.

0:21:07

Trevor Hill: Tell me, I could hazard a guess as to the name of the man, the Assistant Head who thought Dodd was only visual?

James Casey: John Simmonds.

0:21:17

Trevor Hill: Oh, I wonder if it was [Con Mahone].

James Casey: No, he was the boss at the time. He was the boss.

0:21:21

Trevor Hill: Because that's a name that brings a glazed look into your eye, I've noticed in the post, that does to Con Mahone Hone.

James Casey: Con, yes. Well of course Con never produced anything. I mean I don't know what his background was but he'd never done any

production and he certainly knew nothing about comedy. So, it wasn't easy to meet mentally, you know, on Light Entertainment. Plus, the fact that he seemed to like to sit on the fence as well.

0:21:55

Trevor Hill: Did you find as a writer and as a producer, did you have to convince the Les Dawsons and the Roy Castles and the Jimmy Tarbucks that this is what they did well and this is where their weak points were. I mean rather as a father has to with his children.

James Casey: It's very difficult to tell them what their weak points are. I think what you have to do is move them gradually into where their strengths lie. You see it's a very vulnerable thing being a comic and you need a certain ego, a confidence and it's a very rare comic who you can tell him he's not very good at something.

I mean with Kenneth Arthur, with Ken Dodd, when we first did the series, I realised after the discussions that Ken didn't know what was the right thing for him to do on radio. He knew about the theatre but he didn't know about radio. Whatever you suggested he would say, "Yes, very good, very good but I think there might be something better." This would be an hour later or a day later and then you'd start again.

I was writing this particular thing with Frank Rosko and we finished the script on the Tuesday and he said, "When are we going to see Ken?" And I said, "We're not. He's going to arrive on Sunday and he will get the script, because he doesn't know what's right for him. I'm not sure but somebody's got to make a

decision and I've made it." So, he turned up and he did the show. It went extremely well and afterwards he said to me, "Well, I'll tell you now I didn't think there was a laugh in that show, which just shows how much more you know about radio than I do but I know about the stage."

That kind of established our relationship, which lasted for 20-odd years because the very last thing I did before I retired was a Ken Dodd series.

0:24:07

Trevor Hill: Did you have to do a lot of editing when you were doing those, edit the recordings?

James Casey: The last Ken Dodd series I did, it was six half hour shows and I spent twenty-four days editing, which is like four times/five times as long as I would with anyone else. Ken just went on forever.

0:24:26

Trevor Hill: As with his stage act, they used to say, "For heaven's sake bring down the curtain?"

James Casey: Yes, the difference though was the stage act, he knew everything he was doing was set, I mean he would go on a long time but that was deliberate. With the radio, he would just keep producing material and doing it, didn't ad lib, hardly ever ad libbed in his life but he would just keep doing more material.

I think this was because he wasn't sure until he heard the audience laugh.

Now with Les Dawson, Les is a very great creative comic so - and I wrote for Les when I was producing him and he always added to it, which was great. I mean my father was the same. You could not write a thing for my father without him altering something, it just would happen. If it didn't happen before it would happen on the take. Jimmy Clitheroe, in nearly 300 shows he never altered a word or suggested a word. He just did what I gave him but with somebody like Les or Eric Morecambe they're going to add, they're going to change. They're going to ad lib.

Now Ken Dodd didn't ad lib but he just had a tremendous amount of material. I mean instead of 30 pages he'd arrive with 75.

0:25:50

Trevor Hill: A lot of editing? I understand now.

James Casey: Oh tremendous.

0:25:54

Trevor Hill: I remember you coming to me to ask for some pilot money in order to do a try-out with another ingenuous writer turned performer, Eddie Braben. And it was the title which also appealed to me.

James Casey: Yes, 'The Worst Show on the Wireless'.

Trevor Hill: On the wireless.

James Casey: Yes, well Eddie of course had been Ken Dodd's writer for 12½ years and they split up and Eddie then wrote for Morecambe and Wise. I mean he was the most successful writer of his time. Then he was ill and he was told not to write, not to do anything. Mustn't work for at least six months. He just froze sitting over the typewriter, I believe.

Anyway after a few weeks he rang me up and he said, "I can't just do nothing. I know I'm not allowed to take the pressure, you know, the Morecambe and Wise shows and all this," but he said, "I can't sit at home Jim, it's driving me mad." So I said, "Well don't we do a radio show. We do a pilot. You write whatever you think is funny, no stars involved and I will get some actors to perform it and we'll do it without an audience and we'll just have a ball and we'll take all day and there'll be no pressure at all." I said, "In fact it'll be therapeutic."

And we did. I came to you for the money and we did the pilot. It was quite interesting because the first reaction was tremendous you see from people. Douglas Muggeridge who was the Controller then, thought it was very funny, a great show. So he said, "Do 10." Well we did 10, the figures were terrible, the audience ratings dreadful. The Programme Review Board which reviews programmes tore it to pieces and Douglas Muggeridge had been away on holiday and he came back and read this stuff, you see, had rang me up and said, "The Programme Review Board Jim is terrible, they've destroyed it." I said, "But you thought it was very funny Douglas. You're not going to allow them to dictate to you, are you, what you should think?"

So he said, "Oh no, no." So, we did the series and I knew that's it, it's got to be the finish because the audience rated... But Eddie who had won the award for the best television script, comedy script also won it for radio with 'The Worst Show on the Wireless' so he had both awards that year and I went down with my wife, had a lovely evening there and then the next day I rang Douglas Muggeridge and I said, "I was in London yesterday at the awards, writers awards and Eddie won it for 'The Worst Show on the Wireless'." He said, "Oh yes, yes, well we want another series." I said, "Oh good."

So I said to Eddie, "We're doing another series, that will be the finish because no way will they let us do another one." And we did and that was the end. So, we then did one-off programmes lasting an hour or 45 minutes and we did the... At Christmas, we did the Easter Egg Show and at Easter we did the first of the Christmas shows. Then we did one called 'The Show with 10 Legs' and this was another interesting thing you see, the Controller then was Charles McLellan and at the Programme Review Board he said, "He thought this was great, this show. 'The Show with 10 Legs' and we ought to have a series."

We did this with an audience, incidentally for the first time and I said, "Well that's great." The public liked it, the critics liked it, everybody liked it and I swear it was because we had an audience because I always maintained that a lot of people who are critical of shows, when they hear the audience laugh they think it's funny and if there's no audience, they're not sure.

0:30:27

Trevor Hill: Like an American Football, we need a cheerleader.

James Casey: I think so. So many people are convinced by the audience laughing.

0:30:36

Trevor Hill: Now, as you'll know better than most, in order to get ideas on to the air you sometimes have to work very hard to persuade others in the BBC. You mention the Clitheroe Kid, was this long-running and very highly successful of yours, which was very much your baby taken up immediately or did you have a batter to get that accepted?

James Casey: Oh, eighteen months, yes.

0:30:59

Trevor Hill: Eighteen?

James Casey: Eighteen months. I did the pilot and then Jimmy Clitheroe was in a show called 'Call Boy' which Ronnie Taylor started, originally, I played the part of the stage manager in it, feeding Jimmy Clitheroe and I was writing the show. Then, eventually, I finished up producing it when I was in the BBC and Ronnie and I were writing it. It was a variety show linked by the call boy. Anyway, I did this pilot of 'The Clitheroe Kid' and when the Controller then, or Head of Light Programme I think they called him in those days said, "Oh no, I wouldn't have a midget on radio playing a boy." I said, "Well, not a lot of people can see him and he sounds like a boy." He said, "Oh no it makes me squirm to think of it." I said, "Well I'm sorry about that." He said, "No, we'll do a Call Boy again because that's very good."

So, the next series of 'Call Boy' instead of Jimmy just being the call boy in the theatre and introducing the act, I had a seven-minute sketch in the middle of the show of Jimmy at home with his mother or his sister. That was it, we had his sister then and to get it in I had the stage manager, Jack Watson, who was playing the stage manager then lived in their house. They were his digs, you see, that was the reason for doing the sketch in the middle of this act - show.

The ratings were tremendous and when this George Comachio walked in, in the next meeting in Manchester I said, "Have you seen the figures for 'Call Boy'?" He said, "Yes, great." I said, "Better than they've ever been." He said, "Yes." I said, "The reason is Jimmy Clitheroe in a sketch as a little boy at home, now can I do 'The Clitheroe Kid'?" And he said, "Alright, do six." And we eventually did nearly 300.

I mean it took 18 months to do that and...

0:33:06

Trevor Hill: Jimmy, of course, had appeared with your father, hadn't he? As the upstart child in 'The Mayor's Parlour'?

James Casey: Yes, what happened was I was writing Norman Evans' show, 'Over the Garden Wall' that Ronnie Taylor was producing and I took it over after two shows of the series. Well, before the next Norman Evans' show I was doing one for my father, 'The Mayor's Parlour' and I happened to write in it a scene where my father was in bed and his wife and their little boy came to visit him. So I booked Jimmy Clitheroe. So that was actually the first thing he did and then he went into the Norman Evans' show and after about three weeks, he was so successful I said

to Ronnie, "Any time you want to forget about all the others and just have Jimmy Clitheroe in a show, let me know and we'll do it because he's great."

Then as I say we went into 'Call Boy' and then eventually 'The Clitheroe Kid' after a lot of struggle that went on for the next 12½ years or whatever.

Trevor Hill: Was right at the top.

James Casey: It was Sundays, yes.

0:34:19

Trevor Hill: Jim, did you ever turn down a star to be?

James Casey: Not that I really know of, possibly pop singers I may of done. I remember a man, very annoyed with me because I turned down a woman singer at an audition. I said, "No doubt she will make a record, it'll be a smash hit and I will have to top the bill with her in a variety show but until then I wouldn't allow her in the theatre." Have you ever done it?

Trevor Hill: Yes, this was in Forces broadcasting, 1946/'47 and my wife and I had done 'The Adventures of Robin Hood' as a serial, mainly male cast and we had Cliff Michelmore, Ray Baxter, Geraint Evans was the wandering minstrel singing the odd song as Blondell. People like of that ilk and there was this young lieutenant and I only put him the role as a Forester because I didn't think he was very good. He looked jolly good

on the stage and I'd seen him in 'Shop at Sly Corner' and I'd done a radio version. The two Foresters, one was a chap called Brian Forbes, who then in the North of England used to play Biggles for us with Nigel Davenport, our Robin. And the other one was a chap called Roger Moore and I said to Roger, "Roger, you look terrific but if I were you, I mean take up modelling but give up any thought of acting."

Some years later he just made that very good film 'Gold' in South Africa, South African goldmines and he sent a message via the scriptwriter, a mutual friend and Roger said very nicely, "Tell Trevor I still can't act but I'm not doing badly."

James Casey: Yes.

Trevor Hill: Jim, right from the very early days of broadcasting in the North of England, Blackpool of course has been synonymous with live entertainment and I see from the Radio Times that back in the early 1930s the region was doing outside broadcasts from there. In those days there were, well, recitals by a chap who was billed as R H Dixon, from The Tower Ballroom.

James Casey: Yes, Reginal Dixon.

0:36:32

Trevor Hill: Yes, you'll remember when the famous organ eventually came to us at our own BBC Playhouse Studio in Manchester.

James Casey: That's right, yes.

0:36:37

Trevor Hill: What was that, about 1970?

James Casey: Yes.

0:36:38

Trevor Hill: Tell me about another series you worked on for many years, 'The Blackpool Nights', you have mentioned them but tell me a little more.

James Casey: I mean it was a tremendous series. There's no doubt it was the summer series of variety and when I did it some years, it ran for 14 weeks and everybody who was in Blackpool who was a name or anywhere round there, Morecambe and so on, we used on our 'Blackpool Nights'.

There was one funny incident happened with a comic I always thought was an extremely funny man, Albert Modley. Now one year I got on to our bookers and said, "Book Albert Modley." And they came back and said, "He doesn't want to do it." Well I couldn't believe this, you see, so I went over to Blackpool. Now Albert had a very forceful wife, Doris and I walked into the dressing room and before I could say, "Hello," Doris said, "He's not bloody doing it." I said, "I haven't bloody asked him, have I?" I said, "Albert, have I asked you to do anything? I walk in here just to say hello to a friend and some woman, who is this woman? I said she just says, you're not bloody doing it." I said, "That's not very nice Albert." And he started to laugh.

I said, "I don't care whether you do 'Blackpool Night' at all, it doesn't matter to me, it's not me they'll talk about. He said, "Who?" I said, "Well all the other people in showbusiness, all the pros." I said, "You know what they're like." They'll say, "Hello it's funny, Albert Modley's in Blackpool he's not on 'Blackpool Night', he must be on the slide."

He said, "Hey he's right Doris, you know what they're like, you know what they're like." He said, "But the trouble is the jokes, the gags you see, I haven't got gags." I said, "Well that's silly Albert, I'll give you three gags you can make them last 20 minutes." Anyway, in the end he did 2 shows.

0:38:40

Trevor Hill: This may come as something of a surprise to those of us who know you James, I call you James because you were evidently considered legit by Radio 3 no less. What is more you were invited to narrate a programme, 'The subject of Comedy' on that august network.

James Casey: Yes, there was a turn-up, hey. But I quite enjoyed that and it came out reasonably well. Basically, I interviewed Ken Dodd and then we did some, what we call Vox Pops where we go to the public and get them to make comments. Ken and I really talked about the North, comedy, Rob Wilton, all these different comedians, Albert Modleys and so on. Then, as I say we had comments from the public and we were really trying to get into what is northern humour and northern comedians as opposed to southern comedians and so on.

There were a couple of amusing bits from the public. One was a man who said he went home and he called into the pub on

the way home and he was a scriptwriter, actually, just to have one pint. Then he thought, "Well I'll take some crisps for the kids." So he said, "Can I have two packets of crisps?" He said, "No, wait a minute, give me another one." He thought, "I'll get one for my wife." And he thought, "I'll have one myself." And he said, "No, make it four."

There was one other old fellow standing there and the scriptwriter said, "I felt I had to say something amusing, you know, having gone through all this palaver." And he said, "I said, we're having a party, you see." This old fellow said, "Is the Queen coming?" That's beautiful repartee.

And the other one which I thought was great, we were talking about Liverpool humour and this commercial traveller said, "Well I think Liverpool is the greatest place for humour." He said, "I'll tell you, for instance, I've got a very long-haired dog and somebody said the best thing to comb it is a hacksaw blade because you just draw that through and it takes all the loose hair." So, he said, "I was in Liverpool and I called in at the hardware shop." This fellow said, "Did you want a high speed or a low speed blade." He said, "It doesn't make any difference, does it?" He said, "It'd make a difference if it was a bloody greyhound." He said, "The mad logic of this," he said and just fell about it.

0:41:39

Trevor Hill: I imagine that the 40th Anniversary Show you did at the Philharmonic Liverpool was a highlight in your career Jim?

James Casey: Yes, the Philharmonic, yes. I mean talk about third programme and then on the Philharmonic and our orchestra, the NBO

dwarfed in a little tiny part of the stage, you know. It was interesting to me doing the programme there because of the... How you do the warm-up. I mean I always did a warm-up before a show and this was quite special and I was trying to think of something to say and I'm reminded about Sir Malcolm Sergeant when he was the guest conductor here.

He walked on to play Beethoven's 5th, tumultuous applause and he turned to the orchestra, tapped his baton, looked at the first violinist and said, "How does it go again Charlie?" I thought, "That went down very well in the Philharmonic, yes." Everybody who was a star in the North that I could get hold of on the programme which ran an hour and a half and...

0:43:03

Trevor Hill: In its edited form?

James Casey: In its edited form, it was an hour and a half, yes. Closing the show was Kenneth Arthur Dodd. So I'd ask him to be there at 2:30pm. His contract said, '2:30pm rehearsal', and I'd also said to the orchestral conductor, "We'll rehearse him after the orchestra's break at 5:00pm." Knowing Ken wouldn't be there at 2:30pm.

Anyway, eventually he did arrive about 3:30pm/3:45pm or something and I went through this paraphernalia of, "Oh I'm sorry Ken, you've missed it now we'll have to wait. It'll have to be, I think it'll have to be after the orchestra break." I shouted, "Bernard, it'll have to be after the break now for Ken, won't it?" He said, "Oh yes, 5:00pm." I said, "I'm sorry." He said, "Oh that's alright, that's alright." He never knew of course that we'd already arranged that anyway.

0:43:58

Trevor Hill: You certainly had a very large number of successes by any standards, Jim. Were there any failures?

James Casey: Well I had one or two pilots that didn't take off. I did a pilot with Ken Goodwin that we all had hopes for but nothing happened. In spite of all the success I had with Eddie Braben on 'The Show with 10 Legs' which ran for about 9 years, we did a pilot called 'The Turpin Family' which nobody wanted and we thought was very funny.

I did a series written by Eddie Braben starring Graham Stark called 'Stark Raving' which was greeted with great delight here and in London and the public hated it. In fact, it got so bad, Eddie and I used to have our weekly joke. I'd ring him up and say, "Well the rating was now down to 38 or something." I said, "Well the only thing is it can't get any worse than that." Then the next week I'd say, "We've done it, it's 35." I think we got down to about 32 or something which was... I never had anything like it before or since.

Eddie's remark was nice he said, "Well we got the 32. It's those actors, they didn't get anything."

0:45:28

Trevor Hill: The influence of others can be a very big springboard in the creative world of broadcasting. Who above all influenced you in your BBC work?

James Casey: Well here in Manchester I would say three people, really. A drama producer, great drama producer, Alfred Bradley. I mean watching Alfred work and the way he used people and so on. I mean mine was situation comedy but a lot, I admired him a lot. Then you may be embarrassed but you did - Mr Trevor Hill - because I admired the tremendous care and the homework you did and the authenticity really you brought to things with a lot of preparation. I used to listen to your programme, you probably never knew I ever listened to them but...

Trevor Hill: I'm amazed.

James Casey: I used to think, "My God that's tremendous, that's real." Now I couldn't do that myself because I often had like a one-hour rehearsal or two hours rehearsal. If it was Ken Dodd, half an hour but it did affect me in that this idea of doing the thing with great care, I did it selectively. What I had to learn was that decide what's important and that you spend a lot of time on and everything else you have to let go because you haven't the time and it isn't important.

So that did affect me and the other person in the BBC was Ronnie Taylor who I first wrote for as a producer and then I joined the BBC and he was their Head of the Department and Ronnie was great. A great inspiration to me and had a great effect on my work. I learnt many simple things from him. Well they're simple when you know them, they're not simple when you don't know them.

Trevor Hill: Quite.

James Casey: For instance, I was once doing 'The Clitheroe Kid' and I got this idea of Jimmy was getting into trouble doing different things and he was... I said, "Well it's going to take a bit of time because there was a scene where he breaks a window, another scene where he does something else." Ronnie said, "No, you don't do that. You do a montage." I said, "What's a montage?" He said, "Well you have some music playing and the music fades and you come in where Jimmy's breaking a window and somebody shouts, the music comes in and then it goes out again and Jimmy is falling off the ladder. And the music comes in and it goes out and..." So you cover about five scenes in 20 seconds, 30 seconds.

Trevor Hill: He taught you the technical tricks of radio.

James Casey: I thought that is fantastic, I mean afterwards I thought, "Well it's obvious," but it wasn't to me. Plus, things like in comedy that the straight man's lines were very important. Now a lot of people don't look at that and they just think of the jokes, of the funny lines but the character, the authenticity of the straight man of the feed...

0:49:14

Trevor Hill: Being the springboard?

James Casey: Yes, those kind of things. We liked the same sort of things in comedy and so on and as I mentioned before his great love of comics and his appreciation of their technique. I mean I had a lot of this from my father but Ronnie also produced this. In fact,

I said to somebody once in a poetical moment that I'd warmed myself at the talents of creative people in my BBC career and apart from these people, then really it was the performers.

I had to analyse, try to find out why they were funny. I mean you never really did in the end but why this worked and why that didn't work. So working with these performers was a wonderful rich education...

Trevor Hill: Experience for you.

James Casey: Yes.

0:50:19 Trevor Hill: Well even as we speak, you haven't exactly retired. You and your dad closed a theatre or two in your day, you mentioned one but your name is still in lights.

James Casey: Well...

0:50:31

Trevor Hill: Or now does James Casey only do matinees?

James Casey: No, actually I've just been to, last week we were working at the City Varieties, Leeds, doing a good old days type show and it was wonderful. We enjoyed it and the audience were tremendous. So that's great, you know, it's a lot easier doing that then writing and producing, yes.

0:51:04

Trevor Hill: Do you still have time for a little recreation?

James Casey: Oh, not more than six times a week I play golf.

0:51:14

Trevor Hill: Are you, as regards the Jimmy James, the Casey line, are you the end of the line in Showbiz?

James Casey: Caseys yes, Eli of course his real name is John Casey and he has a couple of sons, whether they'll go into showbiz, I don't know. Of course, as you know Trevor, my son died, David who was an actor and was a very fine actor, he died when he was 34.

Trevor Hill: He was, I know he worked for me.

James Casey: Yes. See as I went into writing and producing to be different from my father, David went into the legitimate theatre although the thing he loved was comedy and the thing he did best was comedy in theatre plays. I have a grandson but he's not called Casey of course who could well be another performer, as all children are he's a performer now whether he'll keep at it, I don't know.

0:52:27

Trevor Hill: Does he come to see you at all when you're...?

James Casey: He came last week, yes, last Saturday night.

0:52:33

Trevor Hill: Did you get a thumbs up?

James Casey: Well, he really liked the juggler on the bill and the magician he thought was wonderful.

0:52:41

Trevor Hill: And you were neither?

James Casey: Well we were alright, we were quite funny. And he had a lovely thing to say to Ray Allen who - the wonderful ventriloquist - with Lord Charles topping the bill. I said to him, "Oh my grandson's paid you a wonderful compliment. He has found out the trick with you and Lord Charles. Lord Charles has got a cassette inside him, he said he must have because your mouth doesn't move at all."

Trevor Hill: Well Jim thank you very much indeed for talking to me as part of this history of North Regional Broadcasting.

[Break in conversation 0:53:16 - 0:57:18]

James Casey: The problem was you never knew whether he would be there or not and the first time we did our drunk act where I played the policeman and then it was the interval and I'm still dressed in these clothes, standing on the side because after the opening scene Frank Randall is going to come and I want to see Frank. He was a funny man. So, my father goes on and introduces Frank Randall who is going to walk through the audience in his hiker's costume and of course nothing happens.

So, my father said, "Well in the meantime, there's somebody else I'd like you to meet, Eli." Who was standing on the side, fortunately having changed into his stooge gear and he came on. I dashed up to the top of the building where I was dressing, about five flights up to change into my other clothes and dashed down and just got on the stage in time. So that if Frank Randall turned up when my father introduced him, we closed the show. We went on an hour later. If he didn't, we had to be on first act after the interval and you never knew whether he'd come or not.

Now that was the only time I'd worked with him but before that, of course, I'd met people who talked about him and we'd followed him into theatres. I mean we followed him into Morecambe and he manager said, "You'll have to have number two dressing room Mr James." He said, "Why?" He said, "Well number one is being refurbished because last week Frank Randall was here and he smashed it up." We were told that he had got a crate of Guinness and smashed all the mirrors and the washbasin and everything because he'd got angry over something.

I think it was the same theatre, Jimmy Clitheroe once told me he went to see Frank because he had worked with him quite a lot.

Trevor Hill: Oh yes.

James Casey: He knocked on the door and Frank said, "Come in." He walked in and Frank was sitting with a little air pistol in his hand and he had miniature drink bottles along the rail and he was shooting them in his dressing room off the mantelpiece thing, off the mantel, you know. And Jimmy said, "Oh I'll come back later than Frank," and ran out.

But I mean he used to do these things. There's one lovely story of him at Blackpool. My father was rehearsing and Frank was rehearsing and my father went over to watch him because he wanted to see him about something and Frank was walking about rehearsing with a brown paper parcel under his arm. He was about 25 minutes and he had this brown paper parcel under his arm all the time, when he went off and when he came on. My father said, "What was the brown paper parcel for, I was waiting for the gag." He said, "That's no gag," and he unwrapped it and he said, "That is for Jack Taylor," who was the owner and producer, the first time he interferes. He unwrapped it and it was an axe and this guy just ran. I mean I don't think he would've hit him with it but it was to frighten him but he carried it around with him throughout rehearsal.

1:00:49

Trevor Hill: This may come as something as a surprise to those of us who know you well James, I call you James because you were

evidently considered legit by Radio 3 no less. What is more you were invited to narrate a programme, 'The subject of comedy' on that august network.

James Casey: Yes, there was a turn-up, hey. But I quite enjoyed that and it came out reasonably well. Basically, I interviewed Ken Dodd and then we did some, what we call Vox Pops where we go to the public and get them to make comments. Ken and I really talked about the North, comedy, Rob Wilton, all these different comedians, Albert Modleys and so on. Then, as I say we had comments from the public and we were really trying to get into what is northern humour and northern comedians as opposed to southern comedians and so on.

There were a couple of amusing bits from the public. One was a man who said he went home and he called into the pub on the way home and he was a scriptwriter, actually, just to have one pint. Then he thought, "Well I'll take some crisps for the kids." So he said, "Can I have two packets of crisps?" He said, "No, wait a minute, give me another one." He thought, "I'll get one for my wife." And he thought, "I'll have one myself." And he said, "No, make it four."

There was one other old fellow standing there and the scriptwriter said, "I felt I had to say something amusing, you know, having gone through all this palaver." And he said, "I said, we're having a party, you see." This old fellow said, "Is the Queen coming?" That's beautiful repartee.

And the other one which I thought was great, we were talking about Liverpool humour and this commercial traveller said, "Well I think Liverpool is the greatest place for humour." He said, "I'll tell you, for instance, I've got a very long-haired dog and somebody said the best thing to comb it is a hacksaw

blade because you just draw that through and it takes all the loose hair." So he said, "I was in Liverpool and I called in at the hardware shop." I said, "I wanted a hacksaw blade." He said, "What kind?" He said, "Well it's for the dog, I've been told the best thing is draw the hacksaw blade through the dog and it gets all the loose hair up." He said, "This fellow said, did you want a high speed or a low speed blade." He said, "It doesn't make any difference, does it?" He said, "It'd make a difference if it was a bloody greyhound." He said, "The mad logic of this," he said and just fell about it.

1:04:06

Trevor Hill: I imagine that the 40th Anniversary Show you did at the Philharmonic Liverpool was a highlight in your career, Jim?

James Casey: Yes, the Philharmonic, yes. I mean talk about third programme and then on the Philharmonic and our orchestra, the NBO dwarfed in a little tiny part of the stage, you know. It was interesting to me doing the programme there because of the... How you do the warm-up. I mean I always did a warm-up before a show and this was quite special and I was trying to think of something to say and half remembered a bit of a story and changed it slightly and it fitted perfectly and it went down very well. I said, "It's wonderful to stand here on this stage with our orchestra there, our little orchestra, 20 players, to think of the wonderful orchestras that've played here." I said, "Somebody was telling me about a magical moment when...2 Oh what's the conductor?

Trevor Hill: Sir Charles Groves, he was there at Liverpool for a long time.

James Casey: No, it was the Manchester man.

Trevor Hill: Barbirolli?

James Casey: I'll say Barbirolli, when Barbirolli was conducting as the guest and they were playing Beethoven's 5th and he walked on, tumultuous applause and he stood in front of the orchestra, raised his baton, turned to the first violin and said, "How does it go again Charlie?" I mean that really went down well at the Philharmonic. It was a tremendous bill because obviously we had classical pianists, we had every big star from the North that we could get hold of including my father, including Ken Dodd, Ken Platz, oh tremendous bill.

Now you mention there, Ken Dodd you were talking about him being late and so on and people arranging things. Well I arranged something that day because his contract said his rehearsal would be at 2:30pm. I told the conductor that we'd rehearse him at 5:00pm after the break because the orchestra had a half an hour break. Ken arrived about 3:30pm or whatever, 4:45pm thinking he was an hour and a quarter late or something and I said, "Oh well I'm sorry you're too late now at the moment, you'll have to go later." He said, "Oh yes." I said to Bernard ____ [1:07:18] the conductor, I said, "He'll have to be after the break, now won't he?"

[Break in conversation 1:07:24 - 1:07:35]

1:07:35

Trevor Hill: I imagine that the 40th Anniversary Show you did at the Liverpool Philharmonic was a highlight in your BBC career, Jim?

James Casey: Oh yes. First thing actually was and it intrigued me thinking about it being at this wonderful place, the Philharmonic, you know, very legit for me doing the warm-up. I always do the warm-up before the show. I thought, "Well I'll try and think of something special." I was thinking of this on the side of the stage and an idea came to me which sort of vaguely I'd heard before so I said, "It's wonderful to be here in this Philharmonic, this vast auditorium and this wonderful stage with this tiny orchestra of 20 people that we have. And I'm reminded of a story that somebody told me about Barbirolli, about Sir Malcolm Sargent when he was the guest conductor here and he walked in to play Beethoven's 5th, tumultuous applause and he turned to the orchestra, tapped his baton, looked at the first violinist and said, "How does it go again, Charlie?"

And I thought that went down very well in the Philharmonic, yes. Everybody who was a star in the North that I could get hold of on the programme which ran an hour and a half and...

1:09:14

Trevor Hill: In its edited form?

James Casey: In its edited form, it was an hour and a half yes and closing the show was Kenneth Arthur Dodd. So, I'd asked him to be there at 2:30pm, his contract '2:30pm rehearsal' and I'd also said to the orchestral conductor, "We'll rehearse him after the orchestra's break at 5:00pm," knowing Ken wouldn't be there

at 2:30pm. Anyway, eventually he did arrive about 3:30pm/3:45pm or something and I went through this paraphernalia of, "Oh I'm sorry Ken." I said, "You've missed it now, we'll have to wait. It'll have to be... I think it'll have to be after the orchestra break." And I shouted, "Bernard, it'll have to be after the break now for Ken, won't it?" He said, "Oh yes, 5:00pm." I said, "I'm sorry." He said, "Oh that's alright, that's alright." He never knew of course that we'd already arranged that anyway.

Once when I did a series with him his contract said, 'Rehearsal 10:30am', everybody else's contract says 12:00pm but he found out about that afterwards, about three months afterwards he saw me and he said, "He'd learnt what I'd done to him." I said, "Well, who want a row every Sunday, much better to just get you there and you think you're an hour and a half late and you're on time."

1:10:34

Trevor Hill: You certainly had a very large number of successes by any standards, Jim. Were there any failures?

James Casey: Well I had one or two pilots that didn't take off. I did a pilot with Ken Goodwin that we all had hopes for but nothing happened. In spite of all the success I had with Eddie Braben on 'The Show with 10 Legs' which ran for about 9 years, we did a pilot called 'The Turpin Family' which nobody wanted and we thought was very funny.

I did a series written by Eddie Braben starring Graham Stark called 'Stark Raving' which was greeted with great delight here and in London and the public hated it. In fact, it got so bad,

Eddie and I used to have our weekly joke. I'd ring him up and say, "Well the rating was now down to 38 or something." I said, "Well the only thing is it can't get any worse than that." Then the next week I'd say, "We've done it, it's 35." I think we got down to about 32 or something which was... I never had anything like it before or since.

Eddie's remark was nice he said, "Well we got the 32. It's those actors, they didn't get anything."

1:12:04

Trevor Hill: The influence of others can be a very big springboard in the creative world of broadcasting. Who above all influenced you in your BBC work?

James Casey: Well here in Manchester I would say three people, really. A drama producer, great drama producer, Alfred Bradley. I mean watching Alfred work and the way he used people and so on. I mean mine was situation comedy but a lot, I admired him a lot. Then you may be embarrassed but you did - Mr Trevor Hill - because I admired the tremendous care and you did it in your programmes, the homework you did and the authenticity really you brought to things with a lot of preparation. I used to listen to your programme, you probably never knew I ever listened to them but...

Trevor Hill: I'm amazed.

James Casey: I used to think, "My God that's tremendous, that's real." Now I couldn't do that myself because I often had like a one-hour

rehearsal or two hours rehearsal. If it was Ken Dodd, half an hour but it did affect me in that this idea of doing the thing with great care, I did it selectively. What I had to learn was that decide what's important and that you spend a lot of time on and everything else you have to let go because you haven't the time and it isn't important.

So that did affect me and the other person in the BBC was Ronnie Taylor who I first wrote for as a producer and then I joined the BBC and he was their Head of the Department and Ronnie was great. A great inspiration to me and had a great effect on my work. I learnt many simple things from him. Well they're simple when you know them, they're not simple when you don't know them.

Trevor Hill: Quite.

James Casey: For instance, I was once doing 'The Clitheroe Kid' and I got this idea of Jimmy was getting into trouble doing different things and he was... I said, "Well it's going to take a bit of time because there was a scene where he breaks a window, another scene where he does something else." Ronnie said, "No, you don't do that. You do a montage." I said, "What's a montage?" He said, "Well you have some music playing and the music fades and you come in where Jimmy's breaking a window and somebody shouts, the music comes in and then it goes out again and Jimmy is falling off the ladder. And the music comes in and it goes out and..." So you cover about five scenes in 20 seconds, 30 seconds.

Trevor Hill: He taught you the technical tricks of radio.

James Casey: I thought that is fantastic, I mean afterwards I thought, "Well it's obvious," but it wasn't to me. Plus, things like in comedy that the straight man's lines were very important. Now a lot of people don't look at that and they just think of the jokes, of the funny lines but the character, the authenticity of the straight man of the feed...

1:15:52

Trevor Hill: Being the springboard?

James Casey: Yes, those kind of things. We liked the same sort of things in comedy and so on and as I mentioned before his great love of comics and his appreciation of their technique. I mean I had a lot of this from my father but Ronnie also produced this. In fact, I said to somebody once in a poetical moment that I'd warmed myself at the talents of creative people in my BBC career and apart from these people, then really it was the performers who affected me and working with different comics. And trying to analyse, this was a fascinating thing that unlike say my father, or Albert Modley or Norman Evans or Rob Wilson, I had to analyse, try to find out why they were funny. I mean you never really did in the end but why this worked and why that didn't work. So working with these performers was a wonderful rich education...

Trevor Hill: Experience for you.

James Casey: Yes.

1:17:18

Trevor Hill: Well even as we speak, you haven't exactly retired. You and your dad closed a theatre or two in your day, you mentioned one but your name is still in lights.

James Casey: Well...

1:17:31

Trevor Hill: Or now does James Casey only do matinees?

James Casey: No, actually I've just been to, last week we were working at the City Varieties, Leeds, doing a good old days type show and it was wonderful. We enjoyed it and the audience were tremendous. So that's great, you know, it's a lot easier doing that then writing and producing, yes.

1:18:02

Trevor Hill: You still have time for a little recreation?

James Casey: Oh, not more than six times a week I play golf if the weather's good, six times. I usually don't play on Saturdays, I don't know why but... Because I think golf you see is a great form of exercise anyway. I mean it takes your mind away from everything. You're so annoyed at that little ball that you can't hit it straight that you forget everything else.

Also, people go on for a long time. I played a couple of weeks ago with a man, three of us played, he won the money and he was 85.

1:18:45

Trevor Hill: Are you, as regards the Jimmy James, the Casey line, are you the end of the line in Showbiz?

James Casey: Caseys yes, Eli of course his real name is John Casey and he has a couple of sons, whether they'll go into showbiz, I don't know. Of course, as you know Trevor, my son died, David who was an actor and was a very fine actor, he died when he was 34.

Trevor Hill: He was, I know he worked for me.

James Casey: Yes. See as I went into writing and producing to be different from my father, David went into the legitimate theatre although the thing he loved was comedy and the thing he did best was comedy in theatre plays. So, he'd done his thing. He was, in my line, direct line, the last... I have a grandson but he's not called Casey of course who could well be another performer, as all children are he's a performer now whether he'll keep at it, I don't know.

1:20:10

Trevor Hill: Does he come to see you at all when you're...?

James Casey: He came last week, yes, last Saturday night.

1:20:14

Trevor Hill: Did you get a thumbs up?

James Casey: Well, he really liked the juggler on the bill and the magician he thought was wonderful.

1:20:21

Trevor Hill: And you were neither?

James Casey: Well we were alright, we were quite funny. And he had a lovely thing to say to Ray Allen who - the wonderful ventriloquist - with Lord Charles, who were actually in our act. He worked in our act. He did the Roy Castle part in our act, Ray, as well as doing his own act of course, topping the bill. I said to him, "Oh my grandson's paid you a wonderful compliment. He has found out the trick with you and Lord Charles. Lord Charles has got a cassette inside him, he said he must have because your mouth doesn't move at all." So he said, "Oh that's lovely." Now he'd decided he had a cassette inside Lord Charles. He did a lovely one with us, we worked with him before and at some point, a piece of paper fluttered up from the footlights and Ray Allen made some remark about it's coming out of somebody's purse or something and this was in Darlington and somebody shouted from the audience, "It was in the box."

Because in our act we have this box where there are supposed to be animals inside, this crazy thing.

Lord Charles, the doll, the head moved round, looked at this man in the audience and Lord Charles' voice he said, "Are you Irish by any chance?" This man said, "No." He said, "Well why are you talking to me instead of him?" I thought, "What a gorgeous line," from the doll, why are you talking to me instead of Ray Allen?

Trevor Hill: Well Jim thank you very much indeed for talking to me as part of this history of North Regional Broadcasting.

[Break in conversation 1:22:10 - 1:22:50]

END AUDIO

www.uktranscription.com