For the
Oral History Library
of
The Fashion Institute of Technology

Interview on
MADISON LACY
Hollywood Photographer

by Robert L. Greene
Q. This is Robert L. Greene, with a very fascinating tape. This is a tape that I started...I guess it's three and a half years ago...When the concept of doing, and capturing on tape, some of the great creative talents of Hollywood that are still alive, was something that formulated in my mind and made me realize that it might be difficult to get a long tape, and we might have to do a series of tapes, because these people, of course, were very old. For instance, Madison Lacy, who was the all-time, recognized genius of still photography, who... And when you see the stills, they're so familiar to you because it's all the great Warner Brothers' stars, and all that whole period in which they dominated the screen with their musicals as well as, of course, their gangster films. Because he went back to 1917. The longevity of Lacy was extraordinary, and I managed to get a series of tapes. We got them in like 20 minutes at a time, trying to piece it together so that he wouldn't be too exhausted, and of course we're very fortunate in having it because Madison Lacy has now died. And it's fascinating also, because his last wife--Lois Lindsay--turned out to be just as fascinating as possible, because she was one of the Busby Berkeley dancers. And her concept and awareness and directness about that world is the first material that I've ever been able to get my hands on that gave me a sense of what it was really like.
In other words, what was it like for a girl to be part of those people who sat beside a waterfall, or a shadow wall? So, all those great production numbers that we're all familiar with, that understand early Hollywood. And she was a lady of great directness. The fascinating thing is that, of course, one of the people that was at those tapes was Roger Corrin who had come over here from England to see what he could find out about the whole world of the early Hollywood musicals. It was really tied up with John Cabal's research into "Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance," which is, of course, an extraordinary reference book to that whole particular period.

So, what I'd like to do, is start with the Madison Lacy tape and get that all in, and then I've asked Roger to join me a little later, because what we can do then--between your notes and mine--perhaps we can restructure what it was that Lois Lindsay said. I took rather complete notes, I know you did as well.

A. Right. I have a couple of transcripts. Good.

Q. Madison, of course the thing that fascinates people who do research, and students who are interested in pursuing the careers of great photographers, how did you get into this work?

A. I first got into photography itself when I was a child. And when I came out to Hollywood, it was about 1917, and I went to D.W. Griffith's studio because I had an introduction
to George "Seegman" there, who was Griffith's assistant and also an actor. And Billy Bitzer—I met Billy Bitzer—and I decided to quit school and go to work as a photographer rather than continue and become an attorney. A lawyer. Which I was supposed to do. So I didn't go back to school and I became a photographer, eventually, at D.W. Griffith's studio.

Q. Madison, yes...I remember you told me to call you Maddy...Maddy, what kind of camera did you use?

A. At that time I used an 8" X 10" Eastman View Camera, with a "Gertz-Degor" 12" lens. And we used "arthrochromatic" glass plates, which were rather heavy. And you not only did your own taking of the pictures but you developed them and printed them and dried them and did everything else. There was practically no competition. There were two or three very fine photographers in Los Angeles, but they were photographers usually that had a studio.

Now, Woodbury—a man by the name of Woodbury, who has since died—was with Griffith, and he had a German photographer whose name I cannot remember...He primarily used Woodbury and a German photographer that came out for a short time. Now, whether he got him from New York or Los Angeles, I don't know and I have forgotten his name. It began with an "s." But then I worked with Woodbury, and then Carl Brown also took stills and so did Billy Bitzer. In fact, all of us cameramen then took stills, as well as everything else. And they were not called "first cameramen" then, they were just called cameramen.
Q. Of course, when you got out to Hollywood, the fan magazines were still a very strong force for people all over this country as well as people all over the world. Isn't that true?
A. Yes. They demanded photographs and, as I said, the cameramen, very, very few still photographers, and largely the photographers--portrait photographers--that had galleries of their own, when they were in business...
Q. Well, I suppose we don't think about those things today. But at that time, if you were trying to establish that you were indeed a major force, and wanted to be treated with enormous respect as a motion picture performer, you would find that one of the ways that you could establish that status, and communicate the level of your prestige, was to go to one of the really fine photographers. Isn't that so?
A. Well, Nelson Evans, "Hartzeg," "Witzel," and those. Another one was Milligan. Yes. They would go....Well, actually, they would go either to those studios, which they generally did. Like when Harold Lloyd had his thumb and finger blown off at "Witzel's," that was at Witzel's studio, that was not on the set. They were down, on a Saturday, at "Witzel's" studio to take some publicity pictures and the gag man thought up an idea of having him light up a cigarette with a bomb fuse, and so it went off. It wasn't a fake bomb, it was a real one, which had been gotten by mistake. He didn't make a picture for quite a while; it was pretty nearly a year.

They would either go to their studio; or, in the case
of Milligan in particular, or Evans, they would have them come out to the studio. Or, they would hire them for two or three or four days, and they would take pictures.

In the case of Evans, the Sennett girls were one of his main things, main jobs. Although "June Astapp" became Sennett's still photographer, and he shot many, many pictures of the Sennett girls.

Q. Maddy, one of the questions that, as you get involved in the history of photography, is when, for instance, in Hollywood did photography cease to be just straight, sort of passport photographers taking a direct picture, and enter the world of the art form, where they became enormously creative?

A. There was a great deal of experimentation all the time, and then there was an attempt at creative ability and originality, and diffusion was a mark of photography at that time. They used it a great deal. That started long before Hollywood. Arnold Gentz used diffusion in the early days, and many of them, way back to 1900-1910. And then later diffusion was used on portraiture to a great extent.

Q. Well, I gather from what you're saying that, I suppose, it didn't take very long before the industry developed itself; that still photography and photos in general became a rather important part of the industry.

A. Oh, yes. Yes, from the very start. At first, however, they took them in a makeshift manner, other than those taken by the portrait photographers who had businesses. Then the
still photographer began taking them in, and finally they built galleries, or made galleries out of old rooms large enough to hold the equipment for a portrait photographer.  

Q. I bet that was a decision made by an accountant; somebody who wasn't creatively recognized, who thought it might be cheaper--save money--to have an in-house photographer.  

A. Oh, much cheaper. Sure. Because in those days a still photographer would get more than $45 a week, which was very unusual. Oh, yes.  

Q. I'm so overwhelmed. I was born in 1917, so that I hardly these days run into anything that happened before I was born, that's still around. Maddy, you are remarkable.  

You started in 1917, which means, essentially, that in your relationship to Griffith, you really were at the very beginning of what we think of as the motion picture industry.  

A. Oh, yes. I worked in the motion picture lab for a short time, and didn't like it because of the back work involved, and I asked Billy Bitzer if I couldn't go into the still gallery and he checked with Woodbury, and I went into the still gallery, or, rather, into the still department. And I did everything. In those days you did everything. I mean, you "ferratyped the ferratyped in"(?), you dried the prints, you developed, you loaded, you took copies, you did anything at all. You did it, and you did everything with one or two cameras, mostly the 8" X 10" view camera and occasionally with what was called the graphic graphlex, which was generally a 5" X 7" or a 4" X 5".
And those, of course, you used if you go on location. But, you took the 8" X 10" still camera along.

Q. It must have been very unwieldy.

A. They were unwieldy, yes, but at the same time they were easier to carry--much easier to carry--than the things you have to carry now. Because now you carry, oh, five or six 35mm cameras with about 15 lenses, and all the equipment that goes with them, and including the meters, which we did not have then. And that weighed anywhere from 100 to 250 lbs. It was in cases, of course, and it was very easy when you're using them, two or three hanging around your shoulders and neck....

Q. Maddy, I can tell, as you talk about this whole period you never have lost your interest, your joy, or, I suppose, your fascination with it. What did fascinate you about still photography?

A. I think the whole thing, really, is the matter of liking to create something. Do something the way you wanted to. That's probably why... When I went into motion picture photography I didn't enjoy it as much because there were too many people saying what they wanted you to do and so on, and you couldn't leave the camera. And so I only shot motion pictures for about a year and a half, and I went back... I did other things, but then I went back to still photography. It's like painting. Now, I like to paint, and I have painted quite a bit. Now, there are various other fellows who have been photographers--portrait men and so on and so forth--who have
become painters and vice versa. But I enjoyed photography. I liked photography, and my entire family were lawyers and doctors.

Q. It mustn't have been that easy, or simple, with a family that was dominated by directions in two of the major professions--either socially or economically acceptable. How did you get away from all that, and how did you find yourself on the way to Hollywood?

A. I was going to go into post-graduate work when I took my winter vacation and came out to California, on a more or less long trip, visiting different places. I landed here and I did have this letter to George "Seegman," so I went in to see George and through that met Billy Bitzer and D.W. Griffith and various and sundry other people and became a photographer. I left with Griffith in the last part of about 1918 or 1919 and went over to "Harold Roach," and Hal Roach. Which at that time was called "Rolland" Film Company. And there I had about nine occupations, including still photography including assistant director and what is now called second camera at times. And anything else.

Q. Were the stars aware of what the relationship was between them and the photographer? Were they critical? Did they have real judgment? Were they very fussy about which photographer photographed them, or was it just a chore that they had to do.

A. Well, they varied. Some of the actors and actresses
preferred one photographer, and one photographer only. And, in fact, in those days, when they were more powerful, in one sense of the word than they are now, they would demand that photographer. In the case, for instance, of Kay Francis, Kay Francis came in for some wardrobe tests for a picture at Warner Brothers (this is seven years later, of course) and I wasn't there to take the wardrobe tests and she asked where I was and they said, well I wasn't there that I was out at Metro fora few days—something—and she called me and asked me when I was going to finish and I told her I'd finish almost any time. So she told them, when they were starting to take these wardrobe tests, when they got me back she would come in for the picture and not before. Bette Davis did the same thing for Bert Six. He had been laid off from Warner Brothers and gone over to United Artists, and Bette Davis came in, found Bert was not there, and she said, "All right, I'll come back when you get Bert back."

Q. I would think that once word got around that a given star was demanding a specific photographer that certainly a new level of competition would have operated among the photographers—who could get to what star, who could have which star in their particular stable, as the saying goes. Am I off base? Was there a rivalry of that nature?

A. No, no it didn't. There was probably a minor matter of feeling here and there among the fellas, themselves, I suppose. I never felt that way, because I sort of automatically went from
to the other. Like even when I was with Kay Francis, all the time. Mervyn LeRoy did a picture and I was available and Kay wasn't working, I would go on (?)... 

Q. And do Lombard.

A. Yes. Or...Well, Lombard and Blondell and various others. And the same thing was true of Jim Cagney. I would do, and did many Jim Cagney pictures. In fact, later I went under contract to William Cagney Productions.

Q. Maddy, it's fascinating...When one thinks about one's life. I know it happens to me. I do find that there are given people, given periods, given times that I have very special, strong feelings about. I'd be curious to know, given the length of time you've been involved with Hollywood, is there a period (and which period would it be?) that you felt strongly about?

A. Oh, yes. Very definitely. The period of 1934 to 1941.

Well, it was after the motion picture business had had the cameraman's strike, with the sound men and various others. And that was all over. They had settled on a reasonable salary for one thing. They had decided to have gallery men work in the gallery, and not have to run back and forth from publicity to production to portrait work. They would do one thing, and that was portrait work. And the others would do production work exclusively. Some would do both, if they chose to. But at each studio, you had anything from one to three galleries, and the
galleries were where the portrait photographers worked. And on production of course, when he wasn't making a picture, in which the production still photographers worked.

The best way to describe it, I suppose, is to say that we were our own boss. The publicity department was over us, of course, and in a certain sense, the production department was definitely over us. But, we...For instance, on a set that was lighted (naturally) by the cameraman, if we wanted to change the lighting, we did. Now, when we worked in the gallery, when we were in shooting portraits, we had our own electrician, our own property man, our own grip. And consequently we were our own creative base. Now, at that time we would quite often work just with a crew of two or three men, and even the publicity man and other people weren't allowed in there.

Q. Really.
A. No. We kept them out. Because they disturbed things. Like, the hairdresser would come in and want to fix hair, right in the middle of a picture, and makeup...Some of the makeup people would come in, although they'd got the girls fixed up beautifully before. But...Like the fashion people...The fashion people (in many cases, publicity) would come with publicity people and some of them were marvelous and wouldn't bother us at all and leave us alone. Let us make our pictures. But a few of them would want to come in. I've had that experience. We had one woman at one time at Warner Brothers--a very nice person as far as being an individual was concerned and all that--
but, she liked to be there when you were taking a picture. And she became a damned nuisance.

Q. Maddy, when I look at your photographs, of course, my heart pounds, because I do find that... Oh, what rush of memory, and the images that you've created are so imbedded in my own head and I'm sure even more people than you could even dream of, all over the world. But that brings to mind, that's what your photographs do for me, what do they do for you, in the sense that... Was there a particular star that you preferred to photograph?

A. Yes, I can name several that I enjoyed photographing, for the simple reason that they were what you might call "angle proof." Like Ann Sheridan, you could shoot her from left side, right side, front or any other way. The same way with Carole Lombard. Now... Then... Among the men there were Jim Cagney, Walter Huston, people like that, where you could do in an hour what would take someone less experienced a whole day. And then, too, in the galleries and in portraiture work of those days, you did what you wanted to do. As long as you were satisfying the needs of the studios and the magazines, they took your work and you marked it. There were no changes. Nobody changed your position. Nobody else changed your composition. You fixed the composition in your camera and took it, which is not true now. Now they shoot at 35... More or less... A 35mm camera... More or less at random and then somebody else, generally called the still art director in the publicity department, rearranges the
composition the way he thinks it should be.

Also, in those days, when you called for a still on the production set, they would stop and you would get your still, in between shots. Now you just shoot the still while they're in action, and you're using the cameraman's lighting. You don't change the lighting at all. You just damn well take what you get, whether you like it or not. And in some cases you don't like it, but there's nothing you can do about it because, on the set the cameraman is in charge of it. Not of you, but of the star on the set.

Q. Well, when you think about the great photographs, one doesn't think of candid shots as much as one thinks of the glamor photographs. And, of course, I guess that earlier period was really the last time that that took place. Because whether you were on the set or you were taking it in the gallery, you still were composing, in every detail, from the objets, to the shadows, to the lights, to everything--fashion, makeup, hair--it all became part of it. Snapping a camera as you run around and hope that you get, out of 200 shots that you take, one that is absolutely wonderful, is a very different process. I would think, for someone like yourself, that, as an artist, being able to compose and make that all work, with the sense of your own creativity, must be enormously rewarding. Isn't that a period that you remember with fondness?

A. They were taking these girls--actresses and so on and so forth--and glamorizing them, to build them up to the
public. Now, in some cases, some of the girls were used more for stills than anything else. But, when...
Q. Who?
A. Toby Wayne was an example of that. But others, like the stars, such as Carole Lombard. The great stars—Mary Pickford and people of that kind—they were constantly presenting them to the public in the most glamorous and best possible method. The result being that the public had them up on high pedestals. Now, they don't glamorize them to any extent, which is obvious. And also, the motion picture magazines are almost extinct in the United States. Not in Japan. There are a million of them in Japan.
Q. Well, when the fan magazines were at their height, certainly one could think of your role, or any of the photographer, being essentially to supply what must have been an extraordinary demand. I mean, that kind of monthly-weekly magazine, which eats material. So I would think that essentially what you were doing was working to please the fan magazines.
A. Not only for the fan magazines, which later changed to "Life," "Look," and so on and things of that nature. However, other stuff would go in, for instance, the newspapers. Certain...particularly leg art, that went into the newspapers a great deal. And a production still, and then you had various other different kinds of shots—action shots, and so on.
Q. I would think that it was a unique position to be in, to be a photographer at that time. Because, in the hierarchy
of the studios, it wasn't a major role as far as the studios were concerned. The star, at that point, was the all important person. And, I guess, the photographer had to adjust to whatever the demands of the star was. Did you have any particular star that made real demands...For instance, we've heard all the stories about Claudette Colbert being photographed only on one side of her face.

A. She definitely wanted one side. I know at one time they tried to take the other side of her and she invariably stops it. She won't have it. She doesn't want it. Now, another difficult one, really, was Miriam Hopkins. She was difficult. She just didn't want to pose. She didn't want to take pictures. And would squawk about going in and would put up objections if possible. However, there are others who have always been extremely cooperative. Joan Crawford. Very cooperative. Ann Sheridan. In fact, Colbert was extremely cooperative, with the exception of that side of the face. And you had people, as I say, like Miriam Hopkins, who were not in the least cooperative. Lana was very pleasant to work with, Ann was very pleasant, Kay Francis was extremely nice. Bert Six was always telling me that Bette Davis was great. I only photographed Bette Davis about twice, and one was more or less of an accidental publicity photograph, which she happened to like. But, Jim Cagney was great. He was a little reluctant to come into the gallery, but once you got him in there you didn't have a problem. Walter Huston was also reluctant to come into the gallery, but
once you got him in there he was great. The majority of them were... Greg Peck at that period in his... When he started... Was very easy to work with. Ingrid Bergman was easy to work with.

Q. Great rapport. Fun to be with.
A. Yes. Fun to shoot, and they worked with you. They were professionals. Now, one of the difficult ones, hard to get in the gallery and always impatient was Jennifer Jones. She was extremely impatient in the gallery, at least in my experience. I don't know how she is with others, but...

Q. I know that you've referred frequently, as we've chatted, to Ann... Annie... And I gather we'll be talking about Ann Sheridan and the fact that she could be shot from any angle. Almost consistent with the image that she communicated on the screen--there was intelligence and there was basic, earthy warmth and decency and really a marvelous quality. And for myself, as a fan..., I have very strong feelings in my heart about her, and felt very sad when she died at too early an age of that dreadful cancer.

But, I'm interested in something that has been written about and talked about, but certainly you would know: She was given that sobriquet, "the oomph girl." Which almost in itself is vulgar, and in a way, wrong for the image of what she was. How did she feel about that?
A. Annie did not like the word "oomph," and she ... One of the reasons she didn't like the word "oomph" was because
everybody started calling her "oomphie." And she resented that. Now, Al Sinclair was his assistant and George worked quite differently. We each worked differently. George, for instance, had a hose to his bulb, and I don't know how long it was but it struck me one time it must be 30 feet long, and he would wander around behind the camera and then when he saw the opportunity, he would shoot what he wanted to shoot at the moment.

Well, he and I... As far as I know, he was the first one to do it to that extreme. And as a matter of fact, in all due justice to George, I think we all copied him. I know I did. I got a longer hose, because I thought it was a darn good idea. I'd just stick my hand in my pocket, with the bulb, and maybe stand beside the camera, walk over a little ways, get their eyes the way I wanted, get the lighting arranged that way, and boom, I'd shoot it. And I really learned that from George.

I think, as a matter of fact, that every photographer in the motion picture business—portrait photographer—has learned something from some other photographer.

Q. Maddy, if you had to name one photographer, the first one that came to your mind that you were influenced by, who would it be?
A. George Hurrell is one of them. Scotty Waldburn (?) is another one of them.

Q. Why?
Because of his originality and his creative capabilities. Elmer Freyer is another one, Ernie Bachrach is another one. Bachrach was a perfectionist. Very definitely a perfectionist, and he originated any number of ideas. Now, poses you can't originate, really. Because at some time or another, everybody under the sun has done the same pose. The lighting you can originate. Now, that's where George Hurrell, Scotty Waldbern, Elmer Freyer, Bob Coburn, and a few more of us, originated styles of lighting. Now, we had to, naturally, through our work, because we were publicizing people. We had to shoot a great number of pictures just to please the studio, and to please the magazines, because that's what they wanted. So we shot them the way they wanted. But occasionally we would bust loose and shoot some stuff of our own, as George Hurrell did for "Esquire" magazine. Now he originated a style of photography in "Esquire," with his black and whites, for many months. I don't know how long it was. But it was known as a Hurrell shot, because he had a very contrasty black and white. And the stuff, of course, is beautiful. And I don't know whether you know it or not, whether George has told you, but he's an excellent view photographer.

Q. You mean landscape.
A. Landscape. Things of that kind. He does beautiful work. He has loads, or has had loads of shots he made in Mexico. And various places.

Q. Maddy, I have a feeling...Well...I'm identifying. I'm empathisizing. If I were taking photographs of the great stars,
I think that possibly I would get tired of that and want to go on to some other relationship to them, in terms of their movement. You know. The grace of some stars. Their ability to walk, their posture—all of these things are so memorable and so very special. Which is, of course, what makes them stars.

Did you get frustrated? Did you get tired of them? A. Yes. You would get tired, you would get bored once in a while. There's no question about that. But then you were dealing with so many different personalities at odd times. In fact, you'd shoot one person for anything from one hour to three days. And then you'd be off on another person. It might be a man, it might be a youngsters, it might be anything. So, consequently, there was always an interest and a challenge, that made you want to create something different. And, as a result, you enjoyed that. And it took a long time before you really got bored, but when you did get bored you got awfully bored, and with some people, you think, "Oh, my, am I going to have to photograph her again?" You couldn't get anything. You practically had to put their hands where you wanted them to put their hands, and have them put their head "this way," and right in the middle of it they'd turn around and do something else, just as you were about to shoot. Those people will drive you crazy. But the pros, no.

A star would have certain ideas about how she should be photographed. And if she wasn't photographed that way, then
she would raise a little hell about it. Or she wouldn't work with you. Or she wouldn't pose as you wanted her to. Or you didn't like...

Now, one in particular, who was a great person, really, if people only knew her better, is Dietrich. Dietrich was darn near as good a photographer as most of the photographers. And she learned it along the line, I suppose from von Sternberg. And she would check the lights, she would do this with the cameramen. The only thing is, you had to do a little fooling around with the lights yourself, because she would just look at what was in the mirror, which was at a different angle from where the camera was. So you had to figure on the angle of the camera and shoot accordingly, and shoot when you wanted to. But, she very, very rarely complained. But when she did complain, it was a complaint that could be heard pretty well throughout the studio or anyplace else she was.

Q. It's interesting that you speak so warmly and so professionally about Dietrich. One gets slightly an almost between-the-lines feeling, when you talk to George about Dietrich, and also when you look over George's work--the very special, inventive, creative quality that he had--it was a signature of his particular talent. You could tell a Hurrell photograph. But it's interesting: Not the best ones were done on Dietrich. At least that was my feeling, in looking at them. And it was so odd, because so much of Hurrell's work was related to capturing on camera the essence of sensuality and
sexuality, and almost in some cases a neurotic quality, and here was a woman who exuded this on the screen, and certainly recognized what her role was, there's no question about it. I think the line that sums it all up--"It took a lot of men to name me 'Shanghai Lily'"--And I'd be curious to know whether (1) you see or feel, or how do you feel about the Dietrich-Hurrell relationship?
A. George's personality and Dietrich's personality then...Although I don't know about this, I never talked to George about it, but I imagine this was a case of different personalities clashing. Because George has a very definite personality of his own, and unless he's just going out to do a job he doesn't care about, why, then, of course, he just goes ahead and shoots it. We all did that. We had to, that was our job. But if we were trying to do something of our own and be original, then we would shoot it the way we wanted to, not the way they wanted to, and in that case you would have a collision, and that would be the case with Dietrich and Hurrell.
Q. I would think...And, of course, you still had to communicate as far as the viewer was concerned; that you were dealing with these glorious, goddess-like creatures, and certainly, regardless of the Hays office, sexuality did not disappear and the attractiveness of these people. How did you get around it? I mean, in taking a picture with the Hays office saying you had to button up to such height, or do whatever you have to do, you must have developed techniques. There must have
been ways to make this work.

A. You had to accentuate the positive, in a case of that kind. In other words, you would throw a cross light on the bust, and they would print up the proofs and send them into the Hays office, and if the Hays office said no, then they would, of course, retouch. So, you'd get away with as much as you possibly could, by a cross light, in the case of the bust. Of course, in some other things, you deliberately made some much more erotic than others, and then the Hays office would kill the more erotics and you would still have some that were reasonably so and they would pass those because they were the only ones they had. And they would still suggest changes. Then you would try to do it with the face. That's...For instance, one of the tricks there, you'll notice in many pictures you see the lips parted and the head up, giving...And the eyes more or less looking down, with the lips parted business, gives it a sexual image that you wouldn't get otherwise.

Q. You know, when you look at your stills, one is struck by the fact that...I've yet to see one where the sitter didn't look great. Was it possible to make anybody look good?

A. Some, there's no question about that, some people have that quality automatically. But you can take most anyone that's reasonably beautiful and make them much better looking. But also, you have to give credit there to the makeup people. The makeup artists do a beautiful job, between the hair and the eyes and the lips and things of that nature. And in the
case of chins that are square, they'll use a makeup on the side of the chin to darken it down. And that helps a very great deal and they deserve all the credit in the world for that. There's only one drawback to it: They make so many girls that are quite different looking, look alike. And, of course, it's not only because of the photographer in that particular case, but also the fact that they were chosen, originally, by "Buzz" himself, and he had a certain type that he liked particularly. In blondes, he had a certain type in brunettes, that he liked. So the consequence... Like Carole Landis, and so on...

He picked her, and the various ones that he picked, did look, to some extent, looked alike. They were a "type," as it were. Q. Of course, so many of the pictures are photographs of people who are already established performers. Even the Busby Berkeley girls that you refer to were... If I remember correctly, they were a series of closeup girls. You saw the same faces in the closeups, as the camera came in, even though there might be 50-100 girls in the dance troupe. But... And the other people, of course, that you photographed were stars, who had the advantage of all the grooming. We already knew that they had presence and that they registered, as far as the camera is concerned. But I'd be interested, was there ever anybody whose photograph you took who had no relationship to the industry, that you just took the photograph because you saw something in them?

A. I would say Lana Turner was one in that case. This is purely guess work, but I would say that Mervyn LeRoy... When
I took Lana's first pictures...I took three types of pictures of the same girl. One a school girl type, one what you might almost exaggeratedly call the vampire type, and one sort of in between, exotic. And that way, she was three different people, in a sense. And that may or may not...I'm not certain, of course, because Mervyn never told me, but I have just a sneaking suspicion that may have had something to do with it.

Q. Well, I suppose when people came to be photographed, particularly young people whom you were first introduced to and had to find some way in which you could take a picture that would capture their essence, did they have to take their clothes off? I mean, did they object to that? Were they shy about it?

A. That would be variable. Some yes, some no. Some of them had a very definite inclination to disrobe whether you wanted them to or not. They just naturally wanted to exhibit their body. Jayne Mansfield was one who was very much an exhibitionist. I never in my life so anybody want to have so many pictures taken as she did.

Q. In the nude.

A. Any way. Heads, fashions, nudes--you name it. Mamie van Doren's another one. There were any number of people like that. Van Doren...I think you'll find that that's a matter of ambition, mentality, and it's a combination of a number of things. Now actually, from a standpoint purely of sex appeal, Marilyn Monroe has more sex appeal to me, at any rate, than Mamie. Now, Mamie is a very nice people to talk to, and very
willing to work with, but Monroe was anxious. She was more than anxious. She was pushing to get pictures and trying herself. I took what was, as far as I know, her first real portrait sitting. It was on a Groucho Marx Brothers picture called..."Love Happy"...And I made a whole series of portraits at their request of Marilyn Monroe, and she was only doing a bit in the picture.

Q. Let's return to your career, Madison. It's so fascinating to talk with you about all these people, and one feels that one is there when you talk about them. But after Griffith, let's see, you went to Harold Lloyd...

A. I stayed with Harold Lloyd until about '24 and then I went independent. I worked for "Treven Carr" on Westerns. And then I worked for "Willis Kent" on what we used to call "states right" pictures, which were pretty terrible.

Q. What pictures?

A. "States rights." A man made them and finished them and then he'd take them out and sell them himself.

Q. State right.

A. State right, yeah. States rights. They'd go to each state and they'd go to an exhibitor in that state, or a distributor.

Q. Real quickie productions.

A. Real quickie productions. And you couldn't do much of anything except (?) . .

Q. (?) . . Paramount.
A. Yes I was at Paramount, but I didn't stay very long.
Q. Really?
A. No. Because, you see, the strike came along. Better not mention that, because that's very touchy.
Q. Even now?
A. For the older people, yeah.
Q. (Side 2) I mentioned before, Maddy, that one really can recognize a George Hurrell photograph, and I think it's true even of John Engstead, for instance. I'd be curious as to how you feel about your own work. I mean, do you have a distinctive style?
A. To be truthful, I don't think I have a distinctive trademark. Because I vary, in other words, one time I'll... I made a series of Jeanne Cagney (James Cagney's sister, a lovely girl), and at that time... That was a good many years ago, and I was under contract to William Cagney Productions, and at the end of the period we were working actually on the picture, they asked me to shoot a complete portrait sitting of Jeanne Cagney. Now, in that particular case, I shot what I would call straight portraiture, then I shot glamor portraiture, then I happened to see a "Vogue" magazine, and I shot "Vogue" type shots, by some photographer whom I've forgotten, that were very definitely his style of photographer. So, I shot my style, I shot anybody else's style, as well as this "Vogue" stuff. Fashion. Hat. She had a hat on, and those things. And I also shot her in a Spanish, semi-Spanish outfit. You might almost call it a
madonna type. And then the glamor type, with the hair spread all around, shooting from above and down, and then into the mirror. And all types of photography. So that I covered, actually, in one girl, probably the work of maybe six or 10 photographers.

Q. I guess, when we think of fame, and the kind of fame that has come to certain photographers, it mostly is related to those people who we associate with portraiture. Maddy, would it be fair to say, in the hierarchy, that perhaps (although falsely, obviously) were the still photographers thought of as being inferior? Were they looked down upon, as opposed to the portrait photographers?

A. Well, we not only felt it then, we feel it now. Those are fellows who are working now. Because the still photographer is a forgotten man. He is in a sense with the publicity department, but he also has to do production stuff. Now, therefore, he has both, you might call them, bosses. In other words, he belongs to partially production, he belongs partially to makeup, he belongs partially to wardrobe, he belongs primarily to publicity.

Now, all of those people want different things. And he has to shoot something for all of them. Then, in addition to that, everybody else is called a director of something—like the Director of Photography—is what used to be just called a cameraman. But you don't hear of a Director of Still Photography, and you have a director of this and a director of that—
makeup artist--You don't hear of a photography artist or a still artist. It's just "still man." Now, the fellas, also, for a number of years, had their names on the back of their pictures. And when they were distributed, the negatives would go to New York, and they would get the names all mixed up in the first place. And in the second place, many of them, they wouldn't put the names on. The result was, the pictures would go out to the magazines with either no name or their own name. Many times. That's one thing. Then, the studios, because of the fact that the still photographers started to make more money, because there would become a demand from one studio to another, and they would go under contract, and the studios found that they had to pay higher salaries to the still photographers who were in demand. The result is that they stopped putting the names of the still photographers. And that's why when you look through the books and the magazines, you won't find the name, because nobody knows who took the picture.

Q. It's interesting, when you go back and look at magazines, from the '20s and even into the mid-'30s, there are identifications as to who took the pictures, and then it sort of disappears. I was wondering if it had any relationship to the rise of some of the very powerful picture magazines. Does that make any sense at all?

A. Well, "Life" magazine is to a great extent responsible for that. Because they had their own photographers. They couldn't get what they wanted from the studio. And they made an error...
As I understand it, at one time "Look" and "Life" were both promised an exclusive, and their photographers suspected that "Look" and "Life" did not take the picture, but the still photographer at the studio took the pictures. And the studio proceeded to give the same pictures to both magazines, and they were about to be, or were, published at about the same time. The result was that "Life" started their own photography. They started sending their own men out. And then they would give their men credit. And many, many times the still photographer on a picture has taken the photographs that were used under the name of the "Life" photographer.

Q. You resented that.
A. We definitely resented it.

Q. The more one gets into the history of Hollywood, and gets away from the actual period, so that you're able to look down on it, Maddy, it is completely apparent that the class-act studio, without any question at all, was MGM. And when you examine it, it isn't an accident. It was a matter of thinking through as to what the best would be. In other words, the best behavior, the best presentation, the best quality, so that you have a talent, for instance, such as Adrian, who was the best of the designers. But you make him even better by virtue of the fact that support him so completely. The publicity department of MGM went on a very careful handling of Adrian. I mean, he became as much a star as any star was, and... But that was the intelligence of Thalberg and his influence on Mayer; to understand that the separate pieces--the separate departments--when
brought all together, make the whole, the MGM Company, more powerful, more strong, more important. Not less important, because somebody was given credit. When you think of Bull's photographs and the...I mean, there isn't anybody who didn't know who he was and a great deal about him. And it's funny, right at this moment, I can see Eleanor Powell leaping, with that extraordinary leap of hers, as well as extraordinary legs, and that wonderful Bull photograph that captures the exhilaration of that girl as a dancer, as well as the fact that it became non-sexual. She was the only personality that was showing that much of her body that was non-sexual for us. It may explain the nature of her career. But also I think it has something to do with the nature of her personality. But that's an aside.

However, I do think that when you think of that, in terms of MGM, you realize that it was a brilliant plan, because...I mean, I'm fascinated when I talk with you, Maddy, because you are wonderfully honest and I love the fact that you give credit to everybody. You have no...You're not playing a ridiculous, competitive game.

MGM understood that, first of all, it's a wonderful way to hang onto your talent, so that they can't be bought away from you. Because what the other studio can't offer is that kind of support. Because they don't have the equipment or the machine or the respect.

I can't believe the studios couldn't have learned
their lesson from watching what MGM was doing with their photographers. Didn't they start...Didn't other studios recognize that there were people they could start to promote? I mean, wasn't that something that washed over you, as well as the other photographers you talked about?

A. Sometimes they promoted Elmer Fry. Then George Hurrell. Scotty "Waldburn," they even promoted me, in that sense of the word. For a period...And then Bert Six, for a long time afterwards. And they were very, very good. As a matter of fact, I would say that Universal and Warner Brothers, in a certain period, promoted the fellows just as much as MGM, but not as steadily, or over as long a period of time as they did Clarence and (?) Bull. Now Clarence (?)... Bull is a very fine photographer, but he was the portrait photographer at MGM, the primary portrait photographer, and (?)... was at Paramount. But they were there so long...Now, Elmer Fry was the man at Warner Brothers until the war, and then he went into the service, as did Scotty "Waldburn" and myself. And that's when Bert Six came in. And when Elmer died, and Scotty went back for a short time, and then Alex "Evelov," who was the publicity director, changed the composition on some of Scotty's 8" X 10" portraits and Scotty got mad and quit. And I wouldn't go back. I went with Selznick instead. I went under contract to David O. Selznick until he quit making pictures here and went to Europe, and then I went to Cagney.

Q. Of course one of the great stories that we all adore,
when you get into the world of photography in Hollywood, is the early story of Ramon Navarro coming to George Hurrell with the desire to be portrayed, to be photographed as a believable hero of operas. Because he sang, and he wanted to be taken seriously as an opera singer. So he brought his own costumes and George photographed him and the photographs were so successful that Navarro couldn't wait to show them to the queen of the lot, who was Norma Shearer, whose husband was the head of production, head of the studio--Irving Thalberg--and that really started George's career. He was smart enough to recognize that if he could do that with them, he should be doing it for all their stars and they got him out of this private studio and hired him to work at the studio.

Was there any sort of comparable sitting or something of that nature that affected and influenced your career?

A. No, not any particular one. I remember times when I received them. Like notes from the front office, and notes from the publicity department, and covers on the magazines and so on and so forth. But, no particular instance I can remember. I remember some instances, of course, that were favorable--very favorable--and others that were humorous and so on. But I don't think there's any one particular thing, no. If I did that, I would say that probably the greatest amount of prestige was when I was with Selznick, probably. But that is because Selznick was himself a great publicist. And as you know, everything that went with Selznick was tops. And the fact that I was
Selznick's head of department, and the fact that I was Selznick's portrait man and so on and so forth, very probably had something to do with it. Yet, that was after the war, and before the war, when I was in the service, and was "OIC" of the group, the photo section, for the 18th base unit, they all seemed to know me. The people that, the enlisted men, who came from, oh, from Lowry Field, from Washington. The officers that came, they knew my name. Which surprised me, because I didn't even know they knew me. But they did. And I still don't know how that happened.

Q. When we talked earlier, actually at a previous visit, Maddy, we talked about the very special experiences that we all have in our lives, in which a given period becomes very important. And by free association, if you stop and think, what gave me the most pleasure--a person, an event, an experience comes into mind--and you established for me at that time that it was the period of the '30s until about '41, that was the most important for you and the one that you enjoyed the most. Was it because of any individual? Was it the star? Was it the studio?

A. Yes, of course. It was Warner Brothers. And it was a long time. I knew everybody and everybody knew me and we all worked together, largely, you might say, as a team. And it was a marvelous studio to work, and the equipment was absolutely fabulous. And the entire situation at Warner's, in those days, was just ideal. And all the (?) got along well together. Every one of us. There was no petty jealousy, there was no backbiting,
there was no throat cutting. And the entire...And you were allowed...In other words, you became your own person. Your own self. You had your own electrician. He went with you whatever picture you were doing, or whatever gallery you were shooting in. He went with you, and they allowed you to do as you wished. If you wanted to make an experiment, you made the experiment. And they'd say, fine, go ahead, see what you could do. That whole setup at Warner's was splendid during those years. The publicity department, the personnel. That was what was so nice about it. They had one of the best production men who was ever in the business--Denny Wright(?)--and they had the whole...Everything was good.

Q. It's interesting...When you think about the impact of photography on our culture in America. Someone my age remembers this viewing of daguerreotypes. I mean, we had a stereopticon that I used to look at, and everything, and it was a very exciting experience to be transported to Egypt, to be transported to London. My first view of Westminster Abbey and Big Ben was through a stereopticon. And it was a great front-parlor experience, on Sunday after church, to do that. And to have Sunday dinner and after ice cream, we sat in one of the great places and used to look at these things. And people would bring over their collection of the cards, because the equipment was the simplest in the world.

And when I think about that, and when I think about the sort of Victorian photographs that almost everybody (stilted photographs) has in their family album, where Mommy sits on the
chair and Daddy sits, or stands behind her with his hand like Napoleon, and if there are children, they're surrounding them. Which, of course, was a way of copying the portrait painters of earlier periods. But, when you think about Hollywood, and you think about all of you, who have had such an impact, I suppose, to zero in...How would you zero in, and say what is the contribution, the specific contribution to photography, and to communicating inter-relationships or the essence of people, if you want to put it that way. How did you capture a star? In other words, what was it that Hollywood contributed to photography?

A. I think practically everything, in relation to glamor photography, real glamor photography, as we know it. It originated definitely in Hollywood and nowhere else. And since then they have imitated many, many Hollywood things. Not only in glamor, but character. Character studies. Now, you take some of the better known, outside photographers (I call them outside and by that I mean outside the motion picture industry) made pictures and they are widely publicized by some magazine, such as "Life." Now, you can go through motion picture portrait photographers and still photographers work and you will find identical pictures of somebody else, taken five years prior to the time that some of these other photographers, outside, were given the credit for being so great. I would name names but I don't think I should. There's one I can think of in particular that shots great character pictures, but I can show you great character
pictures that were taken by several still photographers—not several, but a few still photographers—10 or 15 years before he was known.

If you were out of the city and working independently, you would get (1) recognition, and (2) your work would be not necessarily spread any more widely, but it would be spread as "your" work.

Q. As promised at the beginning of the tape, I've asked Roger Ormsby, who has done so much research on the Busby Berkeley girls that it seems almost a great favor and a great joy to have access to your material. You are very, very kind to do this... As you know, it's for the Fashion Institute of Technology, and to the archives, this material will be used primarily for research. And, of course, those girls were certainly the slaves of that business, in the sense that hardly anybody knows who anybody was. Excepting the few who stepped out of it. I remember Carole Landis did, and, of course, Toby Wing, who was more photographed... There were more still photographs of her than actual performances. Then she married she head of one of the airlines and retired into being...

A. Appropriate for someone with the name "Toby Wing," isn't it?

Q. Yes, of course. Flying around. Excellent, Roger.

But, I've looked through your notebook, and the stuff that you have on Lois Lindsay, who incidentally happens to be the wife of Madison Lacy, whom we've just done this tape with,
I felt it was appropriate, if we could connect your notes to his world, because he's talking about, and makes references to "Buzz's" girls, and so forth. So, it's all yours.

A. Thank you. I will segue into Lois just by saying that in meeting both her and Madison, just before Madison died, they were both so charming. I mean, here were people who were not playing, "Hello, I'm Mr. Big Photographer," and "Hello, I'm a Busby Berkeley girl." I mean, Lois had gone on to do...I believe she was...They were both raising dogs. They were...And I think she was selling cosmetics. Her own line of cosmetics. And, you know, here was somebody who had already had two careers and she's off on a third and the perfect hostess. Very charming. Sweet, sweet woman. Unpretentious as hell. And so when she would talk and I'd...

Q. And not young.

A. Not young at all. And yet, there was still...I mean, the afternoon that I spent with her and Madison, Melba Marshall was there. She was another of the Busby Berkeley girls. And I mean, they're all friends. They started off together, they're still friends after all these years, you know. And even...Ethel Reed...I can't remember her last name...It was another one. They're all still a whole cachet of friends now. But, Lois is a pip. And I took copious notes on what she had to say because she was just, you know, from the hip. My kind of woman. I remember when I asked her why she particularly wanted to be a show girl, why she wanted to get into the Busby Berkeley line, she
said because as far as she was concerned it was a way to eat! She said that was all it was, pure and simple. Eating. And she reminded me that that was during the Depression times.

I remember this one that she had here... Right. She had been a salesgirl in 1932, and she felt that it was very lucky to get a job as a dancer at the studio. It wasn't, no sort of a putdown at all. In fact, she would brag about the fact that she had work. Who wouldn't? Everybody else was...

So, they would have a call for a picture and 300 girls would show up and they would just simply say, "We're gonna do a musical, we need so many dancers, send down the ones that you've got registered..."

Q. How much dance training did she have?
A. Not much at all. It was book-on-head, turn, lift your legs and look pretty.

Also, the point that she makes (and I'm glad you brought that up, because), particularly Berkeley had two segments of girls. There was the line--the 50, 100, however many--to make it look like there were 100 girls there. But they could be, as a friend of mine used to say, "Oh, look, it's a chorus of 40, and some younger." You know, they could be as old or as young or as clumpy as they wanted to be. He then had this front line girls, and these were girls who, when they came for the closeups or when the girls panned by the camera, they were the ones whose faces you saw, and I'm sure Madison probably talked about that, or you did.
Q. He married one of them.
A. Indeed. And a pretty one too. That's the other thing. She really...She has a quality of...I don't know, what would you say? Almost Carole Lombard. Very, very sweet looking woman. So...

Anyway...The call went out and they would have them and 300 would show up and she made a point that sometimes they'd even put an ad in the classified ads in the newspapers, and so you went down, and...

Q. There were no unions at that time?
A. No.

Q. You'd stick in an ad, and thousands showed up.
A. Oh, no. That was one of the reasons they could work them like they did, you know. Twelve hours a day. Also, I mean, and I think I'm going back to your previous question, about dancing ability. Berkeley, according to her, never hired anybody on their dancing ability. It was simply on could, as I said with her, could you stand, move and look pretty next to the girl next to you? So...

She...Lois talked...obviously had a good repartee with Berkeley. It wasn't just the director and the girl. I mean, she knew him. She said he was a real tease, because he would, he would say he wanted the old girls, and she was one of the old girls, because she had been around for years. And he'd have a bunch of them, maybe five or six, come down to the office, and he'd say, "All right, come on. Come on up. I'm
gonna interview some new girls, instead of the old girls." And so they'd sit in the office with him, just sort of help him make the new girls look nervous. And then he'd have a girl come in one at a time and he'd say, "All right, raise your skirt." You know, and this is some little kid straight off the farm who'd been told to keep her skirts down around her ankles. Then she'd pull it up just a little bit above the hem and he'd say, "Oh, no, I've got to see more than that." So, he'd turn around and wink at the old girls and they'd all start to smirk, and then he'd keep going until she had to pull it up practically over her head and she'd be in tears. And it was just a joke. As Lois said, it wasn't a really destructive joke, because if he'd pulled her into the office he had already chosen her. So she was part of the inside team...He was just having...

Q. Sort of an initiation into that world.
A. Exactly. That was a gag. So, after she had done it and dried the tears off, he would say, "That's it. You're going to work for us, go and have a fitting." So...But...You know...

As I mentioned, Melba Marshall was there that afternoon too, and she had...Now, she had had some experience as a dancer and on the stage before she'd come out, and...But, Lois told me a story, on Melba, about how she had gotten to Berkeley. She had gone up to him...She had gotten into the studio, she had gotten onto the lot, she had gotten onto the stage and she
walked up to Berkeley and she told him that she was an old pal of Dick Powell's. And...

Q. I bet she didn't know him.

A. Oh, she didn't know him from Adam. And said that Dick Powell said if you're ever out here, look us up and we'll give you a job. So he gave her the job and then afterwards, Melba went up and told him the whole thing. Apparently he said he'd known all along, he liked her anyway.

So...I'm just...There's this one note down here...I told you that a whole bunch of them were still friends. They go by first names, and the ones I've got down here are Melba, Lois, Vicki, Judy, Ellie, Ethel, Rita, and various other ones. And they're still, 60 years later...I don't want to keep going on about it, but, you know? There had to be something to hold them together like that.

One of those numbers where they'd have a casting call for about 300, that could go on for a month, of doing shots, and it was pretty good to have employment.

Q. Of course, one of the things about Busby Berkeley was that when you look at...When you look at the shots, you realize that it isn't so much the girls that are moving, it's the camera that's moving.

A. Right. Right. And the camera operator is probably being paid a hell of a lot more than the girl who's making $50 to stand there and look pretty. In fact, I...You always think of the tap numbers, with Busby Berkeley, particularly since
"42nd Street on Broadway," but I have to read you this, because it's in Lois's own voice." She says, "I never danced. I can remember going to try on, to the first fitting we had for costumes. Those water number costumes that were leotards made out of souffle. And when they fitted us, they fitted us only in these leotards, without the diamonds and jewelry. I can remember running out to my mother in tears, saying 'I don't want to work in the picture business.' I tried on this leotard, with nothing underneath it. I thought that was my costume. But do you see how modest we were? I've always wanted to ask people of the era, who'd go to see these movies, if they realized that none of us had any navels. You understand that the whole group of Berkeley girls never had navels. They always covered them up, either with a little piece of feather (but the feathers kept falling off), so they'd wear patches." So, as Lois says, "Here it was, the middle of summer..."

Q. Hot.
A. Hot, hot. "And we all had feathers on here and here, and we'd have to run around with these feathers and they kept dropping off." But, you know, of course, it turned out there were some girls who didn't care, but inevitably they were the back line girls.

So, costumed up, ready to go, by the time the first number was ready to shoot they ... Well, they didn't rehearse necessarily right then. They had the first few days. They would have the wardrobe department, and they came out with every smock
that the wardrobe department ever had. And all the girls were put into a smock and those who weren't exactly right in the front line had to wear the smock, so that nothing would get dirty. At various stages of what they were and what they weren't in.

Q. Well, of course, one of my great Busby Berkeley images is that fantastic production where Dick Powell sings by a waterfall.

A. Oh, yes. Lois was in that one too, and she said that getting ready for it...Now, I remember that one particularly as one where, as you said, the camera pans and it moves and you keep pulling back and you see the girls sitting with their legs spread by the side of the pool, and Lois made a note of that and said that Berkeley, while directing that piece, kept whispering through the microphone, "All right, girls, spread your pretty little legs." And everyone would giggle. And of course they weren't suppose to giggle. They had that plastic smile that they had to have on so that...It seems that...

He wanted to have fun, and he did have fun. And, in fact, he allowed the girls to kid with him, because he was a kidder. He was quite often the butt of jokes on the set. And gags. And meanwhile, all of this would cost studio time because he wasn't getting the shots and what was supposed to be a one month production turned into a two month production number. Or...By the waterfall...By the pianos...Lois talked about the piano production numbers and she said they would sit
at a piano day after day after day waiting for the shot to be done. So the front office would call down and say, "What are doing with all these people? Why have you got them here? We're paying them money and we don't see any results." So then he'd turn it around on the girls and he'd say, "All right girls, come on now. The front office is coming down on us and they want to see something." So Jack Warner himself, or Hal Wallis, would come down and say, "Now, when they come down, when these men from the front office come down, I want you all to do some tour jete'," so all the girls would get up. It had nothing to do with the number, but they'd all get up and do tour jete' all over the place.

Q. It looked awful.
A. That's right. But the front office representatives would come down and they would say, "This is what we're working on," and they'd say, "Oh, it looks awful!" And he'd say...

Q. I would think so, yes.
A. ....and he would say, "Well, you see, this is why we've got to keep working! Meanwhile, he had the whole thing set up in his head, like Hitchcock always had the whole movie ...He had the whole movie..

Q. Well, obviously Berkeley was fairly shrewd, because if he had done these things rapidly and simply, they would have thought less of him. The fact that it took so long to create the numbers and, happily, we all know that the public adored the numbers. I mean, he kept those musicals alive with those
extraordinary geometric patterns and figures. And the use of the boom camera. I mean, he must have extended the boom way beyond anything that had ever been done before.

I do remember that when Marion Davies made Cain and Mabel, and they wanted a scene in which the camera would just rise, rise, rise, because...Treating her as an angel on the way to heaven...William Randolph Hearst paid a great deal of money to have the roof of the studio raised like 30 feet.

That's right.

But, see, Berkeley, of course, also was unique in that he had an individual talent that nobody else had, and there are other musicals of the period where the choreographers copied his technique, there's no question about it. But that's inevitable. I mean, it's no different than people who copied Michael Bennett or Bob Fosse, on Broadway.

Sure. It was also the thing of having to top the last. You know. You've always got to top. So, whereas, he started off with a production number, then the next time it had to have a little bit more of the props in it, and there had to be five more girls, and the next time it had to get...

Do you remember the violins that lit up?

Yes. Incredible. And the extravagance. I mean, he knew how to work it. I've run across photographers who would say that the way they got their sort of risque photographs was to do something really blue, and the censors would strike down the blue. Berkeley had his own interpretation of that. There
was one number in a movie, "Caliente," with Dolors del Rio. There was a number called "The Lady in Red," and he wanted to have six white horses, and he knew the production company was not going to pay to have six white horses, so what he did was he went to them and he said, "Now, listen, we're going to do a barnyard scene, and I'm gonna have some pigs and some chickens and we're gonna throw in some goats, and I think we ought to have maybe a couple of white horses," and they started screaming, "You can't do this, this is going to break the budget," and so he said, "All right, all right. We'll get rid of the pigs and the chickens and the ducks and the goats. Can we just have the horses?" And they said, "Well, yes, thank God. That's much more reasonable!" So he had his horses. And I think he'd asked for four, he had six by the end of it.

And the heights...I'm just looking at one of the notes here that Lois had about the heights. You were talking about the camera going up and ascending to heaven. She said that they were scared to death of the heights. They would stand up there on these very shaky little pedestals, very high in the air, with maybe just a little belt hidden in the back, hidden underneath the navel patch, you know. And they would have to stand and wait there for days and days and days and just shake. So you can imagine...

Q. Are you going to ask what I was thinking?
A. What?
Q. I was just thinking that, you know, considering the
description of the fact that they stayed on these pedestals and these sets for hours and hours and hours, I wonder what happened if you suddenly had to go to the john.

A. I was thinking that!

Q. You were?

A. Yes.

Q. Because I remember seeing one of the films and seeing the girls as though they were grecian statues, grecian ladies with sort of diaphanous gowns, in the grecian style, on the top of a pedestal. As though they were sculptures, is what I'm trying to say...

A. Right.

Q. ...and when later I realized that these shots sometimes took nine to 10 hours, and they didn't bring them down, they just made them stand up there. That's why they were called slavies, you know.

A. Sure. Well, Lois must have been the front one. She must have been why Busby Berkeley really liked her, because she and another girl called Ellie were the two that would go and try it out to make sure it was all right. None of the other girls had the nerve to do it, so they would always be the two. So, consequently, because they were always willing to do it, they were always the front line girls. You know. He favored them. And they were cute. So the pedestals...I remember when she talked about that. When they said, "Oh, no problem. We'll go up and try it out," and they got up to the
top of the pedestals and they both started crying because they were so afraid. And it wasn't enough just to have a grip go up and get them down, it was Berkeley that had to go up personally and coax them down. But, Lois said later, "I completely forgot I was so afraid of heights."

Yeah. But they did. They strapped them up there. You had a board on your back to hold you up straight so you wouldn't waver.

Q. I wonder what they did do about the john? The girls had a strong bladder or something?
A. I'm just looking in the notes. She doesn't talk about that. I should have asked her.

And, of course, there were other things. The camera both went from a boom that would rise and fall to such things as he would strap the camera and the cameraman to a rafter on the top of the ceiling and use a zoom lens to pull back. So... A wild, wild director. Yes, 30 feet. I'm just seeing where she noted about the raising of the roof. Hearst paid to have it raised 30 feet.

Q. She talked about that? Oh, good. I mean, he so adored Marion Davies, anything she wanted...Whether she wanted it or not, he would think of it, in terms of his great fantasy about this beautiful lady that he adored.
A. I'm just looking. Lois had a little note. She said, "I was in Cain and Mabel but I wasn't an angel, thank God." Then her friend Melba says, "No, you were in the canoe, the Venetian
number." And Lois said, "Well, I was in the number where the
angels were, but I was down on the floor, thank Jesus!"

By this time she was making $65, so she had a $15
a week raise.

I'm so glad I finally found a response to your
question about the bathrooms, about holding their bladders. I
knew it was in here. There's a story about Loella Parsons,
on the set of "Hotel Hollywood," and Louella had a problem with
her bladder, a bladder control problem, so she would be in her
scenes but it was very difficult, so she quite often wore cor­
rective pants. And in particular, Lois makes a note that it was
a zoom shot. It wasn't a zoom lens, so what they did was they
had a cafe' in the "Hotel Hollywood," and Louella Parsons was
sitting way over in the far corner, and between her and the
camera were all these tables, and people were dining and drink­
ing in their evening clothes. And the camera, on a dolly, just
was sort of wheeled over and the tables had to be pulled away
as the camera proceeded and got closer and closer to Louella.
So, as the camera is moving, and people are jumping up and
pulling away their tables and moving in and moving in, closer
and closer and closer, and there was Louella sitting in her
rubber pants, waiting for the closeup to get to her, and they
said by the time they finished filming it, she'd gone through
three sets and everybody was complaining of the smell in the
corner and had it disinfected!!

Q. But you know, it brings up something else, when you
talk about that scene, where everybody is sitting at nightclub tables and the camera, of course, has to move in and they all jump up and move their tables. See, this was before the unions. Today, if you move a glass, the union calls a halt. I mean, they each wanted—the set designers and the set decorators—have their own union, and you can't...No actor can move a thing. So that would never occur today.

A. Oh, it wouldn't. Plus, as you mentioned before, they didn't have unions, they didn't have agents, so...You know, I mean, these girls were working until 3:00 in the morning sometimes, and then get up and be back at the studio at 9:00.

Q. And proud of it, too.

A. Oh! And, as Lois said, thrilled at the money.

Q. Sure. Sure.

A. And yet there is a certain amount of...Well, I wouldn't say reckless, but the expense that was not spared, certainly in Busby Berkeley, to get what he wanted, because you're dealing with the star. The star was behind the camera, in his instance, so, if he wanted to shoot a production number 20 times, to get it just as he wanted, he did it.

Lois was talking about a reunion that they had when Busby Berkeley...I guess this was just about four years ago now....They had a reunion and as he walked into the room, one of the girls was escorting him. Hundreds of people were at this dinner for him. Lois said, "Wouldn't you give us a little step?" Lois said. Busby had never danced a day in his life, never even
turned a shoe. So he said, "All right girls, now let's make our entrance. I won't do it by myself, but I'll do it with you." So the three of them—the two girls and Busby Berkeley—came in and did one little two-time step, you know, and that was it. She said it was the loveliest thing she'd ever seen.

Meanwhile...I don't want to forget Madison in all this. Madison was photographing every Busby Berkeley movie that was going on, and obviously developing the hots for Lois Lindsay....

I had a still from Erich von Stroheim's "The Wedding March," and I brought it out and showed it to Madison when we were sitting there and having tea...(Actually, when Lois makes tea it involves several brands of liqueur, but, nonetheless, we were having a lovely afternoon.) And I do have some rather good notes here about what Madison responded with. Would you like to hear it?

Q. Oh, very much so. Yes.
A. He noted that: "Erich von Stroheim had two crews, so that when one crew got drunk, he'd have the other to take the place. And, of course, he got the actors drunk for that orgy, because the result was what he wanted. There was no make-believe in that orgy scene. That damned pink gin was bitter too, as a matter of fact. It took 15 hours to shoot that scene because von Stroheim wanted Fay Wray to act, and that's a very difficult proposition!"

Q. She could scream, however.
A. That's right. And as a consequence, he kept on her
for 15 solid hours, until he got her to do what he wanted.

    Let's see. Madison said, "We used to work for 40 hours straight on 'The Wedding March.' They had a hospital there and he'd go to lie down in the hospital in one of the beds, to get a little bit of rest now and then. Many times they would work 30-35 hours straight, because he wanted the results that he wanted. And he worked too, just as hard if not harder than anybody else. All the legends about the legends of von [he called him von] is a lot of nonsense. He was the hardest worker and the nicest of people. He was also the most exact perfectionist that ever existed."

    Oh, and here's a note about what they shot, the difference between American and foreign release: He said, "You have no idea of the stuff we shot for foreign release. It was probably cut out of the picture, but there were things in it like in the Madame Rosa sequence that would make things today look mild. Not nudity, but it was in the way that they were done. The subtlety of the way they did them. There's this one scene where two German officers were... an Austrian officer... were talking to a girl in Madame Rosa's. She had this house of ill repute. They had one girl talking to two men, and she was leaning against a post. And while she's talking, she takes a banana, peels it, puts it in her mouth and shoves it as far down as it can go; shoves it all the way down, pulls it out and then shoves it back in again."

    And there was this other scene where a girl is lying
on a couch and he had one officer behind the couch and another one sitting in front of the couch, playing the harmonica. So it was like, he had this girl trapped in this situation. So...

Oh...I couldn't read what the word was...But he said, "Von had spread champagne, not necessarily champagne—it was apple cider—spread all over this one girl. She had a little teddy bear she was holding as she lay on this chaise lounge, and he put this very sweet apple cider on the various parts of her anatomy, and then had four pekingese dogs come up and lick the sugar off. And that was only for release in France," Madison noted.

But that was "The Wedding March." I asked him about "The Merry Widow," which I personally prefer. But there have been various versions, and there was certainly a great deal of notoriety surrounding von Stroheim's "Merry Widow." Madison was there, he had seen a lot of the work, he obviously saw him as a good worker. I asked him what he thought and he said, "His 'Merry Widow' is superior to anything that's ever been done," and I think, considering Madison Lacy, I think that's high praise indeed. One of the things that Madison was saying about his extravagance was that he would have, for instance, guards marching by in the background for a scene. There would be 150 men dressed in absolute perfection of uniform. Everything was perfect, right down to silk underwear. Each one of them wore...just had the right feeling. And they'd be going along and he'd be directing the scene in the foreground, and with 150 men walking by, he'd stop the scene, stop the cameras, and tell one
man in the very far end of the ranks to pull in his stomach. A perfectionist. An absolute perfectionist.

Q. Well, you've been very generous, sharing your notes, and I'm just delighted. And the information helps a great deal, to get a whole picture of the world of Madison Lacy. And the world of Busby Berkeley. It inter-relates.

A. I was just going to say that. To really understand Madison, you have to know Lois and Busby.
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