

A TEI Project

Interview of Bianca Pino

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (January 25, 2011)

Collings

Today is January 25, 2011, Jane Collings interviewing Bianca Pino at the Ralph Edwards Productions offices, and we'll just start off with hearing about when and where you were born.

Pino

I was born on January twenty-second—I just had my birthday—1942, in Evanston, Illinois.

Collings

All right. So you were a war baby, in a way.

Pino

I was a war baby, yes.

Collings

What kind of things did your parents do? What is their background?

Pino

My father was an Italian immigrant—

Collings

Oh, really. First generation?

Pino

First—he came to this country in 1939, three years before I was born.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

He enrolled in the University of Michigan I believe on a scholarship, although I'm not real clear about that. My mom was a first-gener. She was born here. Her parents were born in Italy. And she was in nursing school at the University of

Michigan, and they met, I believe, at a local Italian Americans' function at the school.

Collings

Yes, there's so much of those kinds of clubs and immigrant activities in the Midwest and the Chicago area. Was your dad fleeing the war?

Pino

He was; Mussolini. Yes, he left his family, his brothers and sisters, everyone, back in Italy.

Collings

Oh, that must have been very difficult. What kind of work was he doing once he came over?

Pino

He was in engineering, statistics. He tracked unemployment statistics for the State of California, eventually. He was an economist and a statistician.

Collings

Interesting. And what kind of work did your mom do?

Pino

My mom was a nurse. She worked in hospitals most of her early career.

Collings

So she was a professional woman.

Pino

Absolutely. And my sister and I were very fortunate, because she was a school nurse while we were in grammar school, so we would go while we were in grammar school and hang out with her in her nursing station.

Collings

Oh, that's really nice.

Pino

It was great.

Collings

That's very nice.

Pino

It was great.

Collings

So did you have brothers and sisters?

Pino

I had one younger sister, two and a half years younger.

Collings

Were there any extended family members around, or were they all back in Italy?

Pino

My father's family was all in Italy. Only one of whom I ever met was my Aunt Bianca, whom I'm named after. My middle name is Maria. I had another aunt, Maria, who was a cloistered nun in the Vatican—

Collings

Oh, really.

Pino

—which is about as Catholic as you can get.

Collings

Yes.

Pino

So all of his relatives were back there. My mother's mother, father, and two brothers were all in Michigan, and I knew them all.

Collings

What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?

Pino

Well, we moved, at a very early age, from Michigan to San Francisco, which at that time was the capital of California. My father went to work for the government. He was stationed in San Francisco, so my very early years were growing up in a residential neighborhood outside—close to San Francisco State, which is where I eventually would go to school.

Collings

Okay, great. So everything was kind of like close by.

Pino

Very close by. It was a very hilly—one of those narrow almost row houses in San Francisco, on a street called Oxford Street, which is still there and probably looks pretty much the same.

Collings

So it sounds like with your mother working and your father in a professional career, that they were probably thinking that their daughters would work.

Pino

I think they always left the door open. I don't remember them putting up any barriers to anything we could do. We grew up in a household where you could become anything you wanted to become if you worked hard, were diligent, and were a little bit lucky. If you worked hard, you could achieve anything that you wanted to.

Collings

So it sounds like they very much embraced their new American home.

Pino

Very much so, to the point where I don't speak Italian, and I think that's true of a lot of children of immigrants. We were never taught Italian. Even when I asked my dad, "Please teach me," he would not. I asked him at one point to go

back to Italy with me, and he would not. He just was comfortable being an American, wanted to be an American and wanted his girls to be American.

Collings

That's so of a time, isn't it?

Pino

I know.

Collings

Because the pendulum has kind of shifted.

Pino

And yet, we were ingrained with Italian culture and music and art. I grew up listening to opera and going to art museums with my parents, so it was kind of strange.

Collings

Yes. But did they ever talk about Italy in nostalgic terms?

Pino

No, no. I talked once, many years ago, with my dad, just the two of us sitting in a restaurant, about the circumstances of his leaving, and it was all in very general terms and then he would kind of well up and almost start to cry when he remembered his sisters that he left behind, and I think there was a woman that he left behind who was a girlfriend of his. It was just very, very hard for him to remember.

Collings

Did he have contact with any of those family members again?

Pino

He kept contact with my Aunt Bianca, who was a secretary. She was a secretary to the president of Pirelli Tires, and so he kept in contact with her. He didn't keep in contact with my aunt, the nun, because he didn't appreciate her asking for contributions to the church, which he grew to really hate. He was very adamant against the Catholic church, very much an atheist. My mom was pretty much the opposite, so there was a little family tension there. But we'd go to church on Easter and Christmas, and that was about it. So he did have contact, a lot of letters going back between his sister Bianca and him, yes. And everybody else—he had two brothers who were both dead by the time, and his parents were both dead.

Collings

So here you are in San Francisco, the city by the bay. Was it an immigrant community that you were living in?

Pino

No, not at all, not at all. I don't remember neighbors. I don't remember much of the people around at all. I remember the house, because it was a vertical house. I remember the street, because it's a steep street. I kind of remember the

weather, because it was always cold and biting and I loved it, and that was about it. And it didn't have any snow, and I hated the snow.

Collings

Did you watch TV and listen to the radio in your household?

Pino

We never had a TV while I was growing up.

Collings

Really.

Pino

Ever. I never had a TV until I left home when I was nineteen.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

We had a radio, which my dad built from scratch, and I remember the front of it—

Collings

He built it?

Pino

Built it from scratch in the days when you did that. You got a kit and you did that. And I remember listening to nighttime dramas when I was supposed to be doing my homework, so that was my first inkling into mass media at all was listening to dramas on the radio. But we never had a TV.

Collings

Did you wish you had one, or did you miss it at all?

Pino

I missed it because I'd go to school and kids would be talking about, "Did you see 'Dragnet' last night?", and I had no idea what they were talking about. So I remember going over to a girlfriend's house to see "The Ed Sullivan Show," and saw Elvis Presley shake his hips on TV at a friend's house. But we never had one at home.

Collings

Why was that?

Pino

I think it was because my parents' fear was that it would interfere with studying, which was very important, and they kind of didn't understand it. And there may have been, "We don't want to spend our money on that," maybe a little bit of that. It was just not a part of the way they grew up, and they didn't quite get that it was a part of what kids during that time in the fifties, forties and fifties, were doing growing up. They just—it wasn't a part of them.

Collings

Right. Did you go to movies?

Pino

We did go to movies, especially foreign movies, and we loved them, absolutely.

Collings

Yes, there were a lot of wonderful films coming from Europe at that time.

Pino

Yes, yes. And we'd go to Italian movies especially, and I'd read, of course, the—

Collings

Rossellini.

Pino

Yes, absolutely, absolutely. They were great, and enjoyed it, and my parents enjoyed them a lot.

Collings

Yes, I'll bet they did.

Pino

It was great.

Collings

So what were you thinking about doing when you were in high school?

Pino

I actually don't think I was thinking about doing much. I thought it would probably be in the arts, but I wasn't sure. I think I was a fairly introverted child. I had really bad eyesight—

Collings

Oh, really? And it wasn't known?

Pino

And it wasn't known. In spite of the fact that my mother was a nurse, she didn't pick up on it. So I can remember like in the seventh grade, my teacher in the seventh grade realized that I had a problem, because I couldn't conjugate verbs. I couldn't conjugate a sentence. I couldn't put a graph—you know the old-fashioned way you used to graph sentences? I couldn't do it, because I couldn't see the blackboard. So the first thing she did was move me up closer to the class, and things started to improve. But she was the one who asked my parents to get my eyes tested. So I got glasses in the seventh grade, and I got contact lenses when I went to high school.

Collings

Boy, those were really new on the scene.

Pino

That was amazing. It really was amazing, because I could see across the room. I could see my friends walking down the hallway, and that was a brand, brand-new thing for me. And so all of a sudden I started to come out of my shell. My

dad worked with a woman named Elisa Schare. Oh, by now we'd moved to Sacramento. Sorry about that. By now we'd moved to Sacramento, somewhere in the—

Collings

Because that became the capital.

Pino

That became—when the capital moved to Sacramento, whatever year that was, we moved with it and moved to a suburb called Carmichael, and we lived in Carmichael for years and years. So this woman had a drama studio, and because I think I was introverted, my parents enrolled me in drama classes, and so I was doing Cancan and doing all of this drama stuff and taking a lot of classes, and thought maybe I would become an actress.

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

At some point. I went to junior college in Sacramento, went to drama school, had a really good time, then went back to San Francisco to what at that time was San Francisco State and enrolled in the drama curriculum. And I realized relatively early on—and I'll use some language maybe I shouldn't—these people were way too fucked up for me. And I think that's about the way I thought about it.

Collings

In what way?

Pino

They were just wacky. I'd never seen people as impressed with themselves as they were. I just had never been exposed to people of that personality. And it was very cliquish, and I didn't fit, and I realized it really quickly. And I was going with a guy at the time who said, "Why don't you try television?" So I literally walked down the hall—

Collings

Which was so early too.

Pino

So early. I walked down the hall—this was in the mid-sixties, early sixties—walked down the hall and enrolled in the TV school, radio, television, and film, and it was the easiest thing I had ever done. It was natural. I could do a montage of shots without even thinking about what I was doing. For some reason, it was really easy. It felt easy. I loved the history. I loved the law of television; we got a lot of it, the FCC and how it works. We got all that side and then we got the artistic side. We got the technical side. We got storytelling, and I just loved it, and I knew I'd found a home. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I'd found a home.

Collings

It's a wonderful composite of sort of entertainment and artistry and technology and sociology. It's just really a potpourri.

Pino

Yes. It was great. And I was just kind of following my heart, I guess. I wanted to go to college, and I knew I was kind of expected to go to college, and my parents went along with it and said, "Whatever you want to do, whatever makes you happy, whatever you're good at and you enjoy." And I don't know that they ever really understood what I was doing. I used to joke that I felt my dad always thought that I was going to be a TV repair person, because he never understood, I don't think, what—

Collings

Well, he didn't watch TV.

Pino

—what went into making a television show, had no concept, had no frame of reference. There was no reason for him to know about it.

Collings

Yes. But with your dad an engineer and your mom a nurse, wasn't there any kind of emphasis on having you do something really solid?

Pino

There was. I think part of the rejection of being an actress was that in the back of my head it was, "You'll never make any money doing this. The odds of making a living doing this are really remote." So I think that was in the back of my head. My father had a very flamboyant, artistic side to him.

Collings

Oh, really.

Pino

Yes. He was fun-loving, dancing Italian, loved his red wine but never overindulged, unlike my mother did from time to time. But he was very outgoing. My mother was much more reserved and proper. He loved parties. He loved people. He was a great guy. So he more understood the artistic side of it, I think, than my mom did. She was much more practical and down to earth.

Collings

Were they from the same part of Italy?

Pino

No, not at all. My dad was from Verona, and my mom's parents were from a little town on the west coast called Cesto Callende. So she was tall, her relatives were all tall, fair, light-skinned. She had blue eyes and blonde hair when she was a kid. My dad was shorter and stocky and dark.

Collings

Yes, I would imagine that where you come from in Italy has all of its own history and baggage, I suppose, that goes along with it.

Pino

I think you're probably right. Yes, yes.

Collings

But they didn't ever talk about that, I guess?

Pino

I think if anything, there were problems even understanding the language—

Collings

Dialects.

Pino

—because the dialects were so different. I know they had problems with the dialects.

Collings

Oh, interesting.

Pino

I think they probably had problems with the culture. Mom's town that her parents were from is much smaller. Verona is much—even then a bigger city, had a big coliseum and Romeo and Juliet and all of this big history, and my mom's town wasn't like that at all.

Collings

So she had a more provincial background.

Pino

Yes.

Collings

Okay. So now you're deciding that you're going to go into TV. Did you think about what element of the industry?

Pino

Something in production. I knew I didn't want to be in front of the camera.

Collings

Why was that?

Pino

I don't really know. It just didn't fit as well as being behind the camera.

Collings

Because mostly at that time, women in TV are in front of the camera.

Pino

Yes, yes. We're newscasters or writing on a board at a TV station doing the weather. Remember when they used to write backwards, do the weather writing backwards on the board of the map of California? I didn't want to be in front of the camera. I think the shyness was still there, and I thought I was better suited to be behind the camera, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. The one thing I

knew I would probably never do was write, because I didn't feel like I was a very good writer. I was more conceptual. I was more a doer rather than sitting down with a blank piece of paper. That was never a comfort for anything. Thank-you letters, thank-you notes were hard for me. I've gotten better at it, but that was not—I knew the notes, but I didn't know exactly where I was going. I was fortunate when I got into college—somewhere along the line a counselor said, "You're a girl. You need to learn to type and take shorthand." So I learned to type, I'm not sure how. I took one semester of shorthand, and I could make little squiggles on a piece of paper. And again, I wasn't sure what that was ever going to mean for me, but that's what you were supposed to do. Somebody said, "Do it," and actually—

Collings

Because you were a girl.

Pino

I was a girl. I'm really glad that they did, because I never would have gotten my first job here. I never would have gotten my first job at the TV station in San Francisco, and I never would have gotten my first job here at Ralph Edwards Productions without those two skills. Nobody cared that I had a college degree. They cared that I could type and take shorthand. That's the way it was.

Collings

Yes, that's the way it was. Were there many other women trying to get into industry work at that time? Were there many other women in your program?

Pino

There were a few. Maybe 20 percent of the class was women, not a lot. Many of those—

Collings

That seems high, really, actually.

Pino

Many of those were going to go into—a good friend of mine became a commercial actress. Another woman that I'd worked with early on did features, went on to do features. There weren't a lot, but there were some.

Collings

Did you have a sense at all that this was a new area and that there was room for women, or was it sort of the reverse?

Pino

I knew it was a new area and that it was blossoming, and there seemed to be—if you did the right things, if you had the right capabilities, and if you had the right—I hate to even say it—the right look, you could get in. I remember being told when I was in college that most people—in a lecture in a big hall—"Most people who are sitting in this room right now will never work in the business. You will graduate, and you will never work in the business."

Collings

Because it's so competitive.

Pino

Because it's so competitive. And I went, "Oh. But I'm still having a good time," and I just kind of let it slide off me. I didn't take it seriously, and I just went toward what I wanted to do. I didn't let it affect my goals, and my goal was to work in television. I didn't know how or where or when or anything else; I was going to work in TV.

Collings

Probably because you were so open minded about where, that was probably helpful.

Pino

Maybe, maybe. Maybe I just went with the flow. And the first job I got was at KPIX in San Francisco, because I could type. They let me type the logs for the station, so I worked in traffic, and I scheduled commercials, and I could do back timing like a champ—maybe my father's statistics got into my head—and so I would type the daily log for the station. But I had to go through an employment agency to get the job, so I paid, I think, like 30 percent of my first month's salary to get the job, but I got the job. And once I got there, I was there for five and a half years.

Collings

Oh, great.

Pino

So traffic wasn't where I wanted to end up, but what it gave me was the opportunity to interact with every other department in the station. It was perfect for that. Because I would be going to the promotion department, finding out what they wanted to air that day; the news department, finding out what they needed; the guy that was editing the movies and where the commercial breaks were going to be; and go up to master control, and I loved going and hanging out in master control, because it was dark and all these machines were whirring, and I learned to string up two-inch videotape on the machines, and I would talk to anybody about anything, because I was so interested in the inner workings of how the TV station worked. The station at that time was owned by Westinghouse, so we'd have Westinghouse people coming in. And so there was the corporate part of it, too, and I was just having a blast. And it was my entire life. I would stay late. I'd do my work, which I think had to be out by like three o'clock in the afternoon, because depending on my log, they cut the movies for the next day. Everybody took what I did, and they would pull commercials, they would do all of this stuff based on this thing that I typed, which is kind of a weird position to be in. And then after that I was free. It was three o'clock. I was done, and I'd go hang out. And then at the end of the day, we'd all go to the

bar down the street and hang out there, and we'd talk about TV, and it was a total immersion, absolutely total immersion into the business and how it was done.

Collings

What kinds of things were people talking about? Like ideas for the future, or what had happened that day? I mean, when you say talk about TV.

Pino

It was much more immediate. It was not grandiose, "Where is this business going?" It was more, "You scheduled the wrong commercial. How did you do that? What can we do to make it better?" It was who's sleeping with who, or dating who, and there was some of that going on. It was much more day to day, how to get the job done, and how to get it done better, much more immediate. It was not far seeking, "What do you want to do in the future?" There was not much about that at all.

Collings

Right, right, "What is the meaning of what we're doing here, culturally?"

Pino

No, no. It really wasn't. You were just going—it was a job, and you were going day to day, and you were having a good time, and you liked the people you were with.

Collings

What kind of people were they?

Pino

They were outgoing Type-A personalities that were just having fun together. It was a lot of laughter.

Collings

Yes, I really get that sense, looking back at some of these—

Pino

We had a great time. It was the late sixties, and we had a great time. We really did. And it was San Francisco. How could that be bad? So I'd walk from the TV station, which was on Van Ness and Union, on Van Ness almost at the ocean. It was the very north side. And I could walk down to the bay, get a little crab sandwich for lunch, sit and watch the ocean, and come back to work. That's not a bad deal.

Collings

That's not, not at all.

Pino

And that part I realized. I realized I was really lucky. I was lucky to be there. I was lucky to have the people in my life that I had. I was lucky to be doing the work that I was doing, and it was a good deal.

Collings

Yes. Now, you said that you had the right look. What look was that?

Pino

I don't think it hurt that I had good legs.

Collings

I don't think it hurt either. [laughter]

Pino

And I'm not sure I knew enough to even use it, but it was just there and it was a part of me. And I can remember, because it was getting into miniskirts and hot pants.

Collings

Right, right, that's the time, yes.

Pino

That's the time. That's the way you dressed, and it was just the way it was. I don't think it hurt. The first day I walked into KPIX for my interview—at that time the engineers wore jumpsuits. It was a uniform. They all wore—and I think they were orange, bright-orange jumpsuit. And one of the engineers, a guy named Tony Bamba, an Italian American, looked at me, said, came out, big smile on his face, "What are you doing here?" "I'm here for an interview." "Well, you know that if you get the job, you have to sleep with me." That was like the fourth sentence out of his mouth. And I went, "We'll see about that." And that was like my entry into this culture where you had to stand up for yourself or you were going to get eaten up alive.

Collings

Where did you get all this poise?

Pino

I have no idea. Maybe drama school was part of it, maybe the confidence that my parents gave me, that I could do anything and go anyplace and be anything that I really wanted to, with a little hard work and a little luck. I don't know.

Collings

It sounds like you certainly had it, though.

Pino

But I didn't take him seriously.

Collings

Right, right. You were able to just kind of slough it off.

Pino

Yes. Yes.

Collings

It didn't really get you down.

Pino

No, it was funny. It was a joke and I knew it was a joke, and that was all there was to it. But I remembered it, I always remembered it.

Collings

Right, right. Maybe it was not so common, so that's why you remember it.

Pino

Maybe. And maybe it was because it was my first time walking in that TV station.

Collings

Now, you're talking about the late sixties and you're in San Francisco, and, of course, there was a big sort of cultural schism going on at that time. How was the hippie movement and the counterculture and whatnot viewed within the climate of the TV station?

Pino

Well, I can remember when I first got to San Francisco, the flower children. There were young girls in flowing hair and wreaths of flowers in their hair, and it was all warm and fuzzy and pure. And then the drugs got in, and it turned mean and ugly, and I remember seeing that turn. And you didn't go to certain areas.

Collings

Really.

Pino

You didn't go to certain intersections. You just didn't go to certain places. And I came from a good-girl mentality, so I didn't. We were all aware of it. It was a part of our culture. There were a couple of people in the station who got in some trouble with drugs. I eventually started working on a TV show called "Pow," P-o-w, which was a local show. We did it live Sunday afternoons, and it was a variety show. It was hosted by—and I'm not going to remember the man's name. He was a TV reporter and film critic for "The Chronicle." And every once in a while we would bring in some of the hippie people. It just, again, wasn't a part of me, so I was always on the outside of it. I never participated in the drugs. I just, it was not a part of me. My parents would have freaked anyway. But it touched us, but it didn't overwhelm us. We were aware of it. We reported on it. I was on the periphery of the news department, so when the problems started to happen and the demonstrations started to happen, we were all aware of it, but not a participant. We were all on the outside. We were observers.

Collings

And how did you interact, if you did, with perhaps the editorial policies of the station and so forth? Like toward the war, or any—

Pino

I don't remember it being a part. We were reporters. We were news people, all of us, even if we weren't working in the news department. There was no—you reported honestly as what you saw. I don't remember ever there being any

policies about reporting. There were more policies about having the right amount of certain kinds of programming on the air. It was more legal in that way, to make sure the FCC was happy. There was a time when I would go through the viewer mail, and we got a good deal of it, because people would write in and make comments about mail. You didn't have voicemail. You didn't have e-mail, so people wrote letters, and on "Pow" we would actually ask for opinions. "How are we doing? What would you like to see?" And we would get mail, and one of my jobs was to go through and log the mail.

Collings

That must have been pretty interesting.

Pino

It was great. It was great. And you had to keep it—at least at that time, you had to make it public. You'd log it, figure out what the people said, do some statistics on how many and what they were saying, and it had to be available for anybody to come into the station and look at. It was part of the public record. I don't know if that's still true or not.

Collings

Yes, I don't know either. I mean, it would kind of be hard, because so much of it is—

Pino

Yes. It'd be almost impossible, probably now.

Collings

Yes, websites and that kind of thing, Twitter.

Pino

Yes, exactly. I don't remember anything policy-wise about the war or how it was reported, because you just reported it, the events that were happening.

Collings

So "Pow" was a sort of a variety—

Pino

It was a variety show.

Collings

People doing different kinds of acts?

Pino

Music and interviews. So part of the job was—so there was a transition in my career between working in the traffic department and working in production, and that happened one January, when I scheduled Gallo wine Christmas commercials in January, and they were not make goods. I screwed up. I was bored and I just messed it up. We had a card system for keeping track of which commercials were supposed to run when, and they were kept in my handwriting on five-by-eight cards. And somehow I pulled the wrong card or dozed off in the middle of doing it, or something happened. The sales

department was not happy, because they lost a lot of money. And at about the same time, there was an opening in what they called the production department for an assistant, and they let me move. I asked to move and they let me move. They realized it was time. That was not where I was going to end up. It was time, and so I moved. So then I was scheduling the directors and the stage managers for whatever needed to be done at the station, again a scheduling component to this. And in order to do that, I was also in charge of the AFTRA contracts, so I had to learn the AFTRA contract and what that all meant, the DGA contract and what that meant, and I was scheduling the announcers, because we had live announcers all the time we were on the air, and the directors and the studios. So, again, I—

Collings

You had to be on your toes.

Pino

Had to be on your toes. I loved it. I loved it. It was, again, a position where you got to interact with a lot of departments, and I liked that, a lot of coordination, and I enjoyed that, and yet on the periphery of doing the artistic stuff. So I was dating, actually living with one of the directors, and he got this job directing and producing "Pow." And, of course, I got the job as the PA [production assistant] on the show. And so we would go three or four nights a week to San Francisco clubs, comped, and hear music, hear comedy, meet people. We had a great time for a couple of years. You got to know San Francisco.

Collings

Yes. So you were looking for people to bring onto the show.

Pino

That's right. That's right.

Collings

Was it a popular show?

Pino

I'm not at all sure. I think it was popular because we wanted it to be. I think it aired Sunday afternoons at like three o'clock, live—

Collings

Yes, wow.

Pino

—which was a lot to do.

Collings

Live, yes.

Pino

Live. I don't know how popular it was. The time slot kind of sucked for a show like that. It was more—it absolutely had a late-night feel to it.

Collings

Yes, it sounds like it, with the music and everything, from the clubs.

Pino

Yes. But I think the station signed off—we had an eleven o'clock newscast, then a movie and the station signed off until six o'clock the next morning.

Collings

Right. It seems inconceivable today.

Pino

Doesn't it? [laughter] Yes, it does. So I don't know that it was that popular, but we had a really good time.

Collings

It sounds wonderful. So what was your next stop on the—

Pino

Our next stop was that boyfriend, Ed Rickie, left KPIX, went to KGO in San Francisco, was directing news. He was getting burned out in San Francisco, but he also got offered a job here at KABC directing news, and I quit. I was ready to move. I realized that if I ever wanted to do anything more in TV—I'd kind of reached that glass ceiling that everybody talks about. I'd kind of reached—

Collings

In terms of gender?

Pino

In terms of moving up in the station.

Collings

As a woman are you talking about?

Pino

As a woman, absolutely. I was probably never going to get much farther at KPIX or in San Francisco, and I looked at other opportunities at other stations, and they didn't really exist. "Pow" was off the air. There were a few other shows being done, but not much. I kind of had the scheduling thing down, and I was kind of bored, so I was ready to move on. I was ready to explore new possibilities, and so I moved down here with him. He went to work and had a great job and was doing the six and eleven o'clock newscasts, and I wasn't working. I was taking guitar lessons and gardening.

Collings

Okay, interesting.

Pino

Interesting. And kind of looking around and put out some feelers, and it was spring of 1971, so the shows for the fall were starting to gear up. And I think it was Ed who said—it was not "This is Your Life." It was another show that was gearing up, and I got an interview with a woman hiring for that show, Lynn Voth. She used to work here at Ralph Edwards. She said, "We don't have anything right now, but you should go see my friend Marjorie Lawson. They're

staffing up for "This is Your Life," which was coming back in syndication, which was a show, very honestly, I had never seen. I'd heard of it. I had heard of Ralph Edwards but never seen the show. I came here for an interview. I interviewed with Marjorie first. The offices then were across the street at 1717 North Highland, where the Hollywood Highland building is now. I went in, had an interview with her. I got called back to interview with Ralph and the producers, and I could type and take shorthand.

Collings

Right. So you were kind of like back to where you started.

Pino

Kind of back, but that's what got me in the door. That's what got me in the door, and the miniskirt didn't hurt. And so my first interview was in Ralph's office, which had the same furniture we're sitting on today—

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

—in a huge office on the corner, and there was Ralph sitting behind this desk, and three other men in the room, Jim Washburn, who was a producer, Dick Gottlieb, who was a producer, and Bill Carruthers, who was the director. I walk in and there's this big room, and we're sitting around and we're chatting, and they asked me a bunch of questions, and they asked me if I'd ever seen the show, and I said no, and they told me what the job would be, and it would be typing scripts and taking script notes from Ralph, which was where the shorthand came in. Marjorie took shorthand, so anyone who was in that kind of position needed to take shorthand. And I walked out thinking I would never get the job.

Collings

Was it unusual that so many people would be there to interview somebody who was going to be typing scripts?

Pino

What an interesting question. I think for a second interview it probably wasn't, because "This is Your Life" is very much a script-based show, so it probably wasn't that unusual, and Ralph was the kind of executive who wanted everybody in on certain decisions.

Collings

I see.

Pino

So the fact that these three men were called in probably wasn't that unusual. My sense is at the time it wasn't. Now I think it would be more unilateral, but Ralph wanted everybody and all those guys involved in the decision. So I walked out thinking I'd never get the job.

Collings

Why? Why did you think that?

Pino

I'm not sure. Maybe it was self-defense. And then all of a sudden Ralph came running after me, and I was standing in Marjorie's office outside of his, and he said, "By the way, do you have your own stopwatch?" And I turned around and looked him, and I said, "Oh, of course. I have two."

Collings

You did?

Pino

And I did. And I turned back and I looked at Marjorie, and she said, [whispers] "You got the job." And I went from earning seventy-two dollars a week in San Francisco to earning a hundred and twenty-five dollars a week.

Collings

Wow. That must have been great.

Pino

This was big money. But it was only going to be for thirteen weeks, because they were hiring people for short periods of time. We were going to do I think thirty-nine shows, which was normal. In syndication you did thirty-nine shows, thirteen weeks of reruns, and that was the year. And it was going into syndication at a time when the hour between seven and eight was something called "checkerboard." So you'd have ten shows being aired, because each one only aired one night a week, which was perfect for "This is Your Life," because it's a really complex show to do.

Collings

So you could only stage it once a week.

Pino

Yes. And there were a lot of other shows, mostly game shows, in that time period, and everybody would do one show a week. So it was a little bit wacky compared to "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy" now stripped—other shows, everything is stripped for five days a week. It was a little bit wacky—

Collings

Yes, very hectic.

Pino

—but that's how I got the job.

Collings

So what was your first assignment?

Pino

My first assignment was to type the first script, and the problem was that they needed it fast. So I offered to—I knew it had to be fast. I offered, "Load a typewriter in my car. I'll take it home. You'll have it tomorrow morning." And

they went, "You're kidding me." I said, "No." And that was before correct tape or anything else. You had to do it the first time or you did the page over again—

Collings

Oh, god.

Pino

—and it was a very strict format about how it was to be laid out. Ralph wanted a certain font on a certain kind of typewriter, and the spacing needed to be a certain way, and I was really kind of good at it and enjoyed it. I enjoyed the pressure. I loved the deadline, and I walked in the next morning with a Selectric typewriter in the trunk of my car and a fifty-two page script.

Collings

Gosh. How long did that take you?

Pino

I have no—I think I stayed up for a few hours, but I walked in the next day and did it. And I remember for that they gave me the next day a little thing of body powder as a thank you.

Collings

Well, that was lovely.

Pino

Wasn't that cute? From the men. But I got the job done. And I don't think that the woman I was working for at the time appreciated that, because she had had my job before me, and she and I were never good friends, and she wasn't asked back the next season. After the first thirteen weeks, she wasn't asked back, and I ended up doing her job and my job.

Collings

Did you ever have a sense that there was only room for "x" number of women in the organization?

Pino

No. No. But all the women were in the secretarial kind of positions. There was not a woman producer or director at that time. The women were the support, appreciated and thanked and paid and given bonuses at Christmas and put on the insurance and the profit-sharing plan and all of that. That was all equal. It just was the way it was.

Collings

Yes. Well, later on, of course, jumping ahead, we start having organizations in Hollywood like Women in Film and other attempts for women who are working in the industry to get together and talk about what's going on. It's a little early for that.

Pino

A little early for that. We were not organized at all. We just went in and had a job to do and we did it.

Collings

Right. Although you are starting to get into the early days of the Women's Movement, getting into the seventies. Did you think about any of that stuff?

Pino

Some of it. My father, my very dear father, was very much into NOW [National Organization for Women].

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

Absolutely. So he and I would have—

Collings

So good for him.

Pino

We would have these amazing conversations about women's rights, and he was very much into that kind of organization. It fit him actually better than it fit me. I was still going pretty much day to day, or tomorrow or next week, and how to get—and I was solving the immediate problems, the personal, close problems, not the overall issues.

Collings

Well, I think part of your talent for handling all of these moving parts was that you could focus on these immediate things.

Pino

Maybe, maybe.

Collings

I mean, some people just have that kind of focus.

Pino

Yes. I was much more comfortable doing the work than sitting around pontificating about the issues. It was much more what I wanted to do and was comfortable doing.

Collings

And were you planning a career, or were you—I mean, I don't know if that would fall into the category of pontificating the issues. Or was this thing just kind of like running as it ran?

Pino

It was running as it ran. It was day by day. I was having a good time. I was supporting myself. I was in the moment. I wasn't looking way forward, and I was comfortable doing that, for some reason.

Collings

So how did the work at Ralph Edwards evolve, then? Because you've done a lot of other things.

Pino

Well, I came to work here thinking I was going to be here for thirteen weeks, and left eleven years later.

Collings

So it sounds like it sort of snowballed.

Pino

It did. I enjoyed it and they liked me, and I just stayed on and moved with the projects as they came in. "This is Your Life" was on the air for three years in syndication and then was cancelled, and it was cancelled partially because it was an expensive show to do. It was a very difficult show to do, and there were other shows that were starting to come in that were airing twice a week. So these kinds of shows—like I think "Joker's Wild" was one of the earliest ones, and "Hollywood Squares"—they would air twice a week. So all of a sudden, one of those other ten shows was gone, and so that was starting to happen. And they were starting to do shows where you could tape five in a day. "This is Your Life" took a solid day in the studio to do. It was an expensive show. It was also getting to be tougher and tougher to book the respondents, the people being profiled. The subjects were harder to book. The syndicator wanted name people, so Ralph in the old days had been doing maybe 75-80 percent what he called little people, unknowns, and a few stars thrown in. This way it was almost no unknowns and all celebrities, and it was harder and harder to book. Publicists were standing in the way. Agents were standing in the way. Unlike the old days when you didn't have "Entertainment Tonight" to promote something, you didn't have a lot of people surrounding the celebrity. Now you did, so it was really difficult. So when the show went off, Ralph went into development mode, and a couple of years later he put "Name That Tune" on the air in syndication, and that was a big show. I went to work on it. I had gotten my DGA, director's AD card somewhere along the line, and I was working with Dick Gottlieb, who I had worked with on—and Jim Washburn, who both did "This is Your Life," on "Name That Tune." And they brought in a man who had amazing game show credentials, a man named Ray Horrel, and whatever game show knowledge, hard game show I learned from Ray Horrel, and again I loved it, and I was doing a lot of stuff, and Ralph was very, very supportive. And when Ray left, Dick and I were made the producers of the show. And I think, and I don't really know this for sure, I think I was the first female producer of a syndicated game show. I don't know of any others. I mean, it was the days when there were three networks. It was a small community. There wasn't a lot of competition. We did amazing things on that show, and again, a complex

show, a lot of things going on. We were the first show to give away a hundred thousand dollars.

Collings

Gosh.

Pino

Ten thousand dollars a year for ten years. We didn't give it all at once. So there were a lot of stipulations on the money, but we were the first to do it, so there were a lot of eyeballs looking at us. And we had broadcast standards from NBC, because we were on the NBC O and O's [owned and operated] looking over our shoulders. So you did a lot of things to make sure of the honesty of the show. And Ralph had been through the game show scandal. He wasn't a part of it, but he was very particular that everything be on the up and up and everything be straightforward, and we were. If something went wrong, we redid it or gave somebody another chance. We were absolutely straightforward and honest about it. It was a lot of work, and we had a ball. We were on the air for seven years. Part way through that, Ralph also did another show called "Cross-Wits," which was a crossword puzzle game show, easy to do, piece of cake to do. And in order to probably save money, number one, but also the convenience of working with people that he worked with, there were several of us that did both "Name That Tune" and "Cross-Wits." So we'd be in production, and we would tape two days a week on "Name That Tune" every other week. We would tape two days a week on "Cross-Wits" every other week, and we would be in production on both shows at the same time. I would only be involved in "Cross-Wits" on tape days, and they happened to be on weekends, because that's the only time—there were four celebrities on the panel—only time you could get people was on the weekend. You'd do five shows Saturday with a set of people, five shows Sunday with a set of people, and it was done. And I only did the weekends. Dick directed, and I AD'd, and that show was on the air for five years. So I would go twelve days without a day off and long hours. I have no idea how any of us did it. But we did because we were having a good time. So you'd get paid more money, you'd work really, really hard, and it was fun. It was really fun. In the middle of that, we ended up with a daytime five-day-a-week version of "Name That Tune" on NBC, and I wasn't involved in the production of that except on show days. So Dick and I would go in on show days, and we would do the show. There was another producer, but we would do the directing and AD'ing, and that show got cancelled after two years, I think, with a thirty share.

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Pino

There were three networks. We got a thirty share. We were out of there so fast. They couldn't stand it. [laughter] And it was actually good. We got some sleep. So it was a really, really busy time. It was a really busy time. It was great.

Collings

Well, it sounds like that atmosphere of like how much fun it was to do these shows, it really comes out in the tone of the programs themselves.

Pino

It does.

Collings

It's just when you sort of look back at these shows, there's such a sort of an optimistic spirit that emanates from them.

Pino

Oh, that's really interesting. Yes.

Collings

I mean, how does that compare with what you know about game show production today? Is it sort of still the same in that way? Or is there something—

Pino

I think it's much more cutthroat today. I think the competition is unbelievably fierce because of cable, and the tone of reality programming is different now.

Collings

Very different, yes.

Pino

There are certain shows like ["Who Wants to Be a] Millionaire?", it's a fairly straightforward—"Millionaire" and the kind of show that is could have been done in the seventies. "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy" could have been done.

Collings

Yes, yes, for sure.

Pino

Some of the other shows aren't. Some of the other shows are meaner. Reality programming, especially the non-scripted stuff, took a big turn, which is a whole other conversation, which Ralph was very much into because of "Truth or Consequences." And he tried at one point to revive "Truth or Consequences," which I worked on, unsuccessfully, because the tone of the old TRC really couldn't be carried over. It was already turning and evolving in the eighties to a more mean-spirited kind of programming. He wouldn't do that, and so the show didn't last.

Collings

I can really see how that would be, because the consequences in the old "Truth or Consequences" were quite lighthearted and harmless fun.

Pino

Harmless, yes.

Collings

And the people who participated seemed to be quite relaxed.

Pino

Yes. They trusted Ralph and what he would do.

Collings

Oh, yes. That's really—

Pino

There was a real trust in him.

Collings

Yes, that's really important.

Pino

They would go with him because of the person they knew he was.

Collings

Yes, I think that's probably like really important. They weren't guarded in that way.

Pino

Right, right.

Collings

I mean, some of the old shows I've seen, just some of the wonderful ways that the contestants are smiling and they're relaxed and like they're having the time of their lives.

Pino

Yes. And I think that happened with "This is Your Life" too. They trusted Ralph. So these people who legitimately were really surprised would just go with the flow, because of him, because they trusted him. And he had a long track record. By the time I got to the show, he had a long track record, and everybody knew him.

Collings

So what are your memories of Ralph Edwards? You worked with him for quite some time.

Pino

I worked with him the first time for eleven years. Then I went away out in the real world.

Collings

Out in the real world.

Pino

Because this was very—he liked to say it was a family. It sounds corny. It really was, with all of the family problems and the family joys. This really was

a family. And when you'd get out to the real world, there were people stabbing you in the back.

Collings

So what were you doing in, quote, unquote, "the real world"?

Pino

I left in late '81, I think, to do a show called "Fantasy" on NBC. I was hired because they wanted to do "This Is Your Life" type reunions. And production was winding down here. There was nothing new coming on. I think Ralph would not have let me go, but wasn't unhappy that the time had come for me to move on and had said, "I'll hire you back the first chance I get," which, in fact, he did a few years later, when I got tired of being out in the real world.

Collings

Out in the real world.

Pino

I've been hired three times by this company, for long periods of time. And I went to work on "Fantasy," producing segments of reunions, and I knew how to engineer a reunion. We'd done it for three years. I knew what went into it. I knew the little fibs that you told people to make them believe one thing when really something else was going to happen. And that show was on the air for a year and a half. I had a blast. Again I had a ball. Had my own little niche of the reunion people. And if you remember "Fantasy," which you probably don't—

Collings

No, no, I don't.

Pino

—it was Peter Marshall and Leslie Uggams. It was a one-hour daily show, aired, I think, at two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and it was a very weird combination of little game show segments, reality segments, some kinds warm and fuzzy. We had big remotes, and people would write in to the show, "My fantasy is to—," and it could be—

Collings

To see some long-lost—

Pino

To see some long-lost relative. It was the eighties. You didn't have the Internet. People didn't know how to find people. Our researchers got on the phone and in three phone calls found people, so we'd put these amazing reunions together.

Collings

That's interesting.

Pino

Totally different time now.

Collings

I know.

Pino

Now you can do it. Back then you couldn't do it as easily, and people didn't have the money to get on airplanes and fly. So we would do at least one reunion in every show. Some of them were little, some of them were big. Some of them were a Vietnam veteran who wanted to find his buddy. Some of them were a girl who was put up for adoption who had never met her father. I started out writing them, but as I told you, I was not a writer. They realized that very quickly, and it wasn't what I was suited for anyway. So I became the producer of these segments. So it had a couple of researchers and a couple of writers just doing these segments, and we would literally go to the mailbag and start opening letters. We, very honestly, did not open every one of the forty to fifty thousand letters that we received in a month.

Collings

Wow.

Pino

We would open until we found something that was something that we could do, and then we would get on the phone and try and produce them and try and schedule the people, and bring them into town and have them show up at the studio so that they wouldn't see each other, hide them in different rooms at NBC so they wouldn't see each other. So we had this kind of underground CIA thing going, because we had to do it quick and dirty. And I think there was only one time when two people ran into each other in the green room—

Collings

Oh, dear.

Pino

—and we very honestly went on and told everybody what happened, and told their story, but only once. One guy showed up an hour early, the other guy showed up an hour late, and there we were. So it was great fun to do, and it was working with my "This is Your Life" background but not really stealing the idea, so I was comfortable with it, and I did that show for a year and a half. Then I went to Paramount, and I was director of development for "Solid Gold." "Solid Gold" was just going on the air. Or "Solid Gold" had been on the air, and they were just starting "Entertainment Tonight." So my boss and the woman who had been doing "Solid Gold" shifted over to "Entertainment Tonight," and they left me alone with "Solid Gold." So I was for the first time a suit.

Collings

A suit.

Pino

I was overseeing the production.

Collings

You said you were for the first time in a suit?

Pino

No, I was a suit.

Collings

You were a suit, okay.

Pino

I was a suit. I was an executive. I wasn't doing the work, I was overseeing it.

Collings

Well, this is very different.

Pino

Very different. Talk about a male world at Paramount, and I really hated it. I really hated that job. I lasted a year, and then I quit.

Collings

Wow. What did you hate about it?

Pino

I hated that I was watching other people do the work that I was good at and loved doing. And it was my job to—I felt like my job was to go in and spy on the producers and the production. It was not fun. Andy Gibb was the host, and he died during that show, during my year there.

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Pino

And it was tumultuous, and everybody was off worrying about "Entertainment Tonight," because that was going to be a big deal, and I was here with this position that I really didn't like, in an organization—talk about this is big time. This is the big time. This is studios playing, cooking the books, and I knew about it, and I knew what they were doing, and there was nothing I could do about it in my position, and I just didn't like the environment. I didn't like the people, for the most part; there were a few. And it was outrageous, absolutely outrageous.

Collings

Nobody was having fun.

Pino

Nobody was having a good time. Everybody was taking their jobs very seriously. I was told to my face this was as high as I would get at Paramount. They were right; I left. And I was really miserable.

Collings

Because you were a woman?

Pino

Because I was a woman.

Collings

I mean, was there a discussion about how you were thinking you wanted to get a different job, or was this just sort of told to you, "Oh, by the way,"?

Pino

No. It was—we were doing part—my other job, we started doing plays on television. They made a deal with Neil Simon to televise some of his plays that were already being produced. So we went to Florida, we went to Oregon, and we would put cameras on the play that was already in production, and I would go on the remotes with the executive in charge, and he was the one who—and I was talking about wanting to produce, and he said, "You'll never do that at Paramount. You might as well just sleep with me or leave."

Collings

He said that?

Pino

Yes. I didn't. He wasn't that cute. [laughs] But it was very out front what you had to do to get ahead. It was the casting couch and you had to do it in that business, or you weren't going to get ahead. And I really hated it there. I've still got good friends from that time, but I didn't fit. I didn't fit. So I came back here. I was offered a job back here, because Ralph was starting to do specials for "This is Your Life," and he did specials in '87, and we were doing good stuff and then "People's Court" came along, and I think you're going to interview Stu Billet.

Collings

Right, right, right.

Pino

So that all ties into "People's Court" and a switch here from doing Ralph shows, which he conceived of. Although that wasn't true of "Name That Tune" or "Cross-Wits," the emphasis was on Ralph's ideas. All of a sudden "People's Court" comes walking in the door, and it's a totally different thing, and it's something that Ralph isn't in charge of. Stu was really in charge. It's a very big shift for this company.

Collings

Oh, that's interesting. Yes. Well, just from knowing Ralph Edwards, I mean how did his personality and sensibility inform the kinds of programming that came out of his company?

Pino

I think it was everything. I think his small-town upbringing, his honesty, his creativity, his willingness to take chances, informed everything that he did. Nobody was doing the kind of things he was doing on "This is Your Life" and "Truth or Consequences," especially T or C, which was in some ways a variety show. They would do everything. They would do game show segments like "Fantasy" did. They did game show segments, and they did reunions. "This is

"Your Life" came out of a reunion on "Truth or Consequences," on radio, so it goes back that far. And he would take chances, and he was a bit of a tightrope walker. He would go out there live on radio and do these amazing things with people and to and for people, and it was all about his sensibilities, people trusting him and the way he did things and the chances that he would take.

Collings

It almost sounds like he came out of like a vaudeville background or something—

Pino

Wouldn't you think? And he didn't.

Collings

—but it's not.

Pino

He didn't. He went to Berkeley. I mean, he grew up on a farm and ended up in Berkeley being a radio announcer in Oakland, doing hours and hours of radio announcing a week and coming up with ideas for shows on the side, just very aggressively pursuing what he wanted to do.

Collings

And the first "This is Your Life" had a kind of humanitarian focus, didn't it?

Pino

Yes, yes.

Collings

It had to do with a returning vet, yes.

Pino

A returning veteran who was a paraplegic and kind of lost, and the VA called Ralph and said, "What can you do for people like this?"

Collings

Why did they call him?

Pino

Because he had done drives for war bonds.

Collings

I see.

Pino

So he had ins in the State Department, and he was a public figure. The show was huge. "Truth or Consequences" was huge on radio.

Collings

Yes, of course, yes.

Pino

And he said, "Can you do anything for these people?" And he profiled a man named Laurence Tranter, who wanted to be a watch repair guy. So he contacted, or somebody on the staff contacted the Bulova Watch Company, and

they literally set him up in business. They set Laurence Tranter up in business. They brought him on. It was the first time he uttered the words, "This is your life," and they profiled the man; they told his story. They set him up in business and months later brought him back to let everybody know how he was doing.

Collings

Wow.

Pino

And he started doing these stories more and more on radio on "Truth or Consequences," and then he got the bright idea [snaps fingers], "Gee, we could do this—this could be a program all unto itself, and he did that over his career. He would take segments from "Truth or Consequences" and try to develop them as another show. It could be used that way. Several other programs were started off as segments on T or C, and "This is Your Life" were both successful.

Collings

Did he run his company in a special way? I mean, you said that when you left this company, you felt like you were going out to the real world. I mean, did his values inform the way the company was run?

Pino

Absolutely. Absolutely. He was a boss and a father figure all at the same time. It was managed the way he wanted it managed. I at one point had a memo written. My language tended to be a little salty, and he would never confront you as one on one or definitely not in front of people. He would never really correct you, although I knew that it was not appreciated. And I don't know what I did, but there was a memo that was circulated about using certain kinds of language—

Collings

Oh, I see.

Pino

—and I knew it was pointed at me. I knew it was my little slap on the hand, but it was done in a very gentle way, and you just kind of got the message.

Collings

Yes. So it was using certain kinds of language within the workplace.

Pino

Yes. [laughs]

Collings

And how were sort of decisions made about the programs?

Pino

Decisions were made by Ralph and the upper-upper level. You did a lot of run throughs of game shows, so there were some commonality of things that worked, especially when we got into "Name That Tune." We did months of run

thoughts on a game called "Bid a Note," which is basically liar's poker. "I can name that tune in four notes." And you would say, "I can name that tune in three notes," because you'd be given a clue and then contestants bid back and forth about how few notes it would take them to name that tune.

Collings

Yes, it's hard.

Pino

Sounds like it was written from the script, right? It's hard. And we did months of run throughs on that. And at that level, all of us got to say our input, and so you develop it as you go along. The bigger decisions about, for instance, who was going to be profiled on "This is Your Life" were Ralph and the writer and the producer. Until the very last minute, people working on the show didn't know who it was, and there were certain people on the staff who never knew who it was—

Collings

Oh, really.

Pino

—until it ended up being taped.

Collings

Because of leaks.

Pino

Because of security. Absolutely, leaks. If the word got out, Ralph wouldn't do the show.

Collings

Really.

Pino

He would not do the show. And there was an occasion—we did one of the guys on "Mission Impossible," which was a huge show. James Arness' brother.

Collings

What character did he play?

Pino

The gray-haired man.

Collings

Oh, you're talking about Mr. Phelps?

Pino

Yes. So he was being profiled. The associate producer—we were taping at TAV, Trans American Video on Vine Street. The limo and the associate producer, not me, went to pick him up. They got back to the studio, and the associate producer was supposed to walk him in to makeup, and it was all planned. Everybody was back in the green room, back down another—and the AP, they couldn't find a parking space, so the AP—Peter Graves—asked Peter,

"Please just walk in and take the first right into makeup, and I'll meet you there in a few minutes." Peter took the first left and walked into the green room, with everybody who was there to surprise him.

Collings

Oh, no.

Pino

And Ralph—now we have—I mean, the studio was there. We had to do something. We were going to lose a lot of money, and the show was due on the air. So Ralph walked him back into makeup, told him what was going on, and then sat down himself and wrote out a disclaimer that he taped before the rest of the show was taped. He very honestly said, "This is what happened. Somebody let him walk into the studio. It shouldn't have happened. He saw the people who were about to surprise him, but we have since separated them, and we're going to go on with the show and tell the story of this amazing man." And that's what they did. So honesty in this company was always at the forefront.

Collings

But wasn't it like hard to hide what was going on? I mean, if you were contacted by Ralph Edwards' company, wouldn't you have a good idea that—

Pino

Well, you were never contracted by Ralph Edwards' company.

Collings

Who were you contacted by? How did they do that?

Pino

I believe he was told that he was going to do some promos for his show.

Collings

Oh, I see. Oh, okay.

Pino

So he was given another story that was believable, which was why he was picked up in a limo, why somebody else was there, and everybody who would come in contact, including the guard at the door, needed to know what the ruse was—

Collings

The story was.

Pino

—what the story was. And that would happen until he literally walked out onstage and found Ralph Edwards and an audience rather than a little promotion setup. So there was always a ruse. There was always a story. There were times, there were a couple of times, especially in the old days, where one person was brought on thinking they were going to surprise somebody else on "This is Your Life," and it turned out to be them. That did happen a couple of times. But there was always a ruse. There was always a story.

Collings

Did anybody ever get upset about it? I mean, some people don't like surprises.

Pino

There were stories in the old days of—there was a journalist who supposedly got very upset. Whether he really was or not I don't know. I don't know. And there was one story—after Ralph turned the mantle over, they tried to do a special with Angie Dickenson, and she refused. She absolutely refused. And everyone was in the green room watching, and she refused, including, I believe, Bob Hope. I mean, it was going to be a hell of a show. And whatever was going on in her life, that was a no-go. And I think that may have been the only time.

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Pino

Not to say anything about Pat Sajak, but they weren't expecting him in that role. I don't know what would have happened if Ralph had walked in. But he didn't and it happened, and I believe that was the only time it happened.

Collings

Okay. So what was Ralph Edwards' opinion about the rest of the TV world that lay about him? He didn't like mean-spirited shows. He wasn't really doing shows during the worst of it, like in the nineties he had already retired by then.

Collings

So he retired—what year was that?

Pino

Oh, that's a really good question, and I don't have it. It would have been in the early nineties, because we were doing shows up until '87. There was a version of "This is Your Life" with Joe Campanella done that I did not work on, while I was over out in the real world. So his opinion was, as long as it was kind of clean, entertaining, honest, it was fine. He didn't like shows that were mean and nasty, and never would do them. He liked entertaining people. He liked doing good for people, and he always believed that he was doing good for people.

Collings

Yes, whereas now, I mean, the term edgy, everything has to be edgy, and I wonder if he at a certain point wondered if he could even continue.

Pino

I think he probably did. I never heard him talk about it, but it wouldn't surprise me at all if he thought this wasn't for me anymore.

Collings

Right. Did you have a sense of how audiences were responding to the programs over the years, whether that was shifting in any way?

Pino

I think it was definitely shifting. "This is Your Life" in the seventies was not one of the top shows. It was hard to do. The other problem that we had in the seventies was that it was pre-recorded. Because it was pre-recorded, the network and the sponsors wanted the subject to be revealed in the promotions before the show aired—

Collings

As a teaser, yes.

Pino

—so it wasn't a surprise. In the old days when it was live, Ralph would walk out somewhere and he would do a tease, a little cold opening. They'd go to commercial. He'd come back, he'd do the surprise, and you never knew who it was going to be. You didn't know whether it was going to be a school teacher or a celebrity, and that was part of the charm of the show. In the seventies, we didn't have that surprise. They told the world who was being done on "This is Your Life," and I think it kind of spoiled it, and it made Ralph crazy. He hated it, tried to do things about it and couldn't. There was nothing anybody could do about it. The network was running the show, and it just kind of spoiled it for him.

Collings

Yes. And also it was moving more towards exclusively celebrities at that time, you said.

Pino

Absolutely. It was almost all celebrities.

Collings

Right. So that's a very different kind of focus as well.

Pino

Yes. And it was never—it was the people who were appearing on NBC shows. We had a hard time convincing them that we should have somebody from ABC's show on the air. So it was a promotion vehicle for NBC too. It was pretty good for that purpose, but it was hard for Ralph, because things were changing, and the promotion was changing, and the way people thought about him and his shows was changing.

Collings

Yes. I mean, he seems like he was very much a man of his period, without question.

Pino

Yes, very traditional in that way.

Collings

I wanted to ask you—I notice that you were a member of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, and I was wondering if you had a sense that there is something

particular about West Coast broadcasting as opposed to what was going on in New York. I mean, why Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters?

Pino

I guess because it was started here. Ralph was one of the founding members, and there were a group of people at that time who kind of all got together and—Sue Chadwick was a part of that, and she was one of the boys' club. She really was. She was a ballsy, outgoing publicist and had been with Ralph for years. She was part of that. Fibber McGee was part of that. I don't know who else. But they were a group of people who just kind of wanted to get together and honor the pioneers of broadcasting. I'm not sure it happened in New York. There was a community here. This was Hollywood. This was the center of entertainment. This is where it all started. And it was very popular and still is. I'm still a part of the organization. I've taken over writing the newsletter from my friend Sue Chadwick. We throw these wonderful luncheons five times a year, and all of these old people get together and laugh and have a good time, and it's kind of a lot of fun. I'm not sure—I don't feel like I'm a pioneer. Pioneers to me were old men in weird hats. But it's fun to get to know these wonderfully alive seventy, eighty, ninety year olds. It's great.[End of interview]

1.2. Session 2 (February 1, 2011)

Collings

This is Jane Collings interviewing Bianca Pino on February 1, 2011, at Ralph Edwards Productions. Good morning.

Pino

Good morning.

Collings

I had looked through some of the archival material on "This is Your Life," and I was really struck by a very large folder of letters from politicians, from governors, prominent leaders, heads of state really, suggesting people to be on the show, people to be featured for the show, and it really gave me a sense of how the show was seen as a public service.

Pino

I think that's really true. Ralph, during the late fifties when the show was at its prime on TV, would get hundreds of letters a week from everybody from the State Department to a student at a school in the South, suggesting people to be tributed on "This is Your Life," and I think because of the early origins of "This is Your Life," the political scene was part of it, because he did do governors, he did do politicians from time to time. He was big on doing service people, and that really was a part of who he was.

Collings

Was there ever any thought that the show might be hosted on public television?
That it would not be—

Pino

Because?

Collings

Because of all of these sort of public figures that were—I mean, you see now Charlie Rose doing all of these interviews and whatnot, and I just was wondering if that was ever—

Pino

It was danced around after the show went off the air—

Collings

Oh, really.

Pino

—but it's a pretty expensive thing to do a regular series like this. Charlie Rose is one guy in a studio with an interview. "This is Your Life" is far more expensive to do than that.

Collings

Oh, I can imagine.

Pino

So I don't think it was ever done on a serious basis. I think they explored specials, but they'd never quite happened.

Collings

Yes, I was just kind of wondering about that. And then Ralph Edwards was asked on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary, "'This is Your Life' is such an upbeat show, yet we're living in a cynical age. Will that make a problem?" And Ralph Edwards—it's a longer answer, but just excerpted, he says, "It's life as it truly is. There are heroes and heroines in every decade, lots of inspiration about a country always needs it," so here again very much this notion of providing, in a sense, a public service.

Pino

He always wanted to do honest stories about real people. The people that were selected for the show almost always had some sort of public service aspect to them, or helping other people. That was a theme that went on and on and on. It was not just a promotional gimmick for a celebrity or a movie or something that was happening. It was deeper than that, always much deeper than that.

Collings

I could see how that would really kind of maintain the morale and the enthusiasm of the entire crew and workforce.

Pino

Absolutely. And the surprise element. It was as much a surprise, especially on the technical people, who would walk into the studio not knowing who was going to be sitting in the chair—

Collings

Oh, that must have been fun for them.

Pino

—until the morning of the rehearsal. And by that time, when we came in the morning of a rehearsal, and I'm talking now about the show in the seventies that I did, the person being profiled was off with the chaperone someplace. We knew where they were. All the people who were going to appear on the show were called into the studio, went into the green room. First thing we did was sit around and do a dry read-through, hopefully without scripts at that point, and we'd make notes and changes to the script as factual things came up that were incorrect, usually not many at all, and then they'd go onstage, and somebody would stand in for the person being profiled, Ralph's secretary Marjorie, and we'd run through the entire thing, all the blocking, with the director and the cameras. And that's the first time anybody in the studio crew would know who was being profiled. So then they would go back. They'd have some lunch, I think, and then the person who was getting surprised would get to the location, and all of a sudden you'd load the audience and it's done. And in half an hour or very few minutes after that, it was a done deal. So it was a big surprise on a lot of people.

Collings

Yes. It's like putting on a birthday party once a week.

Pino

Well, there was a little CIA overtone even around the office. We had codenames.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

We were not—if it was, say, Bette Davis, and I can't remember what her codename was, but we would never use the name Bette or Miss Davis. It was always the codename, even in conversation, because it gets you aware of thinking not to drop the name anyplace. Scripts were always locked up at the end of the day.

Collings

Oh, really.

Pino

Everything was under locked under lock and key, so the secret was taken very seriously.

Collings

I see. How would you come up with the names? Was it just sort of off the cuff?

Pino

Ralph did it. It was something that was—and I wish I could remember some. It was something that made sense once you knew who it was, but was general enough not—so Arnold Schwarzenegger, although he was never done, might be body builder.

Collings

Right, right. It wouldn't be Guvernator.

Pino

Exactly. It wouldn't be Guv—it wouldn't be something, a word that you could specifically say that was who that was.

Collings

Yes. Oh, that sounds like it was a lot of fun too.

Pino

It was great. And the first drafts of the scripts even, the early drafts of the scripts, the cutter page wouldn't have the name of the real person. It would have the name that we were using around the office, and it was only the last draft that got the real name on it.

Collings

So it was just always the same couple of people who knew going in.

Pino

It would be Ralph, it would be the producers, the writer, and the researcher, up until as far into the process as they could do it. So there were a lot of times that I didn't know, although I was typing the script. So you get to a point where you have to broaden out. When a writer hands you a script and it's about Bette Davis, you pretty well know. The people booking the travel knew at a fairly early stage, because they would have to be getting people in from out of town, and as the researcher would get on the phone and start calling friends and relatives, then the circle gets outside of the office and at that point starts to get a little scary. You've got a show that you're doing in a week and a half, so you're making studio arrangements, and you're making all of these arrangements. You're getting graphics ready. You're getting music written specifically for that show, and as it gets father into it, more and more people know, and it gets a little more scary. It's also really exciting at that point.

Collings

Yes. When the people came in from out of town, would they stay at a particular hotel that was sworn to secrecy?

Pino

They would stay down the street at the Hollywood Roosevelt. That was the hotel that had the deal. They were sworn to secrecy. People in the hotel, if it was somebody who had the last name of a celebrity, for instance, they might

register them under a fake name. If it was somebody who you'd never—you know, the grade school teacher, who cares? Nobody's ever going to trace it. And they kind of didn't care at the hotel. It was a room going to somebody. It was being paid for by the company, and it never got to the point where that kind of thing was really worried about.

Collings

And you didn't have the swarms of paparazzi like you do today.

Pino

You didn't. No, you didn't.

Collings

That itself was an emerging industry, shall we say.

Pino

There was no TMZ. Right. TMZ did not exist.

Collings

Was there ever any discussion of making Ralph himself the subject of one of these?

Pino

Oh, yes.

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

There was. Very early on when you came to work here, you got the speech from Ralph, "Nobody will ever do my life." [laughs]

Collings

Oh, I see. Okay, so that was out.

Pino

"And if you do, you will be fired." Because the way that we went about securing whatever permission we could secure—because you couldn't go to the subject, so you went to the husband or wife, a really close person, a manager, an agent, somebody very close to the person you wanted to profile, and you had to have their cooperation, and you had to swear them to secrecy. Mrs. Edwards, Barbara, would never have agreed, because of this thing. He thought that it took—if we did his life, that it would take him out of the role as host, and he would never be able to really be seen as the host again. That was the logic. It was never done. It was never even done in an office setting. It was never written. It was never even—it was like so, so verboten that nobody ever went close to it.

Collings

Oh, it would have made a wonderful like final show.

Pino

It would have made a fabulous show. It would have made a fabulous show.

Collings

Yes. I'm really struck by how the programs are almost like a living oral history. I mean, rather than the subject remembering their early years, they do that and then somebody comes in and supplements that memory.

Pino

Yes, and it comes more alive than just remembering. And you get the surprise element on top of it.

Collings

Yes. It's a really rich format.

Pino

Yes. It's very original. It's very complete. It's kind of fixed in time. When we did the DVD—we did a DVD issue about, I guess, four or five years ago, and because a lot of the shows we selected were from the sixties or seventies or fifties even, we had to bring the stories up to date or it wouldn't have felt like it was a complete thing.

Collings

Oh, I see.

Pino

So we did "Laurel and Hardy," and that show was done somewhere in the fifties, I think, late fifties, and we would do like a few screens of dialogue on the screen afterwards, just bringing the story up to date.

Collings

Oh, I see. That's a good idea.

Pino

Yes. You almost have to.

Collings

Yes, absolutely.

Pino

And a lot of the people were still alive, so that was also good, people from the seventies.

Collings

I saw in the files that I guess Lowell Thomas was—I think that Ralph was asked for his sort of most remarkable shows, and he said that the most emotional one involved Hannah and Walter Kohner.

Pino

Oh, yes. It's a Holocaust story about two people who were in the camp together. They got separated, and Walter and Hannah came back to the United States separately. They found each other, fell in love, and got married. Hannah's brother she hadn't seen since the camps, for many, many years, and he was reunited with her onstage. I get chills just thinking about it. It's on the DVD because it's such a remarkable story, and she is such an amazing, remarkable

woman. She's petite and cute and peppy and outgoing and just adorable, and when the two of those people come together on the stage, it's just an amazing moment. It's so real. It wouldn't have happened without "This is Your Life," which I think makes it even more important, and it was such a genuine, real moment.

Collings

That sounds very exciting.

Pino

UCLA is sponsoring an event in March around the Holocaust, and that's one of the stories that they're going to show. And Hannah's daughter now takes her story with "This is Your Life" and goes around to schools and tells the story—

Collings

Oh, that's great.

Pino

—so the daughter is trying to keep up the history of her mom and dad.

Collings

Okay. And then Ralph Edwards said that the Lowell Thomas episode, he called that the most bizarre. Apparently, Lowell Thomas kept repeating, "This is a sinister conspiracy."

Pino

Conspiracy. [laughs] Well, the surprise was done at a sports dinner, so there were a lot of sports people around. They'd had dinner. I would imagine there had been a couple of cocktails consumed. And Ralph walks into this room with hundreds of people and springs the surprise. And Lowell Thomas, who was kind of a biting writer anyway, did say, "This is a sinister conspiracy." And although he and Ralph became huge friends afterwards, it's interesting to watch the show. I think it's more temperate when you watch it. It's much more sinister telling about it than it is when you watch it.

Collings

Yes. It probably didn't feel very sinister.

Pino

It didn't feel very sinister. Ralph did do a pushback and go, "Oh, I hope you enjoy what we're going to do," and they went immediately to commercial—

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

—and they came back two minutes later and everything was fine. It was a live show. There was nothing you could do about it. [laughs]

Collings

Right, right. Unless he wanted to ruin his reputation forever.

Pino

There's also another story of Nat King Cole, who was surprised in a studio with his two daughters, Natalie and his other daughter [Carol], whose name I can't remember, sitting at a piano, and he literally gets up and walks out.

Collings

Oh, I think that's one of the featured things on the Ralph Edwards website. He just starts like walking—he looks really embarrassed.

Pino

He does. And Ralph runs after him. He's a big guy, bigger than Ralph, and Ralph runs after him and grabs him by the coattails, brings him back onstage, and that's a fabulous show. It's just a lovely show.

Collings

And then he calls a show with a Dr. Laurence C. Jones, who I guess was a teacher in rural Mississippi?

Pino

Yes, yes, and started a school. I believe the show was suggested by one of his students who had grown up under the tutelage of Dr. Jones, who started a school sitting around on logs under a tree, and the school still exists, the Piney Woods School. And Ralph—I mean, at that time, Dr. Jones could not stay in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. They wouldn't have him. He was black.

Collings

Oh, god.

Pino

And Ralph was putting this man on the air and tributing an amazing educator. So Ralph took some big chances in what he presented to the general public. It's a wonderful tribute. The man is very stoic throughout the entire show.

Collings

Really?

Pino

Yes. That's one of those shows that probably tells better than it really actually was to watch, because he was so honored and he was so quiet. He's such an introvert.

Collings

Just probably very modest.

Pino

Very, very modest. Exactly who you think he would be. You know, didn't think he was doing, I guess, all that much good, and he made an amazing change in the lives of his students.

Collings

Oh, good.

Pino

It's a gutsy move on Ralph's part.

Collings

Yes. Did you do a lot of that kind of thing, where he would bring in what you might consider to be sort of obscure but very effective people?

Pino

He did a show on the Hiroshima Maidens, Kyoshi Tanimoto, who brought plastic surgery to some of the people that were injured in Hiroshima.

Collings

Gosh. Oh, my gosh.

Pino

And he would bring them to this country. He would get them plastic surgery, and he would try to make them feel better and be able to function in the world.

Collings

Oh, my goodness. I've never heard of that.

Pino

And most of them wouldn't be shot on camera. So he had this thing where he put them behind a screen and they did their voice over and their interview behind a screen, because they didn't want to be seen, because they felt like they were deformed. It was a hell of an emotional show.

Collings

I'll bet.

Pino

And Ralph introduced one of the men who was onboard the "Enola Gay," who dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

Collings

Introduced him to these women?

Pino

He came out—to Tanimoto. Now, that's a gutsy move.

Collings

And what happened there?

Pino

They were very polite to each other. They shook hands. I think it was probably pretty cathartic for all of them, because it was war. Everyone was at war, and this was what happens in war sometimes.

Collings

Right. And would audiences—what kind of experience were live audiences expecting to have? Because sometimes they would come in and it would be hilarious, and other times they would come in and I would imagine in this case, everybody would just be hushed.

Pino

Sometimes it would be Lou Costello, and sometimes it would be Tanimoto. Once I think the audiences got over the initial shock of what was going on, the

stories were so fascinating that you went with the flow. And they were also used to it. People that came to the shows were used to the flip-flop of a happy show and a sad show and an interesting show and an educator and a doctor, or a big celebrity. They were used to not knowing, and it was part of the excitement of coming to the show was the not knowing.

Collings

Do you know if there were a lot of people who came often?

Pino

I don't know. I don't believe there were in the seventies, when we were doing it. I don't know about the early days.

Collings

I was just wondering if there was like a group of people who regularly came, yes.

Pino

Like a core group? I'm afraid I don't know.

Collings

Okay. Ralph Edwards also mentioned Alice Lloyd. Was she the founder of the Alice Lloyd College in Appalachia?

Pino

College, yes. Yes.

Collings

Okay. So this is sort of falling into the same category, then.

Pino

Yes.

Collings

And then he also mentioned an Yvonne Kennedy, Yvonne Kennedy Files maybe? I couldn't find anything. I was just kind of curious, because if he mentions these as sort of memorable shows, I was just sort of wondering what it was.

Pino

And I know—I'm not sure, I think that's one of the shows that I haven't seen. So I'd have to look it up.

Collings

That's okay. Was there any kind of dress code for appearing on the show, or coming in as an audience member?

Pino

Oh, yes, both. Less so in the seventies. Now you can go anyplace in jeans and shorts, but absolutely in the sixties, a lot of people—women came on with little gloves and hats. You dressed up to go to a TV show. It was new. It was fresh. People in the audience dressed up, absolutely. It was an event. You were going out to an event.

Collings

So there was no announcement of what the dress code was? People would just do this?

Pino

I think you'd just do it. I know in the seventies we had a sheet of paper that we would send out to participants, and in those days, before the contemporary cameras, if you wore white on camera, you'd blow out the camera, so we had rules like that. "Please don't wear white." But nothing about a dress code that I remember per se. People just did it. It was what you did.

Collings

Right. Okay. Well, let's talk a little bit about Paramount versus Ralph Edwards, just briefly. You said that you didn't like the environment at Paramount, you didn't like the people—

Pino

For the most part.

Collings

—and then in contrast, you'd talked about Edwards' management style and consideration for employees and so forth, and I wondered if you thought that the Ralph Edwards company was unique in Hollywood in that way, or if you could point to other companies that—

Pino

I think it was somewhat unique. Even companies that had a person's name on the door, the so-and-so company, tended to be more warm and fuzzy than somebody like Paramount, that's owned by a big corporation. I think that probably is a normal thing. But I also think that Ralph was unique in the way he looked out for people. He looked out for people on the air, he looked out for people who worked for him, he looked out for everybody. He was one of these amazing people who always remembered your name. He could walk in a room and know forty people, and know not only your name, but your relationship to somebody else and how your aching back was. He would know tidbits about you and be able to walk up to Jane Collings and say, "Hi, how are you? You know when I saw you two weeks ago, you were talking—." And he just had a remarkable memory, and he worked at it. Later in life he would take a piece of blue paper and he would make notes on blue paper. He had a remarkable way of doing that. So he really cared about who you were, more so than, I think, almost anybody else in town. I think it was extremely unusual.

Collings

And were there like policies, like leave policies, maternity policies, that kind of thing that reflected this, or was it more of an atmosphere?

Pino

It was more of an atmosphere. I think things like maternity policy—I don't remember anybody getting pregnant. Isn't that odd? There were always—

Collings

Well, I'm just using that as an example, kind of a human relation—

Pino

—vacations, there was profit sharing, they took care of your medical. They took care of you.

Collings

So you felt like you had a good health plan and all that kind of thing.

Pino

You did feel like it was—oh, yes, oh, yes. At Paramount, did we have a health plan? I'm trying to think. I know there was no profit sharing, at least at the level I was at. It was a corporate world in a big way. They were doing big things. I remember when I went to work for Paramount, and I won't mention the name of who did it, but "Winds of War," which is a big mini-series, was being done, part of it on the lot. There was a big huge backdrop where I would park, of a skyline, and it was in this area that they literally would fill with water, put miniature boats, and have battles out there, which was kind of cool to watch. I was in one of the executives' offices who was overseeing production, and the film editor passed away. Somebody came in, told him that the film editor had passed away—

Collings

Just right there on the set?

Pino

I don't know. I don't know where it happened. But the man who had been working on the show had passed away. He told the executive, and the man said, "Oh. Now we can get somebody cheaper."

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

And he did it without taking a beat.

Collings

Oh, god. That's a great story.

Pino

Ralph would have said, "Get his wife on the phone." And it was that kind of environment. I just went, "Who are these people? These people are from Mars. They're totally on another—." I mean, that's not how you treated people. It's not how I grew up. That's not the world that I came from here, and it had just made me a little cranky.

Collings

Yes, I can imagine. [laughter]

Pino

I was there a year, and I had gone to work for a man named John Goldhammer, who I adore, who was the program director in KPIX. That's how I got the job at Paramount. "Solid Gold" was starting. No, "Solid Gold" was in production. "Entertainment Tonight" was starting in '81, so they needed somebody to look over "Solid Gold," which is why I came in.

Collings

Yes, because you had been with "Name That Tune."

Pino

I'd been with "Name That Tune," which had just gone off the air.

Collings

So what were you hoping to find at Paramount that wasn't happening for you at Ralph Edwards?

Pino

I think I was looking at that time for something different, and it was a really good opportunity to go and work for a big corporation. I think it was just me trying to grow a little bit, and I knew it was warm and fuzzy around here, which is really comfortable. But I was also trying to see what the real world was like.

Collings

Yes, explore the industry.

Pino

Explore the other possibilities.

Collings

Well, it sounds like you found out.

Pino

Yes. [laughter] Then I freelanced for a while, and then they offered me a job and I came back.

Collings

Were there ever any people who came through Ralph Edwards that were kind of like not Ralph Edwards people? You've described this very congenial and supportive atmosphere, but maybe somebody who was more hard edged would just—that wouldn't work for them.

Pino

There were a couple of people who came here who tried to change everything, walked in the door and tried to change everything. Most of the people who came in were working on shows, and there were some people who just kind of didn't fit the way things worked around here. Not a lot. I think they were really good at finding people they thought would fit into the hierarchy and the way of doing business here, so there were not a lot.

Collings

So that was actually kind of looked at and considered during the hiring process, it sounds like.

Pino

Yes.

Collings

All right. Who would you say that Ralph Edwards' community was, within the larger industry community? I mean, who were his counterparts? Who were his—

Pino

Who were his friends?

Collings

Yes, like friends, people who did business, kind of saw things the way he saw them.

Pino

I mean, what's interesting is there were people who you wouldn't think would be his friend who actually were. There were agents who were his friends. There were not other producers necessarily. A lot of people who had been on "This is Your Life" were his friends, or became his friends. Stu Billet became a huge friend of his, because they did think the same. They operated the same. He had a lot of family, and family was extremely important to him. He had three kids, a lot of extended family. He spent a lot of time with family, and that was his escape. He belonged to a few organizations, and it was guys going out and going camping or going fishing, so the guys would all get together and go out. He was a big horseback rider, so he would take the family up to Montana or out in the country, and that was his getaway is a couple of weeks a year, he and the family would get out of town, and it would be either with other people or by themselves. I'm trying to think of the name. His best friend, the man who played Frankenstein—I will remember it before the end of this conversation, his best friend. I will remember it, and I'll blurt it out in the middle of talking about something else. But he had a few really close friends, some of the writers from "Truth or Consequences," because those boys would hang out forever writing those shows, and those people became very close friends.

Collings

All right. Well, let's move on to somebody else who worked here at the company, or with the company, Sue Chadwick. So who was Sue Chadwick?

Pino

Sue Chadwick was Ralph's publicist for something like sixty years. She was born in Texas. Her uncles started Texas Christian University. She, unfortunately, did not live to see the Rose Bowl last year. Too bad. We would have watched the game and had a good time. She went to school. She became a schoolteacher. Then she started working as the editor of a small-town

newspaper. She read someplace that a movie called "Boomtown" was being done with Clark Gable. She wrote a letter to MGM, got a job as a technical advisor on the show, and ended up out here in Hollywood. It was shot somewhere in Texas, but she ended up in Hollywood.

Collings

So she's going to be advising on—

Pino

On Texas oil stuff. How do these people talk? What do they wear? She was an advisor. I don't think she was getting paid much. But she met Clark Gable, who was a big—they became fast friends.

Collings

Really.

Pino

And she had also gone to work for the Armed Forces Radio Service at the end of World War II, so she was working in broadcasting. She met her husband, and they started the Chadwick company in about 1947 or so, and they had a lot of celebrity clients, Arlene Dahl, Janet Leigh, and she represented shows. She represented a show called "Command Performance." She represented the National Cigar Company, and every month she would send cigars to George Burns, just because George Burns smoked cigars, and maybe he would talk about these great cigars he was smoking. So she was a publicist. She really was a publicist at heart.

Collings

She had publicized herself just to get out here in the first place.

Pino

Absolutely. Absolutely. And because she had done a "Command Performance" show, she had met Ralph. Ralph started the show in New York, moved out here to Hollywood. She was now in Hollywood, and somehow she got word that Ralph was looking for somebody for "Truth or Consequences," a publicist for "Truth or Consequences." She called him up. He remembered her. He said, "I like how you do business," because she had written him a thank-you note after appearing on the show. A publicist writing a thank-you note to somebody appearing on the show. He remembered her and hired her, and she was one of the people instrumental in getting the name of Hot Springs, New Mexico, changed to Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, and she helped engineer that event that came on. And she was the one that Ralph trusted. The hard part of being a publicist on a show like "This is Your Life" was that Ralph didn't want anybody to know who was being profiled beforehand, so she would be the one to have to talk to the press about understanding that it couldn't be revealed. But they trusted her, she trusted them, and she got a lot of publicity after the show. So the night of the show, she was a really busy girl, because she was now on

the phone getting the word out. So if somebody was being profiled who came from Chicago, she'd be all over the Chicago media, the newspapers, the radio and TV stations, to tell what happened the next day. So she was pretty busy, and Ralph trusted her. She knew what the secret was, but nobody let it out, and it didn't happen one time, because people trusted her so much. She worked for Ralph until—I met her in the seventies. She worked on the seventies show. Then I think at that point she left and went to work for Metro Media, and she was a censor at Metro Media. So I met her in the seventies. She was kind of crotchety. She was little and fiery and had these piercing eyes and this hair that kind of went all over the place, and would wear hats.

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

Oh, yes. And her husband was tall and very quiet. She was the talker. And she was kind of a character, and everybody looked at her as kind of a character. But you knew that she meant business, and you knew that her calling was to protect Ralph. That was absolutely what she did. She went to work at Metro Media, and I did a show called "Thicke of the Night," which is a Metro Media—

Collings

With Alan Thicke.

Pino

—with Alan Thicke. Sue was the censor on the show, and I'll tell you a story that's a little bit off color, but it's very Sue Chadwick. For some reason I got the job—I was one of the producers, and I would do the remote pieces. I would produce and direct that remotes that were then edited and rolled into the show. And for some reason, one of my other jobs was as a go-between between the writers, who came up with the gags, and Sue Chadwick, who was the censor. And there was a group of people who were writing the shows, and this whole cadre of performers kind of like "Saturday Night Live," this group of people—Bowser, Jon Fleischman, whatever his name was—and the writers, and they were all in cahoots to get as much stuff on the air as they could, and they took it as a challenge to get things by Sue Chadwick. So they wrote a piece that used the word clitoris. I took it to Sue. I read it. I knew she would not go for it. And she came back to me and she said, "What's this word?" She didn't know what it was. And I had to explain it—

Collings

Then you were stuck.

Pino

—and then I'm stuck having to explain it to her. And we laughed about that for years. And she finally realized what these people were trying to do and then really came down on them.

Collings

Oh, god.

Pino

It got worse rather than better. It was always a fight between the two of them, and somewhere along the line I stepped out of the go-between role, because it was a no-win situation. The writers and the talent all hated me, because they thought I was working for Sue, and Sue and I, I would kind of side with her, because these people were crazy. They were trying to put stuff on the air that—it was a game with them, and that was how—okay. But over that we kind of became fast friends. And she would go and sit in the control room at the studio with her hat on, with her quiet husband next to her, and she would just flip out at some of the things these people would say, and then she'd give notes about what had to be edited out. So then a number of years went by. She came back to work for Ralph, and she would answer fan mail, and she would do anything that he needed around the office until a few years ago, when she finally retired—

Collings

At the age of?

Pino

—at the age of probably ninety. She died at ninety-six. In November, she died at ninety-six, and she still had big ties to this company, and she and Ralph were always very, very close. They thought alike about things.

Collings

I mean, it just seems like with this company, personalities are very important. It's not an organizational structure so much as it is an amalgam of particular people.

Pino

That all thought alike but had very different personalities. So there were quiet, studious people, and somewhere down the line there were the Sue Chadwicks, who were flamboyant and outgoing and very much kind of a Hedda Hopper, old-school, old-Hollywood mentality.

Collings

Right. Now, was she trying to sort of push the show to be—I mean, was she going farther than just the regular network, the censors that are in place? I mean, was she like not allowing them to say certain things that, in fact, they were allowed by law to say?

Pino

No, no. She was trying to abide—when she was at Metro Media, she was trying to abide by Metro Media rules. There were certain words you didn't say on the air, and clitoris was one of those, and certain concepts. You didn't talk graphically about sex in those days. And censors got a bad name because a lot

of them made up the rules as they went along, and I'm sure Sue did too. But they were there for a reason. She took her job very seriously, and Metro Media backed her up. If she said something, it was law. It was law. She went out one time and found one of the—here's another story—found one of the talent literally peeing on the side of the building, relieving himself. These were wild times. These were really wild times. And she had him thrown off the lot, and he was gone for a couple of weeks and then had to apologize in order to get his job back. She had that kind of power.

Collings

So what years was this, you were saying?

Pino

Somewhere in the eighties. I'm kind of fuzzy. It would have been in the early eighties.

Collings

Why were they such wild times? Was it kind of the medium was kind of going through another stage of growing pains? Or cable was starting to appear?

Pino

I think it was more—cable was starting to appear. It was also that this was a Johnny Carson "Tonight Show" kind of show that we were trying to do in syndication. It was an hour and a half every day of comedy, music, and interviews.

Collings

Gosh.

Pino

It was a lot of work. It was very hit and miss. Sometimes it was good, and sometimes it was just awful, and it was really, really difficult to do, so you worked really long hours. I think we would tape from five to seven-thirty, and it went on the air that night at eleven, something like that, and so at seven-thirty when you finished doing the show, you'd start the production meeting for the next day. So these were horrendously long hours, and people got very tired and testy, and those kind of people kind of pushed the bounds, which is what they do so well. And sometimes you push the bounds and it's hysterically funny. And sometimes you just step over, and everybody kind of goes, "No, you can't do that." And it's hard to say where that line is sometimes.

Collings

Because you're caught up in the moment.

Pino

Yes, yes. So that's why it was kind of heady, and all you could do was get through that day's show and start worrying about the next one.

Collings

That's kind of addictive.

Pino

It is kind of addictive. And you'd kind of almost shut the rest of the world out, because that's how you survive. That's all you can do.

Collings

Actually, there was an article in the "L.A. Times" I guess about a year ago—it was talking about directors in particular, but it can be applied more broadly—saying that, what do people who have been in this business do when they're not doing this business, because what else can be as compelling and endlessly fascinating and where you get that kind of a—

Pino

There is a high to it.

Collings

—that kind of high, yes, exactly.

Pino

Yes, there is an addiction to it, and you get really engrossed. Your personal life gets tied up into it, for a lot of people. Some people don't, but I did. For a lot of people. My friends were in—I was working with my friends. My boyfriends were people I was working with, because they understood what the hours meant and how hard it was, and you were forgiving of each other's schedules. You do get really, really tied up into it.

Collings

It's almost like a community of emergency room doctors or something.

Pino

Yes, yes, yes. And I'm very lucky that a lot of the friends that I made here in the seventies are still my friends. There's a picture on the shelf over there of five women from—we all worked on "Name That Tune" in the seventies, and every once in a while we'll go and get together, the five of us—

Collings

Oh, that's great.

Pino

—and tell stories. We sent that picture to Ralph after one of our luncheons at Musso's, sitting in the booth that he used to go to in Musso's.

Collings

Oh, that's very nice. Well, actually, I also wanted to ask you about other women that you worked with. I mean, you worked with Sue Chadwick, and who were these other women that you worked with? What roles did they play?

Pino

I was probably—no, I know I was—in the hierarchy, if there is a ranking. I was a producer. So other people were contestant coordinators or associate producers or worked in travel or the talent department, and we would spend hours just talking about what we were doing; how to make it better; what was going on;

how we could cut corners and make it more efficient; who's being a problem and we need to fix it; how do we get this done with this amount of time and money. And we were all just kind of consumed by it, and it was really enjoyable. You rarely had a night off, because you'd finish work and go out to dinner, or go out and have drinks, or go over to somebody's house, and you'd talk about the business. You'd talk about this place and how to get things done. So you'd come in the next day with all new ideas, if you're lucky, and try to fix what's not happening right. And I think that was appreciated. I think that commitment was appreciated. And we got a lot of things done very efficiently, because of the people around it.

Collings

Did you and this group of women feel that you were in jobs that worked well for you as women? Or did you sort of feel like you were kind of sliding under the radar in some way?

Pino

No. I think we felt like we were really important to getting the whole thing put together. The guys weren't doing what we were doing. The guys were going home to their wives. We were—and at the time, and I'm looking at the photo. One of the women was married. Other people were in relationships, but we were the ones that were trying to solve the problems. One of the very important people around here was a man named Dick Gottlieb, who was one of the people who interviewed me and was with Ralph since the fifties. He was here forever, and he was kind of the father figure. He was the creative one. He was one of the big idea men. And we would go in to Dick the next day and say, "What if we did this and this?" And he would say, "That's a really good idea, kiddies." And we would do it. So we felt like we were the instigators of a lot of the way things worked around here, which was really nice. We didn't get shuffled off to a corner, saying, "No, girlie, go in the corner and type." We were in on the planning of what was being done, so it felt really good.

Collings

Yes, so that was very fulfilling.

Pino

Yes. We were participants in it, and I know at other companies, that wasn't true. At other companies, if you were a PA, you were a PA the entire time you stayed there. Here you got a chance to move up. You got a chance to do more. You got a chance to contribute. One of the women, my friend Nancy Eckels, started out as a receptionist. She was working at a bank. There was an opening for a receptionist. I'm thinking about 1973 or so. She got the job. She became a writer on the "Cross-Wits." She was a PA on "Name That Tune," and she became a writer on "Cross-Wits." And she went on—after that, she was a director on "The Bold and the Beautiful" for many years. So you got a chance.

If you showed aptitude and you had a little bit of energy and you were willing to work hard, you could do it. You could do it, and there wasn't anything standing in your way. And the pay was the same and parity was the same, and there was no problem.

Collings

So you're saying within the context of the Ralph Edwards Company, or more broadly?

Pino

Within here, within the Ralph Edwards Company. I think it was probably different in other companies. I think this was unusual that it was this open.

Collings

What was Ralph Edwards' wife like?

Pino

Oh, she was a fireball, Barbara. She was a stay-at-home mom. She was very warm, very welcoming when you went to their home, a wonderful hostess, phenomenal. Everything proper, everything in its place. She was his right hand. I think he talked to her about a lot of things none of the rest of us ever knew, and vitally important in his life. They were very, very close. There's a picture up on the wall of Ralph and Barbara.

Collings

Oh, that's nice.

Pino

They're in Western gear, and he's leaning over looking fondly at her. It's a very cute picture.

Collings

It is cute, yes.

Pino

Yes, yes. They very much liked going to New Mexico, to T or C, New Mexico, and Barbara loved it. Barbara was a fisherwoman. She was this Beverly Hills housewife, and she loved to go fly fishing, so she was a well-rounded woman. She had a good time.

Collings

And their three kids were boys, right?

Pino

No. Two girls and a boy, a boy in the middle. Chris is the oldest, Gary in the middle, and Laurie's the youngest.

Collings

And what did the girls go on to do?

Pino

The girls went on to—they both went to Berkeley, where Ralph went. They both live up north, I think both in Oregon now, with their own families, and

they've started businesses on their own. They are apparently very content being out of the Hollywood limelight. Gary was a part of this company for many, many years. He's now pretty much retired, and worked on shows, worked on ideas, worked on writing with his dad.

Collings

That must have been fun.

Pino

Yes.

Collings

All right. Well, shall we move on and talk about "The People's Court"?

Pino

Sure.

Collings

All right. How did you get involved with "The People's Court"?

Pino

Okay. It was 1981. Stu Billet came here in 1980, if I've got the dates right. He was a producer at Hays Hall. He had done a lot of game shows and very, very well respected. I think he was suggested by an agent at William Morris. Ralph was looking for somebody to do development. "This is Your Life" had been off the air. I think "Cross-Wits" went off the air in 1980 after five years. "Name That Tune" was still on the air, so those of us who were here were still there, but we were only doing one show. We were before doing both shows. Now we're only doing one show. God, it felt like your vacation. Yes, it was nothing. I think the story goes—and I'm sure Stu will tell it better than I do—a man named John Masterson had an idea, the original "People's Court" idea. He took it to NBC daytime. The programmer at NBC was a man named John Rhinehart. Someone along the line at NBC, and I'm not sure whether it was while John was there or not, but somebody didn't really get the idea of people representing themselves in Small Claims Court and tried to put comedy lawyers with the plaintiff and defendant, and at some point John Masterson said, "I don't think so." So John Rhinehart left NBC. He and John Masterson became partners, and John Rhinehart, who Stu knew from working at NBC, John Rhinehart brought the ideas to Stu, who brought the idea to Ralph.

Collings

What do you think Ralph saw in the idea that fit in with all of his other things?

Pino

It was a people show. It was a people show. Like all of his shows, it was about people, with interesting stories. So January 1981, NAPTE, okay. Stu and Ralph are at NAPTE. They call, and I think they called me, but I'm not 100 percent sure, and Stu said, "I need to do a pilot of a show the day after tomorrow. It's

called 'People's Court.' We need a courtroom set and a studio and a crew. Can you do it?" As I always said, I said, "Sure. No problem." [laughs]

Collings

Famous last words?

Pino

Famous last words. We had been shooting some of our shows at a place called The Production Group on Vine, which is still there. They had two studios, a big one and a small one. The problem with the big studio is it had support poles kind of in the middle of the studio, but it was a good studio. They had a crew that they could get very, very quickly. I called Paramount—

Collings

Your good friends at Paramount?

Pino

—my good friends at Paramount, and I knew of an art director over there named Herman Zimmerman, who pulled enough set pieces to make a courtroom out of Studio One at The Production Group. We had virtually no idea what the show was. We knew we needed a courtroom, "A Small Claims Court," we said. Herman said, "Okay," got a lighting director. He came in and lit it. We had a bench. Someone said, "Okay, Stu knows a guy who knows a guy who knows Judge Wapner." They found some cases somehow, because I was off doing the studio stuff. There were these like almost three pods of people doing things without ever talking to each other, and we all came together. We put a schedule together and taped some cases, two or maybe three days, but I think two days later. It was edited literally overnight. There were no satellites, so somebody jumped on an airplane up to Vegas, which is, I think, where NAPTE was that year, with a tape, and they sold the show to Metro Media.

Collings

And you used actors for the cases?

Pino

I don't think so. I think they were real people. And I can even remember at some point doing run throughs in the office to see if it all really worked before it ever got to the studio, so I may have the timeline too squished. It may have been a longer period of time, but it was very, very fast, and I think it sold literally in one day.

Collings

Wow.

Pino

Then we had to figure out how to actually do the show. And as some point in there, Stu sent three of us to go to Small Claims Court in Van Nuys and sit there. So it was me, my friend Nancy Eckels, remember her, and a man who

had been around here forever, named Tim Regular. He has started out as a "gofer," and we called them gofers at that time, and his deal was to do anything for Ralph. The three of us went out to Small Claims Court in Van Nuys, and we sat there for like half a day, and it's still true that they don't tell you the resolution of a case when you're sitting there in Small Claims Court. They send you a postcard or a letter later on with the ruling, because they don't want fights to erupt right there in Small Claims Court, unlike what they do on the show. So we sat there, and I remember one of the cases, which was a case of a bride suing the man who made her wedding dress. They happened to be Italian, which has nothing to do with the story except gave it a lot of personality. So the bride is suing the tailor. She says she went in for a fitting, went back eight weeks later to pick up her dress, and it didn't fit.

Collings

Uh-oh. I can see where this is going.

Pino

The tailor's defense is, "She's been eating too much. The dress, if she was the same weight, would have fit fine." And that was the case. So now you had these two people at each other's throats, the poor husband, the newly minted husband, kind of this little guy sitting off in a corner trying to disappear, and these two people at each other. "This is a great show. This would make terrific television." So I came back and I told Stu how excited we all were. I don't know whether the other two were as excited as I was, but I was just going, "This is fabulous. This is good stuff. If you can get this on television, besides the legal side of it, this is good stuff." And that's how it happened. But by the time the show got on the air, "Name That Tune" had been cancelled, and I had gotten the job offer at Paramount, so I left before "People's Court" went into production.

Collings

Oh, okay. All right.

Pino

That was an interesting year.

Collings

Yes, that's right. So you never actually worked on "People's Court," then?

Pino

I never actually worked on "People's Court."

Collings

Oh, that's a shame.

Pino

No, I know, it really is a shame.

Collings

Yes, because it seems like something that you would be well suited for.

Pino

I think I would have loved it. I was unfortunate. I left at the wrong time.

Collings

So when you came back to Ralph Edwards, then, what did you work on when you came back?

Pino

Development. Development of new programs with Stu and Ralph, and we did pilots, we did presentations. A couple of the shows got on the air. We were doing a lot of run throughs. We were on the tenth floor at Hollywood and Highland, a big run-through room, and we would do run through after run through, which you do with friends at first, playing contestants, and try and figure out whether an idea works or not, and it's pretty darn hard to come up with an idea from scratch that will work on television. "People's Court" didn't come out of that. We did a show called "Family Medical Center," which was scripted. We did—

Collings

Now, "Family Medical Center," that was real life stories and it was played—

Pino

With actors.

Collings

Yes, and there is a show on TV that is that now.

Pino

Yes, yes, yes. A lot of—not that they copied—

Collings

I forget what it's called, "Emergency Medicine" or something like that.

Pino

Yes, something like that. But real stories. We had a doctor who was in charge of the writers, the writing staff. We literally created a doctor's office in an office building down the street, and we would bring hand-held cameras. It was all done two cameras hand held, and we would do these cases. And so there was a lot of coordination in that, a lot of makeup. How does a bruise that's two days old look, that kind of thing. How does keratosis look, when somebody drinks too much carrot juice and turns orange. And it was a really interesting show to do. We also did "Superior Court," which was, again, done back over at The Production Group. It was the same kind of thing, real cases dramatized. So they would take an idea from a real case. The writers would say, "Okay, what if x, y, and z happens?" and it was intense. Both those shows were—those are the first scripted programs I'd ever done. It was very, very different. But they were again about people, which is why Ralph liked them.

Collings

Right, right. This seems to be the theme that runs through everything.

Pino

Absolutely.

Collings

It has to have some connection to reality, so it's always this kind of line between games and reality—

Pino

Yes, yes, real-people shows.

Collings

—or drama and reality.

Pino

Yes. Even when we were doing hard game shows like "Name That Tune" or the "Cross-Wits," the contestants are the people, and Ralph always wanted the interview to be meaningful, so you'd always have to have an interview.

Collings

What kind of interview?

Pino

With the contestants. "Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you do? What do your wife and kids have to do?" So it was always getting to know the contestants a little bit more than most shows were doing at the time. Now you have it on every show. Every show does it. Whether it came out of that, or whether Ralph just made it bigger and part of it, I don't know, but it was always a part of his shows.

Collings

Yes, that seems to be really a hallmark of the programming.

Pino

Yes. It was good.

Collings

And what is the cause marketing that the company is doing?

Pino

Ralph always was kind of into cause marketing. During World War II he did bond drives. He would raise money—the two schools that we talked about, Piney Woods School. I think he asked for a penny, and he received hundreds of thousands of pennies for the school. Alice Lloyd College, he did a drive to help the college. He would do fundraising events, both on his own and on television. So cause marketing was a big part of who he was at heart, using the media for good. There was a show, a movie that they did called "Annabelle's Wish" that was done for the March of Dimes, I believe. Don't quote me on that. There was a program that a woman who worked here for a number of years, Barbara Dunn-Leonard, started with General Motors. She would put programs together between General Motors, the unions, believe it or not, and the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the company then would facilitate getting wishes to come true

for these children who were terminally ill, and they did that for many, many years. They always were looking for something to do like that, that would help other people, but using the media to do it. So that carried on what Ralph started.

Collings

Yes, absolutely.

Pino

He raised millions of dollars for causes over the years, maybe billions.

Collings

Wow.

Pino

We have a figure somewhere, if I can find it here in the book, because there is an amazing figure, if I can get to pages in where the total was. "In 2008 dollars, over six billion dollars had been raised." He raised, in Treasury war bonds in 1945, five million dollars.

Collings

Gosh.

Pino

That's a lot of money in those days.

Collings

Of course.

Pino

Today it's five billion, almost six. It's a lot of money. Just because he was so well liked and people would—if he asked them to do something, they would do it. The viewers would do it. It was fascinating.

Collings

Yes. Would he be recognized on the street, like if he went out to go to the store or something?

Pino

Oh, yes, yes, yes. He could barely go out alone.

Collings

Oh, really?

Pino

Yes, yes, oh, yes.

Collings

It sounds like he's not the kind of person—

Pino

But he liked it. He loved it. He knew it was going to happen. He went anywhere he wanted, and he appreciated people knowing who he was, and he would stop and talk to you, stop and talk to people on the street. We'd walk from here down to Musso's and it would take half an hour, because he would stop and talk

to people, and everybody knew him. Even in the seventies, everybody knew him.

Collings

I was going to ask you about that. Did he ever talk about how the industry was changing and the media landscape was changing?

Pino

Not on big terms like that. He was more focused on what he could get done. What he was aware of is who the people were that needed to make the decisions, who to contact to get something accomplished, and he was always really into that. Cable while he was active was really not a concern, although "This is Your Life" were on reruns at A&E for a number of years. He was more—it was not a big overall thing. It was a smaller scale than that. It was, "How do we get this idea in front of NBC? Who do we have to call? How do we get this person to agree to do whatever needs to be done?" So it was a smaller scale.

Collings

Was there ever kind of a sense that he was kind of of an older generation, and there were like these young executives coming up, and maybe they didn't know about his work as much?

Pino

Yes. I heard stories about going in and having to pitch "This is Your Life" to an executive who'd never seen the show. And that's a hard sell. So they would try to send material over ahead of time, so that people were aware of what the show had meant and what it was, because it's an easier sell if you know what's going on. And he was lucky to have some people, especially at NBC, programming people at NBC who were aware of it. But as new people came in, it got extremely difficult, extremely difficult.

Collings

Now, the show is still in production in Australia. Is that correct?

Pino

In Australia and there have been recent specials in England. They did a special with Simon Cowell about, I'm going to guess four years ago, where they surprised him on the American version of—what's his show?

Collings

Which one?

Pino

Simon Cowell's, "American—?"

Collings

Oh, yes, yes. "American Idol."

Pino

Thank you very much. And surprised him on the air, and he was flown back to England where they did a show.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Pino

They did a one-hour show that was kind of half variety, half "This is Your Life" on him. But it's actually a really good show, really interesting, shows a whole other side of Simon Cowell.

Collings

Oh, gosh. I'd love to see that. [laughter]

Pino

It's available at UCLA. It's fun. It's fun.

Collings

Are those productions coordinated through this office in any way?

Pino

No. Production—

Collings

Or they're just completely spun off?

Pino

We license them to produce the show. There is a model, a book that we put together for production companies a few years ago. It's a big thick thing. We did it for England, on how to produce "This is Your Life."

Collings

So there are concerns about branding?

Pino

Yes, absolutely, about the format being consistent and hints on how to do it, because it's a very complex show. You can stumble very quickly if you do things a little bit wrong, so we give them whatever help we can in order to produce a successful program. So there is a bible on how to do "This is Your Life."

Collings

Right. And given that there are some cultural differences between the U.S. and Australia, say, do those show up in the programs in any way that you're aware of?

Pino

Besides the accents?

Collings

Yes.

Pino

No, it's pretty consistent. They tend to do a lot more sports people down there, because they're so into their sports down there, but it's pretty consistent. The

format is pretty well—the book may be a different color and bigger. They may come in from the right instead of the left. They may do a different mix. For instance, on Simon Cowell there was not always an off-stage voice. Sometimes there would be and sometimes not, but after a while, in an hour programming, it gets a little repetitive, so they just broke it up. But that's still consistent with the format.

Collings

Yes, okay. Also I was just sort of imagining that perhaps with the British version that some of the people are perhaps a little bit more restrained.

Pino

Yes. No, you're probably right. If you watched a lot of the shows over there, they're a little more proper than we are at times, and they choose people that maybe that's consistent with.

Collings

Like government folks?

Pino

Like government officials. Even their celebrities seem to be a little bit more proper.

Collings

I see.

Pino

Yes. [laughter] But in the old days, it was a pretty proper show. It really was.

Collings

Yes. What you're describing would probably compare well to—

Pino

Yes. Go back twenty years, and that's probably more like what it was.

Collings

Right. So what would you tell young people today about the industry, if they asked you for advice? And what would you tell women in particular?

Pino

Hmm. It's going to be really, really hard work. You're probably going to have a very good time if you're lucky enough to get into a group of people that values your input. There still is a glass ceiling, but—and I'm not sure whether it's because of where I came from—hard work pays off. I still believe that. Hard work, being smart about what you choose, being careful about who you associate with, focusing on the job and how to get it done and how to get it done right, to me will still pay off.

Collings

So how do you break that glass ceiling?

Pino

I don't know. You be smarter than the other guy, and you work harder; smarter and harder. It's hard work. What people forget is what hard work it is, and how all-consuming it is if you do it right. And be careful of how you present your ideas, because nowadays anybody'll steal anything, it seems like. And in the old days, I don't know that that was true. It probably was, and I just didn't realize it. It probably has always been that way. But now with mass media and the Internet and ideas going all around, it's probably tougher to protect your idea. I'm not sure it's possible. I don't think it's possible to protect an idea, so just be careful.

Collings

So what is the future of this company going forward?

Pino

Interesting. I'm not quite sure. There have been people dancing around the idea of doing "This is Your Life" again. It may still happen. "Truth or Consequences" is probably not—I'll speak for me—probably not a show you'll ever see again. It's a complicated show to do and do right, without being mean, without having people eat bugs or burn down your house or do things that Ralph would never have done.

Collings

I mean, now you have "Fear Factor."

Pino

Now you have "Fear Factor" and "Punked." Not that there's anything wrong with those shows at all. But to do "Truth or Consequences" in that way, the family would never agree. It will never happen.

Collings

The Edwards family.

Pino

The Edwards family will never agree to have that happen. They'd rather not have it on the air than have it done wrong, and that goes for "This is Your Life," too, although "This is Your Life" is going to be very hard to do. Celebrities have insulation around them now. They have places they can go to promote a new book, a TV show, or a movie. They don't need to be surprised, which has the edge of being a little bit dangerous. They have publicists and managers and agents and TMZ and everybody trying to find out about it. It'd be very, very difficult to do a celebrity-style "This is Your Life" show. I think you could do it with the unknowns and have it be very successful, if you could sell it.

Collings

I was just going to say, does the company have a sense that there would be a market for that?

Pino

That's what they're always looking for, and that's what's very difficult to find. I'm not sure it's possible.

Collings

And when you say the family would not agree, so the Edwards family is still very much a part of this company and would have to sign off on any new—

Pino

Absolutely. Absolutely, yes. There's a board of directors that controls the company, and those people would have to sign off. And it would be tough, it would be really tough.

Collings

So mostly what you are doing right now, then, is like the redistributing of the things that have been—

Pino

Yes, selling the formats. "People's Court" is live and well. There's enough to keep the doors open, thank goodness, after all of these years.

Collings

That's wonderful.

Pino

Yes, it's wonderful. And who knows? Somebody may walk in with the right deal. You just never know. You never know.

Collings

So you're looking for new properties.

Pino

Absolutely. Yes.

Collings

Okay. Shall we end it here for today?

Pino

Sure.[End of interview]

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