

Mary Sheridan (extracts from an email about her experiences with video in the 1970s):

But What did You Do To Deserve It? [Women's Aid tape]:

I remembered how the video came about. Women living in the refuge were sometimes asked if they would give presentations to groups, but it was too daunting for any of them to consider. We asked some of the women if they might feel more able to go to a group with a videotape to show and then just have to answer questions after. Enough said 'yes' that we decided to make the tape so they'd have something to use when asked to speak. Although the process aspect of creating the video was extremely important, we also knew that we wanted a useable product at the end. Another memory involves the music for the video. Peggy Seeger wrote the songs that are on the soundtrack after viewing the unedited video, and then recorded them before we finished the tape. One song was called *Emily* and the other, I think, was called *Winnie and Sam*. I no longer remember if we just used *Emily* on the video or used both. It was a special moment for me when Peggy came by to watch the tapes and said she would write some songs to use on the video. "Emily" is included in a book *My Song Is My Own: 100 Women's songs* by Kathy Henderson with Frankie Armstrong and Sandra Kerr (Pluto Press 1979).

Us Girls:

I remembered that we did shoot it ourselves versus hiring others to do it. I remember scouting out some of the locations that we used and running into the now grown-up brother of one of the girls when we were shooting a scene at her house. I had tutored the brother in photography when he was just a lad and I was newly in London, years earlier, doing some video work at Goldsmith's for their emerging dance department. I do remember some challenges with light and sound on *Us Girls* (nothing new at that time, given the equipment we had and the number of people - sometimes only 1 - who was/were setting everything up). In seeing the video clips on the website now I think it looks really good given what we had to work with. If we did have professional outside help, maybe it was with the sound and lighting? That's how good it looks compared to most other things that we taped at that time. In any case, I do remember putting the final edit on the tape a few minutes before I rushed to the airport to return to the US in December 1979.

WIVES:

WIVES (Women's International Video Exchange Service). I'm pretty sure WIVES was Sue Hall's idea. An Evening Standard article from February 1977 said that Greater London Arts provided a small grant to begin the group. A video I was working on around the time I started at the Albany in '76 was a documentary generated by The International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women held in Brussels earlier that year. Because of this tape, WIVES was selected as the official representative from Britain for the feminist network that developed from the Tribunal. Apparently, at some point prior to '79 (when the Directory of

Videotapes was published), Albany Video Project had become the contact point for WIVES video activities (i.e. distribution and exchange of tapes. WIVES didn't produce any videotapes but did work at making sure that tapes that members made were seen by others).

Aug 13: What Happened?

On August 13th 1977, police on horseback were lined up outside my front door on Batavia Road in New Cross to protect the National Front as they marched through New Cross/Deptford. The march began around the corner from where I lived, on Clifton Rise. I remember spending the day shooting video and audio of the march and counter-demonstration, both at street level and from some nearby rooftops. I witnessed a lot of malice and violence by the police toward the counter-demonstrators as the march descended into chaos, and if I remember correctly, it was the first time that British police used American style riot gear. Due to several things that happened around the same time, I began to develop a level of anxiety that became enervating and planted the seeds for my return to the US in December 1979. While I regret missing out on the possibilities and excitement that being part of the Channel Four workshops offered, I was really in no state to continue with life as I knew it in London.

While I made a couple/few tapes in the early 80's, after returning to the US, my primary interest had turned to mental health and that's really where my attention was focused from then on. In another irony, a few years later, when I was applying to work in a half-way house for adults who'd had psychotic breaks and were on their journey back to "normal" life in the community, one of the interviewers was an Irish guy, Patrick, who'd lived in Britain. As I was questioned about earlier work experience, of course my film and video activity came up and at some point the tangential fact that I'd worked on the August 13th tape emerged. "You worked on August 13th?" Patrick said, "as far as I'm concerned you've got the job." And I did get it. Though working on August 13th hadn't actually qualified me in any way for the job, I was really glad that the tape had become that well-known and appreciated that it could come up in conversation with someone 5 or 6 thousand miles away.

Sadly, on August 12th 2017, as I was learning about the LCVA event on the Battle of Lewisham, American nazis/white supremacists were protected by the police as they rallied and marched through a neighbourhood in Charlottesville, Virginia where some good friends live. I had visited that neighbourhood many times. As you may know, an anti-racist demonstrator - a young woman named Heather Heyer - was killed by a nazi that day.

Some of the questions that occurred to me as I was going through the LCVA website related to who might be interested in the archive/who would want to watch this stuff except the people who were there at the time. My question was partly answered in one of the interviews that made reference to using the old stuff to generate new conversations...