

An Interview with Wilf Prigmore

Conducted by telephone, 3 November 2016

Julia Round

Writer and editor Wilf Prigmore worked at Fleetway/IPC in the 1970s. He was Group Editor for Girls' Adventure Comics, co-creator of Misty and editor of Tammy, amongst other roles.

Wilf: I'm surprised at the amount of interest nowadays, to see it [comics] being taken academically, is quite astonishing because certainly in the early days, people were quite disparaging. They'd think, you must have a laugh, you just write in these bubbles as they called them thinking all you did was write all **[unintelligible 00:00:28]** and nothing else, and you'd try and explain to people, if I told you I was in films or TV would that be a bit more interesting?

Well, yes, and I think it's the same thing, you're writing stuff for the artist, the artist doesn't make it up. You're writing all the directions and you've come up with a whole thing you've got to see the pictures, you've got to come up with the story and the words and it's a lot more complicated and comic people never got the cued off in this country that they did certainly in America and Europe.

Julia: No, and still don't I think. I think it's changing slowly but I get a very clear sense that people felt they had to go elsewhere to get that recognition. I think the industry as a whole in particularly in England has died but is coming back. I think it's been a slow process, but you're absolutely right in terms of the effort -- story telling is story telling no matter what medium you're writing it for and to write a good story is a real skill [crosstalk].

Wilf: Even at the time within IPC it really wasn't recognized amongst the other magazines because any time there was a pay dispute or any sort of trouble, the women's magazines always vetoed it -- we thought they were hobby journalists the lot of them. They had enormous staffs Woman's Own used to have something like a hundred and twenty staffers and a comic would have 4 and so the amount of workload we got per head is far greater than somebody in Woman's Own but you're sort of smearing us thinking **[unintelligible 00:02:18]** so even the industry didn't recognize it and I did try to speak with -- have you heard of Pat Lambern?

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: She was quite a big wig in her day, she was overall the women's titles and I did go to lunch with her one day and said, look can't we have a scheme whereby Woman's Own for instance has a little advert somewhere in the paper and you've enjoyed this, we produce great stuff for your daughter why not get your daughter reading Candy, Misty-- so we are getting kids in the reading habit who will then come along and buy your publications, but she thought basically good idea but all the editors were autonomous and none of them wanted to do it.

Julia: Okay, as good as any unilateral way of making that happen.

Wilf: I'm sure if we'd had for want of a better word, branding, which I sort of hate the idea, but if you'd thought IPC produces really good women's magazines therefore the kids things were equally good I think we might have had a better chance, but you just couldn't do that.

Julia: Was the publishing model more with the emphasis on individual titles, it wasn't about here is a great IPC magazine or comic, it was more about this is Woman's own, this is Sandy, it stands on its own?

Wilf: Yes, that's right. I did try to -- I got a little scheme going 3 is company we called it where we got some quite nice hessian bags with the logos of Misty, Tammy and **[inaudible 00:04:08]** the idea of being if you'd liked one of them you'd like all of them. While trying to promote all three, which might affect some sort of short term effect. There just wasn't that idea of being supported within our own industry.

Julia: Seems amazing now. What drew you into comics with that in mind as well because it doesn't sound like it was a very positive all the time place to be to be honest. How did you get to IPC?

Wilf: I joined, I think it was about seventy-one. I got in there by accident, I was a trainee sub on a local free-sheet a news shopper, you may or may not have heard of that one. Kelvin MacKenzie used to work there before he became quite big and then obviously editor of the Sun so I worked with his dad and Kelvin MacKenzie and his brothers were there before I joined. Then there was a bit of a cut back, they got rid of somewhere like twenty out of twenty-four journalists and a friend of mine, his dad worked at IPC between the - what they called it, syndication international where they sold things, different countries around the world and he knew there was a vacancy in the competitions department -- which is a bizarre thing -- an outfit there wrote competitions for everything within the company **[crosstalk]**.

Julia: I was going to say all of them because I've seen a lot of the same ones popping up.

Wilf: They promote all the things and we'd come up with competitions and have to get prizes and go to these different events and things and so obviously we wrote competitions as well for the girls group and boys titles and instead of putting it in return of mail like some other people did I thought I'll go around and deliver the stuff and see what goes on. I just got to know people that way and somebody said oh, you're the sort of person we'd like and in the **[unintelligible 00:06:31]** do you fancy coming over here? Which I'd never thought of before and I ended up in the vacancy on Tammy and I ended up as the sub editor on loan. That was the Gerry Finley-Day he was the editor, Pat Mills was sub editor, Joe Collins is a name that comes up from time to time but not very often either he's a good writer and quite a big part of the comics at the time -

Julia: Was he the one who drew the art for Miss T is that, that's Joe Collins isn't it?

Wilf: That's right.

Julia: Did he just write it or did he draw it as well?

Wilf: He drew it as well -

Julia: That's all the art.

Wilf: - he was quite a revelation because I knew he could write and he turned up with his characters all cripey so there were a lot of people who were full of surprises they could do all sorts of things, he was a talented bloke and nice bloke chad. I worked with- my first introduction into comics with some people who became quite big in the field eventually.

Julia: What sort of time was that? Was Tammy quite well established by then or was this quite early on?

Wilf: No, it had just about started, I'm not sure how long it'd been going when I joined but could only have been a few months. I remember seeing the first issue and I think I probably got involved in doing letters page or competitions or something to do with the early ones while I was still in the other department.

Julia: It sounds like you're - I mean you said that Joe could turn his hand to anything, a lot of people could, it sounded to me from what I've heard from other people that sub editor roles and the roles more generally are quite varied. Was it the same duties all the time? Was it just editing or were you rewriting and scripting and so on?

Wilf: It was all sorts, first of all scripts would come in where the editor or somebody would have spoken to a writer first, sorted out the story or idea. Once that was thrashed out the scripts would come in and so we'd look at that before it went out to the artist and a lot of our artists live in Spain so the problem there was it'd go out to a translator, possibly we had an agency in Brussels, and it may have gone to Brussels to be translated and then sent on to Madrid or Barcelona or somewhere else and that was always fraught with problems as well.

I learnt early on that with the British artist you could write in short-hand you could say somebody looks like a character from Grange Hill or whatever was current at the time and being British

[00:10:00]

they would know when you talk about, say the weather, we had a pea souper, some colloquial thing. You wouldn't have to explain that a pea souper, it's thick fog. When we got a piece of artwork back one day, there was a school scene with children sitting down at their desks. They seem to be speaking something as the teacher walked in the door. There are these black things flying through the air, and I thought what on earth is going on here? I went back to the script. It's a teacher, I think it was Hermione; teacher enters the room, children blow raspberries.

[laughs]

Wilf: I thought, yes, well have your child playback. That was quite a good lesson actually, and you realize after that you just couldn't take things for granted, you had

to spell out particularly firm translators exactly what you wanted, and not to write in short-hand.

Julia: Sure. I can't imagine what the artist must have made of that. He must feel like these English schools are crazy. [laughing]

Wilf: Well, exactly, he must have thought, "What on earth was he thinking? Why didn't somebody phone up? What's going on here?" But I guess some of the strips were sort of a bit crazy and maybe that was right. I remember Kelvin Gosnell, he was from 2000 AD. I think he might have been on Harry, one of the other [unintelligible 00:11:33] possibly. I saw him one day, and he said he had a piece of artwork back in a corner of one of the frames.

It was a one-legged character with an eye patch, and it looked like a parrot on his shoulder. He said, "What on earth is this about?" And so they described the scene with the one-armed bandit in the corner.

Julia: [laughs] Again.

Wilf: Again, you have to realize that you just couldn't do this sort of thing and then expect a foreign artist to understand what you wanted. That was then part of this odd job, you'd have to be very careful. You learn that you have to be quite the [unintelligible 00:12:18] make sure that people understood what you wanted. Also, some people were quite good writers in terms of maybe doing a book or something, but they weren't very visual. There is one strip that I remember or script, rather, that I remember really well.

It came in and the chap had written a balloon. It was 70 words long. You imagine trying to get 70 words, I would take half a page or so. You had that sort of thing. There's a lot of re-writing and you had to make things really fit into the picture. And make the pictures work. You couldn't have 10 pictures of two people talking.

Julia: Sure. Yes, that makes sense.

Wilf: Better moves that along. That really was the main part of your sub editor's work. Then when the artwork came back to check in that really you've got the pictures that you need. Then it went out for lettering. In the early days, it was hand-lettered, a few specialists who did that. Then gradually, we got the computer sort of lettering or machine sets. Then it had to be read again because sometimes people couldn't read any alterations we've made on the scripts, or typos and different things you'd have to read.

The balloons, when they came back, make sure they were right. That sort of rounded that off. It was adding your bits and pieces: great news, what's coming next week, or done this week, done this the other. The general production thing's making sure they got away on time and then you'd have to wrap it all up, and leave it to the printers. There's quite a lot going on.

Julia: Yes, no, it sounds hectic. And the lead time on this is what, about six weeks or something for most of these [crosstalk] comics?

Wilf: I would say that was probably about right. I know we always lived at a different period. I used to have a little [unintelligible 00:14:42] on my watch strap because I never remembered what day it was. We was [sic] living in a different time. If you do an annual on specials, well, with an annual, you're almost a year in advance. That is why, particularly any annuals with pop pictures or football pictures, they are always out the day the teams have changed or people had left the group, or died or whatever. Annuals are really out of date before you bought them.

Julia: And weirdly dated, aren't they, because they go on sale and they're dated for the following year or whatever quite often, which is also another strange thing. So you don't leave that stuff to last on the annuals, you just do it as you go along and hope for the best, I guess? Or radically changing it at the end?

Wilf: Yes, yes that's all you could do. Unfortunately, instead of being a showcase for the title, they were a bit of a money maker for the company because mostly they were reprints. We tried giving a small budget to put at least a couple of new stories, and you try to get a new Bella, for instance, if it was Tammy. You try and get something new. But invariably there would be a lot of stuff you bring down the vaults and pick up things that have been printed years ago.

Julia: New to that title, but not necessarily new work, I guess. The main audience really are [sic] people who are already reading the comic, I think or it's being bought as gifts for those people, for those children. That makes sense. Certainly, looking at the later Misty Annuals, that's obviously stuff that's previously appeared in Sandy and so on. I think probably about an 8-year difference or something like that, if that makes sense.

Wilf: I think it could be. I think it was a bit untidy before so I think quite often it was whatever you can get.

Julia: Was it really just what was there? You wouldn't go looking for something in particular, or what would suit?

Wilf: There wasn't a way to record these things unless you had some bound folios of old issues. You couldn't watch fine things. If you've imagine you got 30 odd pages for each publication coming back from the printer that'd be wrapped up in brown paper, stuck on a shelf somewhere, we've got X amount of titles, so you've got loads and loads of wrapped up envelopes.

Then one day somebody would try and undo them perhaps, and then maybe get all the copies together for a particular strip, but it was a little bit haphazard, you couldn't always go lay your hands on things. I think it's a bit easier now, if you've got an electronic filing systems. Everything was there in visible format, and there were just rows and rows and shelves of things.

Julia: Yes, it sounds fairly chaotic to work within, I guess.

Wilf: Yes.

Julia: Organized chaos on a weekly basis, maybe.

Wilf: Sort of, yes. Then of course, you have your post to deal with because there are a very artists who live nearby. John Armstrong for instance, he's in Middlesborough, Mario Capaldi, a few of them. There are three or four artists that live around the Middlesborough region. The post was much better now these days. You could not absolutely rely on it, but it bearably would come, and yet more than one delivery a day. Things got late, and sometimes an artist would jump on a train or drive down and bring things.

Julia: At the 11th hour. Sounds right. I've always been intrigued why so many of the foreign studios were used. Do you know how this came about? Was it cost effective because they were the best? Why there was there was this kind of arrangement sending stuff to Spain, to Barcelona and so on?

Wilf: Well, I've got fantastic answers of course. I think they in America had a bit more of a tradition of comic work, and have been held in some sort of respect. Maybe it was just something that they would aspire to thinking, well, it's not a career that's in any way demeaning. The Spanish seems to be particularly good at it, some really good answers there. I think they certainly feel 2000 AD and Misty and a lot of the new titles over the years.

Julia: Absolutely.

Wilf: We've got some very good ones here.

Julia: Oh yes, definitely. I mean, there is quite a big--

Wilf: John Armstrong, worked for a lot of the titles for many years. I spoke to him earlier in the year. Funny, I was going to give him a ring again just to find some things out, but he's 92 now.

Julia: 92, impressive. Yes, when I spoke to David Roach, he'd spoken with him relatively recently. There was a guy who runs a Misty website, and I think he'd interviewed John maybe about three years ago in a very lengthy interview and said he was holding on strong.

Wilf: I think there weren't very many new artists in this country come into the business. Saw one or two. I don't know about nowadays, I haven't been involved for years. There wasn't a great interest to new artists to start.

Julia: Sure, yes. Sounds like a lot of the writers were maybe a bit more homegrown, but the art was going elsewhere. Certainly what you're saying ties up with what everyone else I've spoken to has said, which is really this wasn't a cost cutting exercise. They had some really good artists and you'd use the art as much as you could in as many different ways. It was a quality kind of product that was being used for the titles. I'd agree with that without a doubt.

Can you talk to me a bit about how particular titles came about then? How are new titles proposed and decided on? I'm really interested, obviously, in Misty, but also in the industry generally, how things got devised.

Wilf: With IPC, they were really originally imitators of DC Thomson. I think all the people who started it, actually had come from DC Thomson or they'd written for them. John Purley was a Thomson man. He ran the girls' group at the time. Gerry Finley-Day, Ian MacDonald, John Wagner, they'd all been at DC Thomson or working for them. Malcolm Shaw as well. Joe Collins. I'd say, really there was a real Scottish entourage. They'd all come down and then set up this rival company at IPC.

I think they liked the freedom of IPC, because I heard from a few people, they're terribly mean at Thomson. If you wanted a new pencil, you had to take the stub of your old one in to show them you had used it or you hadn't taken it home, and then you got a new pencil. I think they looked upon the staff maybe as their offspring. Malcolm told me one day that he'd been called in by the bosses because he'd been seen coming into work from a different direction, and one of the young ladies had lived roughly in the direction he was coming from. If there's anything untoward, they really don't tolerate it. I don't think there was anything going on. They just put two and two together and came up with five.

They came to IPC; it was a lot freer. There was quite a good atmosphere there. There's a pub directly opposite. A lot of time was spent in there. I think a lot of ideas were probably hatched in the pub. But basically, the early comics were not imitations, but set up specifically to rival Bunty. I think Judy was around at the time.

Julia: Yes, it was. They bring out Bunty, you hit back with Tammy. They bring out Judy and there's Sandie. You can see it in the boys' titles as well, I think. It bounces back and forth. "They've got a war title; we'll have one too."

Wilf: That's right, yes. Basically, that's how it started. They just set up as rivals and then-- I don't know. I suppose, possibly one of the newer ones was Sandie once the others had been established. Then, of course, you'd started getting your own slightly different feel to the IPC comics.

I think the DC Thomson ones were quite Scottish in their way. I remember as a kid reading, I think it was Topper, and I'd got the idea very early on, there was a lot of alliteration. Little Plum, Your Redskin Chum. I could never understand Pansy Potter. I read it as, she was called Pansy Potter, Strongman's Daughter. I couldn't understand that. But of course, because it was written in Scotland, it was Pansy Potter, Strongman's Daughter [speaks with Scottish accent]. That would rhyme for them; it didn't for us. It's quite strange how that slight cultural divide, if you like, or linguistic divide, made a difference. That puzzled me for years, and it's really only when I worked with Scotsman I realized they would have titles to go with the way they spoke.

Julia: Sure, yes. Well, that absolutely makes sense. As I say, it's a small thing, but it probably feels a little bit disconnected, just because you don't quite get the joke when you're based somewhere else.

Wilf: We did have Scottish content, if you like, in Tammy. There was Jeanie's Uncle Meanie, and he was a real caricature of Scotsman, very mean. There were always complaints about that. The argument was, "Well look, it's drawn by a Scotsman. It's written by a Scotsman. They're all laughing at themselves. They're perfectly happy. What's your problem?"

Julia: Yes, fair enough. Was it quite an atmosphere of-- You talked about people having this perception that you're all messing about and having a good time. You say it was quite a good atmosphere and there was a lot of freedom. Were people taking their work seriously, or was it, "Let's knock something out this week and see how we can entertain"? Do you know what I mean?

Wilf: No, it was taken seriously. There was fun, obviously, along the way. You might come up with an alternative ending to a story which was completely flippant because it didn't appear. I mean, Pat and I, Pat Mills, on the wall we had a glass sheet with what we called a vomitometer, and something that made you want to vomit, a real horrible idea that had come in from somebody, you'd put it up there and give them a score, and you'd look at the end of the day, how's the scoresheet going on the vomitometer for terrible ideas.

You did have fun, but quite often you'd be sitting down. We'd have a chat. "Where's it going to go from here, or what other gimmicks have we got?" There'd be a lot of ideas thrown around. A bit of head scratching, but at the end of the day, you're trying to get a good story with sensible results.

I think the flippancy sometimes showed in the little touches in the background. For instance, in one of our period stories, there was a shop, Gosnell's Pie and Mash Shop. Well, I put that in because Kelvin Gosnell, editor of 2000 AD, loved pie and mash. We just got a little thing in there, and then somewhere in one of his stories, there's a Prigmore's Parlour of Peace.

Quite often there'd be little in jokes that nobody else would know. We all looked at each other's publications and you'd say, "Oh, he's having a go at me this week."

Julia: Have seen that when people's names pop up in stories. There's one in *Misty* about a poison pen letter. There's one from Bill Cunningham in there. You can just see his name on the side of a book, and so on. They definitely pop up from time to time. And it sounds from some of the reading I've done as well that new stories that were being created and the ideas that were being thrown away were very much responsive to the audience that were out there.

Obviously, you were constantly asking the readers what they thought about their favorite stories and so forth. And I've heard about 2000 AD, that there was a big chart that ran along the wall of the office, that showed how your story was doing each week. Was there something similar for *Misty*? Was this data used a lot?

Wilf: No. I don't remember that chart. I could always give you Kelvin Gosnell's contact if you wanted to speak to him **[inaudible 00:30:00]**

2000 AD for quite a while. I don't remember that. Obviously we look at any feedback we got by way of letters and things and you try to gauge what was most popular, but we didn't have any sort of chart. You'd instinctively know, in *Tammy* for instance, that anything with ballet, gymnastics or horses would be a hit. Unless you'd set out to write it really badly, those three things would always be popular.

Julia: That makes sense. I just keep seeing that voting coupon in almost all the IPC's things and it doesn't just ask for your favorite stories, it asks for the ones you don't like as well.

Wilf: We never used to get that many. There'd be some which would give you a bit of information, but really there wasn't enough there to base your whole ethos on.

Julia: Did you get a lot of letters though?

Wilf: Yes, we used to get quite a few. I think kids responded in different ways. They seemed to particularly like things like Bella, who was very down to earth. I remember when that started it was called *I will succeed*. That's obviously what she always wanted to do, but it wasn't really that catchy. She had long hair, and Gerry's brilliant idea, Gerry Finley-Day, he said Bella- not Bella, what's her name? Not Nadia, the other one, Olga, Olga Colbert.

She was incredibly popular at the time, wasn't she? A little, very slight kid, and he said we should have somebody like that with bunches and short hair, so I think she was a bit of an amalgam of Olga and John Armstrong's niece. That's how that came about and it just went from there. It's a character that lasted for years and that probably was one of the most popular stories that we'd ever had.

Julia: Sure. This is one that people remember I think as well, when you think about *Tammy* that's the one that springs to mind.

Wilf: Yes. We had quite a good contact with the gymnastics association, but it never got too forward. We got lots of invitations and they were quite keen to have the enthusiasm stoked up if you like, but because Bella was so unorthodox, she was a health and safety nightmare, they couldn't be seen to be too closely associated with somebody who's willing to do gymnastics on scaffolding.

Julia: [laughs] No, fair enough. A tricky situation.

Wilf: I'm not sure if we'd be allowed to do it nowadays. I think that there's so many people that are worried about being safe and correct. I don't know if we could do it.

Julia: That's something that's also surprised me is that she- Were there many complaints received about any of the comics coming out of IPC? I know that obviously various titles have problems, but when I look at comics like *Misty*, there is quite a lot of horror and upset in there. Did they just get under the radar, or did they ever attract negative attention in the girls' comics?

Wilf: I don't remember really any complaints about *Misty*. I know we were fairly careful, we were pushing the boundaries with some of the stories but it was never intended to be a horror comic. I think if Pat Mills had had his way it would have been. I can tell you some stories if we want to concentrate on *Misty* some time, how it came about, because it's not quite the way everybody thinks, according to Pat.

Julia: I'd really like to know how it came about because the book I'm writing is mostly about *Misty*, just because it coincides with my horror and Gothic thing. The narrative that I got from Pat doesn't really make sense because he basically says, "It

wasn't really a response to *Spellbound*, I wasn't really aware of *Spellbound*. I was in my little bubble doing my own thing". It doesn't really seem to ring true to me. Pat's very generous with his time, but he also has a bit of a tendency I think to out-spin a good story, and to tell a story from one point of view. So I'd really like to hear about how it came about.

Wilf: Pat's obviously made a career out of being the godfather of comics, but let's just say his recollection of the start of it is slightly clouded. There's a lot of truth in it, but the way *Misty* came about wasn't exactly as he said. I think I was **[unintelligible 00:35:44]** the time they just came up with this new scheme of having another tier of people, and it became very top-heavy in the end with managers and God knows what. They'd set up this whole group editors scheme, and one of my first tasks was to come up with a girls' mystery comic. Now I don't know how much Pat had been involved with John Sanders and the directors at the time.

Things were always going on that you weren't always privy to. They might say, "I want you to do this that and the other" but they already had something in mind and they'd already been stirring the waters if you like, so there obviously was some talk with Pat beforehand, but *Misty* as such didn't exist as an idea. Just come up with some mystery ideas. I got together with Malcolm Shaw who was pencilled in as the editor, but he couldn't start straight away because he was finishing off *Mirabelle*, one of the romance titles. That was going to close, he had that to close. There's a chap called Bill Harrington. I'm not sure- You've mentioned Bill Cunningham, I don't remember-

Julia: Yes, that's me, that's my typo, sorry. [laughs]

Wilf: I'm not sure if that's an amalgam. We had Bill Harrington who was a writer, and Jack Cunningham who was art editor of *Misty*.

Julia: Okay, that's where I got confused.

Wilf: I'm wondering if that's an amalgam of those two-

Julia: Yes, that's entirely my mistake in my email to you I know it's Bill Harrington. I haven't heard of Jack Cunningham so that's just a lucky mistake on my part I guess.

Wilf: Okay. Jack's still around, he strangely enough is a Scotsman as well. We got together and chatted about a few ideas. Bill thought because we used to have a storyteller in *Tammy* and I think before that in *School Friend*, it's quite an old idea of having a storyteller, he thought it'd be quite nice if we got some sort of a guide, a figure who can direct what we're doing and telling the kids what's going to happen next. He came up with- And I think, I never write it down but I think his character was Nathan somebody. He seemed to be a fairly spooky looking character.

We put this down as one of the ideas. Gradually as we had a few ideas we did take them to John Sanders and **[unintelligible 00:39:00]** the directors, but Nathan was thought to be far too creepy and potentially a child molester, they didn't like the idea of him at all. So we thought, "Fair enough, shelf that one, let's just carry on". We came up with different ideas, we got some scripts from Pat and Malcolm. I've got one script which you're welcome to have a look at some time. I kept the original

version of *The Banana King*- No it wasn't *Banana King*, it was- In the first *Misty*, in fact I'm just looking at it-

Julia: Is this *The Cobra King*?

Wilf: -There's a story about spiders. I can't remember, was it *White Knee*? Sorry I'm just-

Julia: Yes, there's a one off story-

Wilf: *Red Knee White Terror*.

Julia: *Red Knee White Terror* with the spider in the box of bananas.

Wilf: They started off as the banana king and it was really quite horrific. I've got a script there and what Pat really excelled in. He did all sorts of cuttings and he did drawings, it really lay out the artist exactly what he wanted. There's a drawing right at the end of this with a very wizened old character who's got lines all over his face and he looks a bit like, it's a spider's web. It was really quite a frightening story. That was put for this summer the ideas and we said no, no.

We're definitely not looking for horror comic, it's going to be mystery that change the [unintelligible 00:40:44] think. That was toned down to be the one that we've got. I know Pat [unintelligible 00:40:53] these were all rather tame and went back to the old sole of things. We were talking about -- a reasonably young age group, it wasn't going to look like a teenage magazine which is a gone entity in ages, you could've done something a little bit more horrific, if you like.

Perhaps nowadays you get away with it, I was just looking the other night and Halloween, that the way that goes on. It used to be quite fun, you know these witches, and ghosts and what-have-you but some of the people walking around now, look as though they've come from a car crash. They're really quite frightening characters.

Julia: Absolutely. Genuinely horrific.

Wilf: Cause it's Halloween -- Halloween's got so quiet, sinister in some ways, doesn't it?

Julia: Kinds running around with chainsaws on the student campuses, and so on. It's definitely gotten a bit out of hand.

Wilf: Yes. I think nowadays people are really going over-the-top at this. I think possibly, -- younger magazines and publications you could possibly start doing there but at the time, it was really a little bit too scary, I think.

Julia: I think, it was quite scary enough as it was, in all honesty. [crosstalk] Freakiest one as I might have mentioned to -- we did read *Misty* around age nine or seven. I think he's gonna remember sort of, reading it. When I was 10, that was quite enough for me. I'll be honest, you know. Some of those stories have stayed with me. In that exact format, there was a couple of particular stories that some of the one-off

complete stories that I have remembered until this day, when I finally found them and re-read them. The final panels and the final wording, exactly as I remembered it.

That is kind of etched itself on my brain, and kept me awake and gave me a scare. I don't know if I had wanted to read Pat's horror comic. I think it might have been too much for me.

Wilf: I think so and I think they were right at that time. I think, when we eventually did get the Misty characters it was quite nice to have somebody although she was -- obviously, not quite at this world. She wasn't at all intimidating, she was quiet could've been your older sister, maybe. She was good looking. She was very calm, and kind, and reassuring. I think having that sort of character, is quite good.

Julia: At least for me, it's one of the things that I think really did -- it's the only thing that I remember is most clearly about the comic and when you look at the reader's letters and the response to it, Misty herself is something they're all absolutely in love with. It's very different from what was there before, the Nathan character that you said Bill Harrington might have proposed. That's very similar to the Damien Darke, to the Mystery Story Teller, to Bones, to everyone who's been their previously.

What I like about Misty is that she's very -- she's different from that. She's -- maybe a bit like Gypsy Rose who obviously does her own hosting as well. She's much more -- she's reassuring. She's like your guide. In that sense, she's providing a sort of buffer between the tales but not in a kind of American comics comedy sort of way. Just in a sort of -- a protective way. All her kind of welcomes -- I absolutely like that. I think without her, the comic would've been a very different thing. The horror comic patented was not necessarily a better option at all.

Wilf: No. She come about really by accident, we just couldn't come up with a title something that was a bit different. Pat's almost right, what happened -- we got a few stories together, and I thought, right. I don't see Pat he lived in Colchester so I went to up-to-date with John Stenning, he was a **[unintelligible 00:45:11]** a friend of mine. I thought the three of us go out and we can have a bit to eat and then we'll throw around a few ideas.

We went up to Pat's house, we had a bite, talked over a few story ideas, and then came back and I thought, "Right. Really got to try and come up with a title now" because we've got stories but we've got no directions because there's nothing to hang it on. Just couldn't come up with anything, he's always afraid to look through a dictionary. Dictionary is a great source of story ideas, film books.

So we sit on the floor looking through magazines, film books from Pat. Went through the entire index and eventually Play Misty for Me was there. Which is absolutely true, that's what Pat said, but I happened to spot it and I said, "Misty because it's Tammy. It's Jinty. It's Sandy. It's Judy. It's Bunty." The name that is a typical girl's comic name, but different and of course you've got fabulous image, you've got your mist. You've got your mystery, it's almost mystery in itself -- Misty, isn't it?

I said, "The amount of atmosphere we can just get from somebody called, "Misty" and that was it. When we went back, I typed out, "Misty first letter." which I've actually can't quite find written version here. Jack Cunningham, actually then hand

lettered them every week, which gave it a nice personal touch. You can see that we really didn't know quite what Misty was, at the time, because our last paragraph is, "Who am I? My name is Misty. That's one day, I will tell you my story."

Obviously, that time, I couldn't tell you the story because I didn't know who she was or what she looked like, or anything. Jack had this great idea of Shirley Bellwood who he'd known as an illustrator. She wasn't a strip artist but she did some romantic illustrations for the romance titles. **[unintelligible]** he came up with the idea of the moon and the bats on the logo. I asked him, "Where did that come from? Was that taken from **[unintelligible]**?" and he said, "No. To be honest, it was quite an obvious thing. We've got mystery and spooky. What goes together? Moons and Bats." **[unintelligible]**

Julia: It looks good. It's actually very similar to a story logo that appears in Jinty around then as well, I don't know if he was the artist It'd be interesting to find out. I think the story's called, "Dancing to death" or something like that. That little -- individual stories have their kind of "Start logo" and particular font and stuff. That little bat thing attached to it. I only found it very recently, it's not quite the same, the bat's a little bit different. Maybe he was the artist on that as well, I don't know. I'd watch out coming out at some point.

As you would both say all that stuff comes out of the name, really. It's often **[unintelligible 00:48:58]** [crosstalk]

Wilf: Then eventually, she did some more drawings, we got the character. I don't quite remember where the Cavern of Dreams came from, but all these little touches then came about and Misty became a character -- there were stories about her. The first two or three issues we really didn't know quite what she was. We'd really thought so she was dead, but we'd be playing for time thinking, "What are we going to do with it?".

Julia: It seems to me from looking at [crosstalk] -- Go on. Carry on. I was going to say, seems to me from looking at the reader's letters, and the run of it, that actually a lot of the snippets of information that come out are really, sort of in response to on going questions from the readers. There's this mystery that is sustained throughout the whole thing, so readers want to know, "Where do you live? Where do you come from?" She very seldom gives any detail but perhaps, just throws more undefined terms at us like the Cavern of Dreams, like I'm the daughter of the lords of the nest and so on, it just kind of builds up this very mythological kind of world I suppose. Without actually any detail attached to it which is fascinating to me.

Wilf: I think it's quite a nice device if you don't give too much away then you can go anywhere you like.

Julia: Absolutely and readers love it, there are at least two letters I found in the realm where people really do say very directly , "I hope you don't tell us your story because I'd like to think of you as someone mysterious and it would almost spoiler if you told us who you are and where you came from and so on." I think even the readers are kind of aware that this is a sort of a game they are playing to trying to find out something about that, and they would never get the full picture.

Wilf: That's what we saw and maybe truly and of course it could make it a little bit easier from our point of view because she didn't really have to come up with a backstory. If you like, and you could just sort of change things all for all. That's good. I'd we put an I'd. It didn't really don't get anything it said before because you don't really say that much.

Julia: You wrote all the inside cover welcomes, and has it run along?

Wilf: No. I certainly did the first one, I might have done two or three but by the time Malcolm was tied up [unintelligible 00:51:35] he was there I think, or possibly [unintelligible 00:51:40] Bill Harrington... I didn't continue doing those.

Julia: Malcolm then took over as editor, quite early on, [unintelligible] maybe a few months in on something like that when I would check when Mirror validate and then I would probably know.

Wilf: I don't tell exactly when, but obviously it was working roughly six weeks in advance. It took quite a few things set up. He was writing the [unintelligible 00:52:12] than doing almost clearing up the title at that time so I would as well been carrying on for a bit until he could come in. So there was a bit of an overlap.

Julia: That's what I wanted to check though because I thought Bill Harrington was writing the [unintelligible 00:52:32] but maybe I am wrong. You would know better than me. This is all the information I kind of deduced from various places online so it's not necessarily accurate in many ways. I am sorry it is [unintelligible 00:52:52], my mistake sorry.

Wilf: Sometimes difficult things overlap and people change ideas and co-writes some things and I thought it was. [crosstalk]

Julia: I know you are right.

Wilf: There is a story in there, Moodstone, that was a story of two ideas I had this idea of this ring and Pat had some other ideas, so we combined two ideas and that was two ideas rolled into one there. That was one of the few concessions I got for *Misty* to have some color because really I got into all sorts of trouble with management. I kept arguing for a decent publication, decent paper, I said, you know, they've got nice glossy paper abroad and in America.

Why can't we get away from the horrible letter press and pretty awful printing? I was always shouted down for that, but the concession I had got was to have 4 colored pages: the cover, probably the center spread, and the last page. The idea of this first one was a little bit yellow brick road, while that was all black and white color and in the end, it became color and this way we revised and it's covers and it then became black and white color. I thought it was just another way of introducing color which the other comments didn't have at that time and we could use it as a device for the story.

Julia: It worked very well on that story. I think it's a real good use of it and it did on various points. Was that scripted by you and Pat then, Moodstone,

Wilf: Yes. Pat wasn't very keen. He didn't like the use of one-offs and the colour and things... he wanted it really gritty. He liked what he called a dirty look and he wanted it really back and white and smudgy, I can see its got its place, but I was rather hoping for something a little bit different and perhaps move away from what we had done before. This was the best he could get and, as they say, he who pays the piper, and you know that's what they wanted and you either did it or you gave up, and unless we wanted to set our own publishing company up, what can you do?

Julia: Absolutely, and it sounds like you fought for some things that were really important at lots of different stages as well because you are responsible for putting the credits in *Tammy*, aren't you? In the previous time.

Wilf: I can't believe that it had that much of a penalty. I am not sure when it was, it could be I let it be group editing, a few different sets of opinion because of management. I said, "look you want me to do the job I would do but I am going to stand off full by my decision", so I am not going to do a thing without agreeing with him to take the blame for it. So I sort of tacked it in and went back to editing. And it could be it was at time when I had gone back, I can't quite remember. Have you got any dates for when the credit first went in?

Julia: I think it's early '80s, I haven't got the date in front of me. I would have said around-- it's shortly after 2000 AD. I would have said maybe 84 but I am not sure. I can check because I do have some somewhere, so I can check and get back to you. I'll send you by email so you've got a clearer idea.

Wilf: It is a long time ago, but I know what we did at one time its. You've heard of Pat Davidson?

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: One of the writers and Alan Davidson they were sort of husband and wife writing team. Pat Davidson her other name was Anne Digby and she wrote a series of books about the Trebizon school. They were [unintelligible 00:57:26] school characters if you like it's that sort of series of characters and they thought it might be an idea if we do a [unintelligible 00:57:41] book in a picture strip.

We went along with that. Pat said, look it could be a good idea if we put [unintelligible 00:57:54] on it because that sound it was [inaudible 00:57:56] they were world selling books at that time. That would possibly sell more copies. It was a little bit [unintelligible 00:58:08] we had in check and we said why not. It was up until that point [inaudible 00:58:15] with paint brushes writing out part of signatures. I have to admit I have done that [laughs]. That was a process why we paint out signatures. It was a bit revolutionary to have a by-line and I think I must have said at that time, "Well look, why is everybody anonymous? If we're doing it for one why don't we do it for all?" and I think it might have stemmed from that.

Julia: That's what I've read and been told by other people I spoken to. I've just checked the date, they appear in *Tammy* in 1982, so I was a little bit off, around July that is when it starts to get across to there.

Wilf: That would be about right because I'm just looking at *Misty*, that was 78. I think I certainly wasn't doing *Misty* anyway at that time because Malcolm was editing. I think I'd sort of given up being group editor. Must have gone back to *Tammy* and all of that different things are happening. I think it probably was to do with the [unintelligible 00:59:33] and that was also like a trigger for really identifying everybody. I wish we'd talked about that earlier and done it on *Misty* actually because I look through it and I think, "I do remember that but I can't remember who wrote it or drew it."

Julia: Well this is insane. There are pocket full stories of people like Pat and Alan Davidson leaving because they weren't getting credited. I've never really managed to confirm or deny and from different sources I've heard that just because things paid better so the

Dutch team are just paid more money and that's fair enough as well.

Wilf: Yes

Julia: I need to check that with them.

Wilf: Well it's true, Pat was always looking for more credit and sort of saying "Well look my story is popular, I think I deserve a bit more money."

Julia: Yes, yes.

Wilf: He was always, you know, pushing to promote himself and you know, fair enough, he came up with the goods and we thought, well you know you've done as good job, he knows the story, he's worth a bit more.

Julia: Yes, absolutely.

Wilf: We did sort of have to budget. I'm sure some people may have got a bit extra but there wasn't the super star status at those time where somebody could demand double the fee for example. It just wasn't possible.

Julia: No and you can see why it's in your director's interest to keep it that way as well really, so you know, just to keep the comics coming out smoothly and so on. As a researcher looking back on them now I mean the art is one thing you know from speaking to quite a few artists and using their skills and you know kind of recognizing different people's styles, that becomes identifiable but the writers is a whole different level, and yes the writers is a really difficult to identify, especially because so much of it was freelance and so on. As I said, as I said in my email I've hit a wall really when it comes to who was doing what.

Wilf: Yes. Well what I can do, I can, I can certainly give you some names.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: Now I can't always put a name to a particular story but I can give you a list of different writers that were used over the years and you know if-

Julia: That would be amazing.

Wilf: -something comes back I might be able to relate a story to a name but what I'll do, I'll email those to you rather than sort of tell you over the phone, I'll do a list of names and I can do a sort of, something like Bill Harrington if I put Waifs of the Wigmaker, it's a Tammy story, that is the sort of thing he did. If you came across similar period play type stories, the chances are it would be a Harrington.

Julia: Yes, sure. No that's incredibly helpful.

Wilf: I mean it's not, it's not an absolute foolproof formula but if I can give you a name and the type of thing they specialized in if you like, it might, it might just link up with a few stories.

Julia: No, Yes. Yes, Yes. That would be amazing, thank you so much because as I said I've got a small handful of names and that's it so yes, I mean anyone I can, yes anyone I can link to, even if I can't find out what they wrote, it is just interesting to know what they wrote for this title.

Wilf: Yes.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: Well that, that, you know we can use that as an ongoing project if you like, everyone now and then-.

Julia: Sure, Yes.

Wilf: -if I speak to somebody or a name comes to mind I'll, I'll let you know.

Julia: Please, Yes.

Wilf: I am trying to track down some different bits of paperwork. You can imagine you know forty years, something has been tucked away. Um I've got a little bit of a mess at the moment because I was sort of in-laws and then mum died a couple of years back.

Julia: Oh okay.

Wilf: We've have got box loads of things we haven't sorted out so some of my stuff is under boxes at other people's see?

Julia: Yes okay.

Wilf: I am gradually trying to find them and you know if things come to mind I will definitely let you know.

Julia: Please do, Yes.

Wilf: Um one thing, I just got a note, it might or might not be interesting but on the um new comics we always had a free gift.

Julia: Yes, Yes.

Wilf: Um, the first one is a [1:03:49 unintelligible]. It was a horrible thing, it was -

Julia: Blue fish.

Wilf: It was a blue fish bracelet, you know.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: Right we had a department that specialized in getting gifts and doing promotions and what have you and a chap whose job it was to go out to Hong Kong and different places in the far East and pick up gifts as cheaply as possible.

Julia: Yes, Yes.

Wilf: Obviously he had been sent out to get something for this new comic so he came to me with this horrible blue fish bracelet. I said, "No, no, it's horrible, we can't, what are we going to do with that? It's no good." He said, "It's too late I've bought them in Hong Kong." 250,000 or whatever it was. I thought bloody hell, how am I going to justify this?

So, inside there is quite a nice little cartoon um of a character whose got this dolphin sores on her, she's seen a fortune teller, I think if you've got a copy there you'll find it in there. This was [unintelligible 1:04:57] and Ted Andrews, he's a really clever lad.

Julia: Right, Yes.

Wilf: I said, "Do something for god's sakes with this horrible blue bracelet [unintelligible 1:05:07] So he come up with a nice little cartoon and it ends up she said, "Oh, you know um, it's my lucky day after all. This blue dolphin has brought me [unintelligible 1:05:17]" So it's an introduction to the comic.

Julia: Right Yes.

Wilf: So that's why we had that particular lightweight thing.

Julia: Amazing.

Wilf: It's just such a horrible gift we thought we've got to justify it.

Julia: The irony being that people loved it I think as well. It went quite well.

Wilf: Well I think possibly I wasn't a good [unintelligible 01:05:49] of girl's taste because also in my career I'm the chap who turned down my little pony.

Julia: Oh really? Oh.

Wilf: They came to me with this thing and I thought god what's this awful purple horse with a red mane? Nobody is going to like that, it's ghastly. I had the opportunity of either having free gifts or doing a strip or something with My Little Pony and I turned it down.

Julia: Yes. I know.

Wilf: I thought blimey, you know, I mean you know what's done to My Little Pony.

Julia: Yes. I did not know that.

Wilf: There you go, so [unintelligible 01:06:11] blue dolphin ring was um something that was appreciated but not by me.

Julia: Well I mean people look back on it I think. Yes.

Wilf: Luckily, the, the next one was a black cat ring.

Julia: Yes and that was lovely. Yes.

Wilf: That actually was incorporated. Now whether or not, I really don't remember whether the story, The Council of Cats already had a girl with the ring, or we may have managed to get them to get a ring to go with the story, but it's obviously not coincidence –.

Julia: No.

Wilf: One of these characters has this ring and we've got this black cat ring as a free gift.

Julia: Yes. I, I don't know when the ring turns up in the story. I would because that because, Yes as you said it may have been added in to coincide with that or it might already have been there um so I'll find out.

Wilf: Yes I think I think it was the second ah. Not sure I think it might have been the second episode but certainly by number two, this, Yes it is number two, I've, I've got it here um.

Julia: Okay Yes.

Wilf: Yes she is showing her ring. Was it the ah -?

Julia: Oh okay.

Wilf: The ring with the picture of a cat?

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: Yes I can see the ring and it's exactly that.

Julia: It's exactly the same.

Wilf: I think we must have um, either had this black cat ring early on and got that incorporated in the story or vice versa got hold of the ring to go with the story but that is one of the few occasions where something could really be closely linked

Julia: Yes, okay yes.

Wilf: Quite often you just had to pin your piece of plastic and ah, stuck with a bobby pin to make the most of it.

Julia: Yes and all coming from this central department, so like the competitions department, you just kind of had a free gifts department and they just give that to you?

Wilf: Yes, yes.

Julia: Okay that's interesting. "This is what you've got, sell it, you know."

Wilf: Well that's, that's right, Yes.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: It's, it's a funny little story but it's all part of how the comics were made up and what you had to do with quite often what you were given and not what you wanted, um so there is a lot of compromise and you are quite often trying to justify something and make it work for you and not ah, not be counterproductive.

Julia: Yes sure. Well absolutely. Um, oh what else can I ask you? How are you doing, do you need a break or are you happy to keep talking to me?

Wilf: I'm, I'm okay um.

Julia: Yes?

Wilf: Some of these other things, I've been making sort of notes on your questions. Things like the payments um I really can't remember what we paid the artist. I'm going to ask Mario [unintelligible 1:09:02] daughter.

Julia: Right.

Wilf: She's been looking through all his artwork; he died a few years back.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: She's been looking through all his artwork and um paperwork.

Julia: Okay.

Wilf: She may well have some receipts.

Julia: Yes.

Wilf: I think a total figure of about 150 in mind but I could be wrong on that.

Julia: Yes okay.

Wilf: Um but generally we sort of paid for a set, which they sort of called it a set, was usually three pages but if it was a two page or a one page then there would be a prorata payment.

Julia: Okay. Yes.

Wilf: I will go and look into that for you, I should -.

Julia: Yes, I mean a lot of these, a lot of these are speculative questions, I'm not expecting you to remember all this at this late stage you know. Anything you are happy to find out I'm really grateful for but I, I appreciate this is, this is forty years on you know, a lot of stuff has changed.

Wilf: Yes, but I will ask her because I'm sort of quite interested.

I was making payments for years. I don't know why I've forgotten that, but [chuckles]. But some things aren't so important. What else was there on there? I know there was some other things.

Julia: I was interested in the make-up of the team. You've told me most of the people involved I think, because now you've mentioned Ted Andrews as the Art Assistant as well. It was the complicated editorial path, because when you read things online, Pat is adamant that you were the editor. Then, of course, I spoke to Brenda Ellis, Malcolm Shaw's widow quite extensively, and it sounds like he was the editor for the bulk of the run of it, but that perhaps someone took over at the end, possibly when Malcolm moved to Spain, which he and the family did at some point? I've got that down as Norman Worker. I don't know if you know if that's true or not?

Wilf: Yes he was. I think he worked with Mavis Miller some years back on probably, School Friend, or June, or one of those. I mean, he looked a little bit like one of the old storytellers - he always had a pipe on the go - shirt and tie and jacket and he really looked very much like that storyteller.

Julia: Interesting. Pat doesn't rate his input very much - Pat Mills. Pat has this as the time when Misty suddenly became very stuck in its ways and so on. I don't know--

Wilf: Yes. It probably was sort of, getting towards the end then and probably Norman wasn't very innovative. Malcolm had gone. I think as well, there were disputes. We had industrial disputes during the period. We had the three-day week. I remember clearly, sitting on Tammy with a candle stuck on my typewriter in the afternoons, trying to work. I suppose that's just an indication as well, of how keen we were because I think nowadays you'd say, "well, look there's no light - I'm going off home", but you know, we wanted to get the things done and we actually went out and bought candles to stick on top of the typewriter [laughter].

Julia: That's dedication right--

Wilf: It was like something from a Misty story, sitting there by candlelight. It's bonkers, isn't it.

Julia: It's atmospheric. It is incredible.

Wilf: That's the sort of time. Everybody was keen, wanted to do it, not let anybody down. It was a bit of a laugh as well. I think certainly by the time Norman went on it, things weren't as exciting as they had been.

Julia: And that probably translated too, to falling sales and thus the kind of Tammy merger, I suppose. Because Tammy always seems to be doing well, so this would be to prop up Misty. A sad end.

Wilf: Basically, if your team was an editor, a sub, an art editor and the art assistant or 'the bodger' as we unkindly called him. The bodger was there doing a lot of stuff. If the balloons had gone on in the wrong place, they'd have to be moved and the art work's all **[unintelligible 01:13:40]** and things like that. There's a lot of touching up going on. There'd be things like where we did have some color, we had spot colors. Some of the stories were-- had red bits on them. Still, that was done as an overlay. The artist would do his stuff in black and white and then we'd come back and there'd be an acetate put on it and the color would go on that.

Julia: That makes sense.

Wilf: That was another part of the process.

Julia: Colouring the covers-- Would this have been a art assistant job as well? Because I noticed that a lot of the images on the covers are either, if they're not of Misty, they're panels from stories that have then been colored to go on there so that's--

Wilf: Yes because you couldn't always get something drawn in time, or there's money to consider as well. A lot of covers were actually from the stories. One or two of the early Misty ones-- they might pick a panel-- I think there was a locust one. I think Malcolm was editing by that time. He said, "right, we'll put this on the front. Here's a picture, can you write a story to go with it?" So, there were quite a few occasions where I was given a picture, and I'd sit and write something to justify that picture on the cover.

Julia: You were writing some of the stories as well, for Misty, at this time as part of--?

Wilf: I did, yes. In the early days. I can tell you what those were - I can email you a list of those. I did eight or nine scripts and eight or nine of the text stories. Then I went on and did other things later and it wasn't a waste of time for that.

Julia: Anything you can remember about the stories you wrote would be really useful, and I sent you a link to the database I've got up online, didn't I? So--

Wilf: Yes.

Julia: -if you can't remember the title, but you know what was in it, you can search for that as well. I know it was about--

Wilf: Yes. I'll send you-- I've actually got a set of cuttings there, so I can send you the titles later on. I think it would be easier if I email that, rather than try and tell you over the phone. Easier for you as well - you can have a list that you can print out.

Julia: Yes that's lovely. Thank you. That's really good. Am I right in thinking that Bill Harrington is the sub-editor throughout this time as well then? Or--

Wilf: Yes. For quite a bit of the time-- he used to write for Tammy. He'd do things like "Waifs of the Wigmaker". He was quite a theatrical character-

Julia: He used to be an actor.

Wilf: - he liked a period story.

Julia: Did he used to be an actor? Was I right in thinking that, or he used to be a radio actor--?

Wilf: He used to be involved in the stage in some way, yes. We had somebody else called Robin May, who worked on the Look and Learn titles. He was another theatrical one, so we did have a few 'lovies' and they'd always refer to people as "love" and "darling" and things as well, so the loviaes [unintelligible 01:17:05] [laughter]. Bill was a lovely bloke. Now, unfortunately, he died [chuckle] in a sort of a Misty sort of way. He was out on Wanstead Flats walking his dog one day - a thunder storm - he was struck by lightning and killed and his dog wandered off home.

Julia: Oh my God. Okay.

Wilf: The dog wandered off home and, "where's Bill?"-- go out and there he is. I'm not saying we laughed, but we had a sort of wry grin at his funeral and said, "well, this is like one of his stories - if he had to go, this is probably the sort of way he'd want to go". Because that was the sort of ending that he would have written about.

Julia: Yes. Dramatic.

Wilf: So that was the last of Bill. I can't remember who else went on that afterwards, but it could have been towards the end, and maybe they could have had a freelancing or I really don't remember-

Julia: When did he die?

Wilf: -the final dates.

Julia: When did he die because-

Wilf: Sorry-

Julia: When did Bill Harrington die, because I don't really know anything about him at all. He's been impossible find details about online. Was this back then, or was this more recently?

Wilf: No, no while he was actually working on Misty.

Julia: Okay.

Wilf: Yes. He was on the team at the time-- terrible to say, I don't remember what year that was. I mean, it might be something that I could Google and come up with-

Julia: No that's okay, I'll do some more research.

Wilf: It's terrible. You sort of remember people, but you can't remember all the dates sometimes--

Julia: Well it's a really long time ago. I'm so conscious of this. It's forty years past and it's a very short period of time. Misty runs for just over two and a bit years, or perhaps a bit less than two years, so there's very little-- it's a very short thing to try and ask people to focus on, so I don't expect anyone to remember exactly what happened when. That's why I'm having so much fun trying to pull out who's on this editorial team at different times.

I think finally, I've got a handle on it, which is really great, because there's just no information and of course, after Malcolm died then-- he's the person that I really need to speak to, I think, which is obviously not going to happen, which is a real shame. But it sounds like he managed the bulk of it in a way-

Wilf: Yes.

Julia: -while it was established.

Wilf: He went on-- he did do something else before he died. There's a very short-lived magazine called 'Beeb' which was a BBC paper, a sort of look-- what's the ITV one - Looking, I think? It was a BBC version-- I've worked with him on that. Unfortunately it lasted thirteen weeks

or so, he died during the -- in fact I don't think he even saw the first publication he'd worked on it and then he was ill and then he died before it actually came out. That was very good the BBC just wanted too much money everybody wanted a slice of the cake. If you put somebody's life and say they wanted money they really just drained it very quickly.

Julia: Sure. That sounds typical really doesn't it, it's hard to do.

Wilf: You had what else here, list of names I will send you some of those.

Julia: That will be great.

Wilf: If you listed things I got in the early those I'll put the nice stories together.

Julia: That will be amazing.

Wilf: I'm sure that there's some other stories proper just see something sprung to mind just to show the sort of spaces and things in the early days. We did actually get a letter from somebody saying, "Oh I could do with a little bit of extra money for Christmas I thought I might ride you some balloons," thinking that's all we had to do for comic. It was all a little bit disappointing anything all that that's what people thought it was.

Julia: I think your audience appreciated it. I think there is such an interest in the girls' comics now and academically speaking quite of my few colleagues are working in this area and they're publishing stories of people's oral histories about what they remember and what they did with these stories. How important they were in forming

their morals I guess and their ethics and that perception of what it was like to be a girl back in the 60s or 70s or whatever.

It's really good for me or someone who came to in a bit later I was born in some [unintelligible:01:22:08] I'm reading Misty it's some kind of reprint and is a guide jumbo sales and anything like that and picking it up. The girls comic is so important to me as a kid and there is a lot of different websites now online there is at least three really good really detailed dedicated websites to comics like [inaudible 01:22:27] and the IPC frame from Germany, there is DC Thompson and I think it's really starting to gather steam and peoples are becoming really interested in having treated them as completely disposable for a really long time. Like all good creative work it perhaps got recognized in its time for it's readership but I think now it's getting a lot of attention, which I think is great.

Wilf: I'm amazed obviously the school which studied [unintelligible:01:22:58] but to think people are now looking at comics in that sort of way where really at a time when treated comics are bad for you that you weren't learning anything and it's rubbish. While I always argue well it's your opinion but to keep on reading it, that gets them in the reading habit they can read magazines, they can buy books they can read ready journal you've got to get kids reading.

Julia: Absolutely.

Wilf: That's why I think J.K. Rowling is so good whether or not it's great literature and it doesn't matter I think they're well written they're very comic book in their way. I think she's taken ideas from so many different places, but put it together in such a way that it grabs kids attention. They're reading which I think is fantastic I think it's so important they would get their hands to read because when there's a power cut and the batteries doesn't exist anymore what are people going to do for pastime?

Julia: Absolutely when all we've got is our candles again then we're going to be in trouble.

Wilf: That's right.

Julia: Now I completely agree and as well as I think there's -- as we started off by saying this is about story telling this is about telling a great story in the medium that you're telling it in. You can see it now there is a lot more respect being paid to something like TV now as well. We've got channels like HBO, The Big Americans Indications bringing quality story telling, long form story telling to TV which traditionally again was not studied in universities. That was felt to be lower class and so on, for me comic studies is following TV studies which followed film studies and it is getting to that status. It is a slow process but it's happening and finally it's getting some attention which I think is fantastic and well deserved.

Wilf: No, it's fascinating I can't really believe that when I think back it was far away the newspapers really today's comic is tomorrows fish and chips wrapper well that's the way it went, but we got people like you now looking at it and thinking they push from merit in it and it's [unintelligible:01:25:20] really.

[01:25:39] [END OF AUDIO]