

Contemporary TV Times Feature articles

With thanks to Mandy Knighton-Clark

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1: My Story by Edward Woodward – Part one: TV Times 18th December 1971



many lives of Callan

meets the eye in *Callan* – as you can see in *Another Edward Woodward Hour*, on Boxing about *Callan*? After all, on the surface he is simply a miserable, surly, clever killer. Yet most of us somehow sympathise with him. Is it a quality of *Callan*? Or a special quality first of three parts, Woodward tells his life story to KEN ROCHE, a poignant most of all it shows the remarkable quality of the man who plays at violence

seemed very superior to us and therefore children to be especially envied.

I was born in 1930 and life wasn't always good for the average working-class family. But my father was lucky; he managed to stay in work. They tried to save hard out of his money – I think it was about £2 10s. a week; and I remember we had one of those great big box radios full of valves that you were almost frightened to look into.

But there was always the overall feeling of warmth and care and cosiness. I still make a point of driving down that road sometimes and I think what a wonderful way I was brought up.

I never got to that grammar school. I left the area when I was seven, but I know most of the other kids in the street made it.

In those early days one of our very special games was playing the Chimps' Tea Party. I was the youngest of the bunch and I was the only one who hadn't been to the zoo to watch the actual tea party. But it didn't matter as long as you got the idea and we would all lope around dangling our arms and pretending to be educated apes.

Another thing I remember – most of the time I was the only boy in the street. All the others were girls. I must have been way ahead of myself discovering that females were lovely and soft and feminine! But I was never to become a brilliant "chatter-upper" of girls. I was always too basically shy for that.

I certainly wasn't a tough youngster – not by a long way. But I was taught to box almost from the time I could toddle. My grandfather lived about half a mile away and he had a gymnasium in his garden that he built himself. His hobbies were growing chrysanthemums and training amateur boxers in Croydon.

Nearly every day I'd be round there and he would give us boxing lessons. Of course, most of the time it was more or less just shadow-boxing because grandfather made sure no-one ever hurt themselves. He would watch us like a lynx to make sure no-one bullied someone else. It

was all really very good, harmless fun. And it made me feel quite grown-up, too.

At seven we moved to Wallington. One memory that springs to mind is watching my Dad making poultry deliveries on his bike. Remember those "stop-me-and-buy-one" ice-cream cycles, with the big box thing in front? He used one of those, because he had never been able to drive as he had something wrong with one of his eyes.

A year before the war I was eight and both my parents had become Air-Raid Precaution workers. One day a lorry arrived outside our door and some people unloaded dozens and dozens of boxes.

They were gas masks and for the next several months Mum and Dad went around to various places giving demonstrations on how to use them. For my bit towards the war effort, I was used as a guinea pig and Mum would take me to schools to show the pupils how to put on the children's masks. They had comic faces like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. You could say it was my first real acting job!

The war really came home to us in 1944, when I was 14. Our house was bombed out by a doodlebug – one of the V-1 flying bombs.

I remember it was a lovely summer's day and we were sitting out in the garden with my uncle, who had just come back from the army abroad. There was a warning on, but no-one let that interfere with their day-to-day lives, because it was happening all the time.

Anyway, we saw this doodlebug and were listening to the noise of it when suddenly it cut out. I was watching it, looking round a side passage, I remember.

As it cut out my father shouted: "Come on – let's go!" We rushed to the shelter. My mother came up from the bottom of the garden and dived in.

For one split second I glanced behind and there was this machine which completely filled my whole vision. I don't know what happened next. I woke up about an hour later

covered in rubble and there was the house – gone.

One thing I shall never forget was the incredible noise of it.

I was lucky. I had caught my face on the side of the shelter and my arm was lacerated, but I was all right. We all escaped, but my father was pretty badly injured and he spent weeks in hospital.

The doodlebug actually dived into the front garden. If it had landed a few feet further on and struck the house itself then I doubt if any of

us would have survived. However, we spent a few weeks in a rest centre for bombed-out families and then moved around among relatives – the usual thing for those days.

But before that time something else was beginning to develop in the young Woodward that was going to point me very definitely towards the theatre.

At school, one of the teachers was a Mrs. Grace King. She was to have more influence on me, outside of my parents, than anyone, yet



Three faces of the boy who became *Callan*. Of his childhood Edward Woodward says: "There was always the feeling of warmth."



Callan (continued)

she was a very reticent woman. So much so, that years later when she was approached to appear on TV – when Eamonn Andrews pulled a *This Is Your Life* on me – she refused to appear. She felt it was nothing to do with her and she'd be intruding.

I have often thought that her basic shyness was one of the reasons she particularly helped me at school. I was so shy I could hardly communicate sometimes, and she was quick to recognise the difficulties I had.

She helped me to talk, to converse – to relax more with people. She instilled in me an instinct for acting without necessarily pushing me towards it. She taught English, music and drama and I started doing school plays more as a therapy for my shyness.

I still keep in touch with Mrs. King and I look upon her as a friend.

It was a bit difficult for other teachers to take, because I was always regarded as her favourite, and frankly at the time I was a bit worried about that.

But now when I can look back and get it into its proper perspective, I realise that she had a very special knack of being a good educationist.

It wasn't only me, either. There were several people like me whom she helped through the difficulty of communication.

There was another woman who did a lot for me – that was Marion Renner at Kingston Commercial College, where I was from about 14 to 16.

You know, I've got to go off on a sidetrack here. The very process of recalling things like going to school and dredging up one's childhood has suddenly made me realise why I could never become big-headed even though I'm supposed to be a star.

Everything really is so transitory, so unstable. But schools and attitudes of mind like Mrs. King's and Marion Renner's are not.

When you go back to an old school to give away the prizes (as I did recently), or return to an old rep. company you worked for, you realise the complete impermanence of yourself as part of humanity. The permanence, if you like, of everything else but yourself.

There's my old school for instance. It was there before I was born and will almost certainly be there after I'm dead. The education system will still be going on. The theatre that was old before you first crept into its staid door will still be there when there's a memorial plaque to you in its only lavatory.

Every so often I – we all – run into glimmers of insight like this. I thank God we do because, for me at any rate, it helps so much to keep things in perspective.

I didn't lose all my shyness, but teachers like those took a lot of the



Aged 10 (above), 11 (inset) and 17, with his mother (top). "The very process of recalling things ... dredging up one's childhood has suddenly made me realise why I could never be big-headed ..."

pain from it. Mrs. King communicated to me her own enthusiasm for the theatre and all the arts; and Miss Renner – who had gained practical experience as an actress – was the first to actively suggest that I became an actor.

I think I'd thought about being an actor. But how do you become an actor? I had clumsily suggested to myself that I would be a journalist. My thoughts about being an actor were pure pipe-dream stuff. Even though I was an avid radio-play listener ...

Miss Renner pointed it out to me: "Why try and be a journalist when you've the makings of an actor? Let's be honest – you're not very good at shorthand; your typing isn't all that hot; you know nothing about real journalism – and you've got a flair for acting."

Thus armed, or disarmed, with this kind of enthusiasm for and interest in, me, I applied for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art examination.

I suppose I automatically assumed that when I left school I should go out and earn some kind of living. If I passed the R.A.D.A. audition I would not only have my fees paid for me, but also have a grant of about the same amount I could expect to earn in commerce.

But I had to wait for the result and for about three months I worked for

a sanitary engineer in Horseferry Road, London, as a junior clerk pretending to know shorthand and struggling through with typing at 40 words a minute. They gave me £2 10s. a week. It's the only work I've ever done outside the theatre.

When I passed my R.A.D.A. entrance, my fees were paid and I was given a grant of – £2 10s. a week.

At 16-plus I later learned that up until that time I was the youngest male student to go into the Royal Academy.

To be in something I was beginning to feel at home with and getting 50 bob a week (minus £1 to my parents) was good going in those days. It was many years before I was as well off as in those days.

My first real repertory work was at Farnham, during my R.A.D.A. days. It was on a "shares" basis. We didn't get any money other than a piece of what came in. The best week I think I got £3. The worst was a token halfpenny for our production of *Othello*. Imagine that: a ha'penny for a week's work. I've still got that ha'penny, so I suppose you could say I was never really broke.

Then came a Grand Tour of Europe. That was for a touring company which was to play all over England and the Continent.

We went to King's Lynn, then on to the old King's Theatre, Hammer-smith, and that was the end of it. End

of the Grand Tour and I was out of work. The first big theatrical smack in the eye.

A big friend of mine on that gigantic fiasco was Harry Towb, newly over from Ireland. We became very friendly in the three months of rehearsals before the world-shattering tour, and eventually I asked my mother if Harry could move in with us so he could escape from the gloomy digs he was in.

Altogether I did a straight run of eight years in rep. During that time I was always lucky. I was rarely out of work for more than a week or two. I didn't earn much money, but I was rarely out of work. It was a long time before I went through the thing most actors go through, which is total rejection everywhere for month after month after month.

But I did get one awful rejection. At 17 I went to join Perth Repertory Theatre, which had a pretty strong cast. It would cost a lot to get them all together these days. There were performers such as Sarah Lawson, Donald Pleasence, Richard Johnson and Gordon Jackson.

But that wasn't on my mind when I arrived as an eager teenager. It was a beautiful brunette in the company. A girl called Margaret.

This was my first big, idyllic love affair. I saved hard and we became engaged. I spent the vast sum of £25 on an engagement ring (I got it through a friend in the trade so it was cheaper than it might have been). I even went out and bought our first pieces of furniture. Imagine! Building a nest already, as an 18-year-old rep. actor!

It's odd enough these days; then, it was ludicrous.

But I went to a second-hand shop and bought this beautiful French Empire chaise longue and a chair to match. For £14 10s. They are beautifully shaped and designed, ivory inlaid and I have them in my front hall to this day.

I must have thought that if it all falls through I could always keep the furniture.

Of course it did fall through. She was very pretty, very sweet and a delightful person. But she decided she had had enough of acting and wanted to leave the theatre.

Frankly, when you are dealing with two people of the age we were, when one of you gives up what is essentially a way of life then you have to sever all connections completely. Her parents obviously pointed this out to her and forlornly I had to agree.

I got £10 back for the ring; and, packing up the chaise longue and the matching chair in paper and string, I came back from Perth to London.

I returned to the rep. company there a little later, which was a strange experience. Going back and she not being there any more ... 19 can be a hard time to live sometimes.

NEXT WEEK: India and paratyphoid. India and love. And marriage.

MY STORY-BY EDWARD WOODWARD

Part Two

Edward Woodward last week described how, as a child, he narrowly escaped death from a flying bomb; how he went on to win a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and how his first big love affair happened. Telling his life story to KEN ROCHE, he had reached his early days of repertory and the age of 19. But soon he was to be facing death again, in India . . . and starting his last great love affair

'Are you going to marry me or not?'

THE MANAGER of the little Scottish village hall shambled on to the stage, scratched his stomach and solemnly addressed the audience:

"Now listen, you. Tonight we're going to 'ave a show here. It's by William Shakespeare an' it's called *Othello*, or something like that. Now if any of you want to leave the room to go to the lavatory, I suggest you do it in the interval. I don't want any noise or any carrying on. I definitely don't want any carrying on, d'ye hear? This performance has come a long way and I want you all to listen to it. It's very, very good stuff. So let's have no sound at all, d'ye hear?"

Backstage, creased with laughter, I thought: 'No sound! That's charming. Especially during the comedy bits!'

The same chap, all with the best of intentions, staggered out in front of us during the first act and started pumping up the lamps that were acting as footlights. And he did it another five times during



Pause between plays . . . Edward Woodward and Venetia on their way to Bangalore



Woodward proposed to Venetia near the Taj Mahal—a proposal with all the trimmings, including moonlight and fragrant breezes

the performance that evening.

It's learning your craft under those conditions that help you put up with anything. If, after a few years in repertory, you haven't learnt an awful lot, then you might just as well give it up.

I remember one terrifying time we spent in Stornaway, in the Outer Hebrides. We crossed in the boat and arrived at about eleven-thirty on Saturday night. What we didn't know was that at the stroke of midnight everything stopped. Including the crane that picked up our crate of scenery and costumes.

For the whole of Sunday it poured with rain and we'd look out of the windows at the crane, watching our gear get wringing wet.

Repertory, of course, is full of this sort of thing. So it wasn't so hard for most actors when live television plays began, for once the play's started you cannot stop. If the scenery falls over or the microphone clips the leading lady under the chin—the show has to go on.

AFTER Perth, I was out of work for about a month and was getting worried, when an actor friend of mine, Alan Wilson, rang to tell me there was a job going in a company which was to tour India. He said they wanted a good Cassio. The man running the company lived in Golders Green, London, and I went to see him. He hired me on the spot.

Rehearsals were in a ghastly church hall in Pimlico, but as far as I was concerned it was the Garden of Eden. Because in the cast was this gorgeous girl called Venetia and instantly I fell heavily in love with her—and haven't changed from that day to this.

She was pretty and blonde and seemed very confident, somehow. I knew she had had a lot more acting experience than most of us, but what I didn't learn until much later was that she was really very nervous indeed. She seemed hardly to notice me.

**MY STORY—
BY EDWARD WOODWARD**

Continued



At Madura in Ceylon in 1951

and my rejection felt total when she started going out regularly with my friend Alan Wilson, who had got me the job originally.

The boat trip to India was all work. We spent all our time rehearsing and in the end the captain let us use the bridge, to keep us out of the way.

That tour was an incredible experience. My pay was £5 a week with full board—except sometimes there wasn't any board and several times we were left stranded. It was all contrasts. In one town we'd live like rajahs with our own servants in palatial apartments. In the next we'd find ourselves in squalor.

We were there for more than a year, doing shows for every kind of audience. We did a great deal at Indian Army posts. One night Pandit Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, came to see us and invited us all home to dinner.

But the beauty and the squalor of the country was completely overshadowed by the prime thing on my mind. Venetia.

After about a month I proposed to her. I'll never forget the day because I had fallen down a hole in the garden and it turned out to be a sewer . . . I spent hours under a shower trying to soap off the smell. I'm sure I didn't get rid of it entirely, in spite of all the



The Woodward's today. They started married life on £20—a present from his parents

lotions and potions I used on myself.

My proposal was literally with all the trimmings. The background of the Taj Mahal, moonlight, fragrant warm breezes, the lot.

She tells me that the proposal was a gem of lyricism. But I hadn't rehearsed it. I simply told her that I loved her to distraction and wanted more than anything in the world to marry her.

She didn't say anything while I was going on. She just sat there, completely quiet. When I'd finished she gave me a light peck

on the cheek and walked away back to the bungalow.

I raced after her and started going into another proposal all over again. She stopped me, said 'no,' and said that, at best, it would take her a long time to think about it.

So the days, the weeks and the towns went by. All the time Venetia managed to stay good friends with me without really encouraging my hopes.

Sometimes I'd find myself wild with jealousy, especially when the men at a fresh town would cluster

round her. It took illness to turn the entire affair into a realisation for both of us that we genuinely cared for each other.

I woke up one morning with a sharp pain in my chest and shivering uncontrollably. For the first time I missed a performance—I was down with paratyphoid fever.

Throughout all the dreadful time that was to follow, Venetia looked after me. She nursed me and helped me through the worst moments.

The big problem was that we never stayed long enough any-

'Sometimes I'd find myself wild with jealousy when other men clustered round'



Woodward describes his tour of India as "an incredible experience." Above: sightseeing by bicycle, five miles from Poona, in Bombay



"Me doing my Samson bit, holding up a temple near Madras..." another light-hearted "snap" from Woodward's photographic record

where for me to get really well again. And I was determined to stay with the company. I also felt so bad that I was convinced I was dying and the last thing I wanted was for my young bones to be buried in India!

I was left behind once and spent two weeks in a hospital. Then again I discharged myself too quickly and caught up with the rest in Calcutta.

We found a doctor who supplied me with black market penicillin and other drugs. The cost of the drugs completely ate up my £5 a week and it was only because the rest of the company chipped in, that I was able to get treatment at all.

Every night Venetia returned from the theatre and nursed me. But things couldn't go on like that. No one could go on with that kind of sickness.

Finally matters came to a head in the big steel town of Tatanagar in Northern India. There was a superb modern hospital and I was staying with one of the chief surgeons.

I had felt very odd during the first day we were there. At dinner that night my host suddenly got up, came around the table and whispered: "Excuse me, would you come with me."

He examined me in another room and said I had relapsed back

into paratyphoid. He immediately had me admitted to the hospital.

The tour was by now nearly over and I was finally starting to feel better than I had for months. And what happens? The day before I am due to leave hospital there is a new admission to the ward next to mine. Venetia. She had collapsed with a fever and exhaustion — probably mainly brought on by the strain of looking after me.

I certainly wasn't going to leave her there alone, but fortunately her fever was a mild one and the pair of us, tottering convalescents, trod carefully up the gangplank for the journey home.

With no work to do, we had a good rest on the voyage, sailing back as we were to unemployment.

Back home again I once more asked Venetia to marry me.

We were sitting in my family's garden when almost without thinking I said: "Have you made up your mind whether you're going to marry me or not?"

"Yes, of course I am," she said.

I gave a great yell and rushed in to tell my parents. My mother said: "You're telling me nothing I didn't know."

Six weeks later, in July 1952, we married in what I think is the smallest church in Britain—at Tarring Neville, in Sussex. It was just as well it was a small

church. We couldn't afford a big wedding and when we caught the train to London all we had was £20 my parents had given us.

Our honeymoon was an afternoon in Notting Hill Gate, where we had found a flat only the day before we got married. We blew nearly a pound on a celebration meal—which included a half bottle of vin rose.

Our rent was £4 10s. a week and that meant, with our capital, that we could last out for three weeks—four weeks if we pressed it. But with the optimism of a young married couple, everything seemed perfect to us.

But I did get a job before the money ran out, working for Guildford rep. at £7 10s. a week. Venetia got the odd small part on television but she had made up her mind to quit the theatre completely.

When our first child, Tim, came along, there was no argument about it.

I was glad we were living in London. In those days the considered mark of success was to appear in the West End. Happily one of the things that has happened in recent years is that this is no longer so. There may be fewer rep. companies about, but they are stronger. Rates of pay have improved. In fact, the whole trend in theatre is no longer

dominated by the London stage.

After Guildford, I went around a number of reps., Oxford, Nottingham, Perth, Croydon. One thing I started getting involved in—too deeply I felt at the time—was musicals and revues. I remember one job I got at the Criterion in *Intimacy at 8.30*. I understudied all the men in the cast—and Fenella Fielding understudied all the women.

We also had to share the same dressing-room, which was quite hysterical.

I got a part in the same musical on a Combined Services Entertainment tour of Germany. That wasn't a bad cast: Naunton Wayne, Hy Hazel, Thelma Ruby—and a chap who was having a terrible time struggling to get back after being a child actor. Chap called Anthony Newley.

I had always been a bit of a singer, even from rep. days. But I wasn't keen on doing musicals at the expense of acting. So I made up my mind deliberately to put myself out of work and refuse to do any more revues.

I would wait until I could break into the West End; as an actor.

NEXT WEEK: Failure... then international success—and the birth of *Callan*—and why Woodward sang *Oh, what a beautiful morning* for Sir Noël Coward in New York.

MY STORY-BY EDWARD WOODWARD Part Three

What Callan has done for me

Married to his beloved Venetia, Edward Woodward settled down in London to the serious business of trying to make a success of himself. In this final part of his life story, he tells KEN ROCHE about the two classical imposters—success and failure . . .

YOU MAY think it strange, if you've seen my occasional musical TV show *An Evening (or Another Evening) With Edward Woodward*, that when I could ill afford it, I frequently turned down work on musicals.

Yet I had made up my mind—and Venetia agreed with me. We'd had our first son, Tim, and No. 2, Peter, was on the way, and yet there I was, turning down work. Even though I needed the money.

It was simply because I wanted to act and I felt that getting too involved in musicals would hold me back in the long run.

Venetia, bless her, has never, in all our married life, expected me to do anything "just for the money." One reads a lot about failed marriages between actors and actresses. But an actor needs a wife who understands the particular drive he has.

So we struggled along. I would do the odd bit of repertory work here and the odd play there. One of those plays turned out to be *The Queen and the Welshman* by Rosemary Anne Sisson at Guildford. And it was with that I had my first real whiff of success.

It was 1957 and the producer decided to give it a whirl on the Edinburgh Festival "Fringe."

It was a beautiful play. Everything worked and it seemed to hit a chord somehow. For the first time I got national notices and it suddenly became the thing to go and see at the Festival.

Impresario Peter Bridge bought it and tried to get a theatre for it in London while we went on tour. Eventually we went in to the Lyric, Hammersmith, and then to the Criterion in the West End. It was reviewed on both occasions and I was in the wonderful position of having had three sets of rave notices in as many months.

Surely now, I was heading for big

things? But don't you believe it.

Even though my next move—to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company at Stratford-upon-Avon—looked good, it all seemed to turn sour.

Glen Byam Shaw, the director, asked me to do the season with the Stratford company and at the end of it we did a marvellous two-month tour of Russia.

I remember thinking to myself: "This is it. When I get back the marvellous parts will start coming in."

What I actually got was my first television piece in *Emergency—Ward 10!* I was Mr. Bridges of the Chest Unit.

Better off, I moved my family to an unfurnished flat in Chiswick, London. We could afford now to be a little more ambitious in our style of living.

But it just didn't happen. I got the odd few parts all right, and some television. But those two promising years just petered out into bits of yesterday's tinsel. And slowly, almost imperceptibly, I slipped into a growing deep depression.

I began getting moody, loafing about at home, snapping at Venetia and the children. For the first time I could remember, I was beginning to question whether I was worth the bother at all.

Actors must have a kind of personal belief in themselves or they would never survive the knocks and the setbacks and the outright rejection they frequently go through.

I had never seriously questioned there would be some kind of success at the end of it all. Until now, when it was getting beyond me. I was beginning to lose the only thing that had driven me on; this quiet inner certainty that *I could do it*.

Without Venetia I would have gone completely mad. If ever I had been near



Scene from family life. A game in the garden of his London home for Edward Woodward, his daughter Sarah and Socrates, their dog



Behind the swagger and outsize nose it's Edward Woodward as Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*.



After his success as Callan: a singing role in *Two Cities* based on *A Tale of Two Cities*



Rehearsing a song for his ITV Christmas show. Below: a scene from the new series of *Callan*.



As Scott Fitzgerald (top) for a TV biography, and as Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.



The remarkable audition which got me singing on Broadway

to suicide it was during that period. Yet all the time, encouraging me, putting up with me, acting as my emotional prop, Venetia was there.

I hate to keep going on about this woman of mine—but if you've got a wife like her, or you are a wife like her, you'll know what I mean.

The best part about her cheerfulness was that it wasn't that phoney sort of liveliness. It wasn't all superficial patting on the head with the occasional "there, there, darling." It was real and quiet and meant something.

Then along came *Rattle of a Simple Man*, the story of a Northerner who comes to London for the Cup Final and meets up with a prostitute.

I knew I could get the accent right, because I have always tried to specialise in accents. And we opened at Richmond.

It was a howler. One of the best nights of my theatrical career. And the upshot of it was that producer Michael Codron wanted to do it in London's West End—with me starting in it.

Then came the inevitable catch. There was going to be my name over the title, in lights, in the star part—in the West End—only not for another year...

Well, these things happen, and for various reasons I had to wait it out until the play could go on.

For six months I was out of work; not doing a thing except going down to the Labour Exchange to pick up my dole money.

That period was to take me straight back into depression. More this time from frustration than the previous rejection.

We had two children and another on the way. There was stardom yesterday and stardom tomorrow—but today there wasn't even jam on the bread.

Even worse, they kept calling me to auditions for the girl to play opposite me in *Rattle*. My squeezed-up mind worried that it was a ruse to find someone to take my part and they weren't looking for a girl at all. I don't know how I could have thought that—seeing all the auditions were for girls and not for my role at all.

But that's the way a worried mind can work.

The opening of *Rattle* was still three months off, when I had a phone call. "How would you like to go to South Africa for a while?"

"Doing what?" I asked.

"Go and direct and play in *Rattle*



The Woodwards on holiday. Left to right: Peter, Sarah, Edward, Venetia

there for eight weeks at £120 a week."

Imagine my reaction? Up to then I had been lucky to earn £600 a year—almost any year—and there was a thousand quid just like that at a time when I needed it most!

That was the end of the trouble. I returned after the trip, found Sheila Hancock waiting to play opposite me for the opening...

So, in 1962, *Rattle of a Simple Man* opened at the Garrick Theatre. It was the kind of success you dream about. I remember Sir Noël Coward coming one night and presenting himself at my dressing-room. Apparently he only came to hear me speak in my normal accent. He had asked someone during the show if I came from Manchester.

"If he does, it's a very good performance," he said. "If he doesn't, it's brilliant."

Rattle did well enough to go to Broadway and they wanted me in it there. But I hedged even at this chance of international acclaim because Venetia was close to having the baby. I couldn't afford to take the family with me. What we had put by from *Rattle* was going towards a house we'd decided to buy in Twickenham, Middlesex. Even to do that I had to borrow £300 towards the deposit.

I had just got eight-months-pregnant Venetia into this big house, when I had to leave for America.

We were apart six months and although the play was a big hit, I swore we'd never be parted that long again.

Sarah was born and the night of the birth I went out for a celebration with some friends in Boston's Chinatown (where we toured the week before the Broadway opening). At some point (I am told) around three in the morning, I stood on the table,

toasted the manager and his restaurant for their splendid hospitality and announced I would name my little daughter after the restaurant.

This sort of dedication is taken quite seriously by the Chinese and, after this was explained to me, I had to take my suffering head back to the restaurant and apologise to the manager. How could I lumber her with the name "Ho-Ho"?

So I offered a compromise and thus I had to tell Venetia over the phone that evening we'd have to call her Boston.

"Oh no we're not," said Venetia. "She's going to be called Sarah Wendy."

Another compromise and that's why my little girl's called Sarah Wendy Boston Woodward.

In New York I was invited to tea by Sir Noël Coward who said somewhat airily that he'd heard I could sing.

"After a fashion," I said.

"Go and sing something," waving to the piano and ringing for someone to come in and accompany me. All I could remember was the first verse and chorus of *Oh What A Beautiful Morning*.

On the strength of that remarkable "audition" Noël offered me the leading role in his forthcoming *High Spirits* on Broadway. This was a musical version of his Forties' hit *Blithe Spirit*.

This time I insisted on taking the family and for the run of the show we had a marvellous time. And as soon as we returned to England we were able to indulge in the luxury of a long Devon holiday for the whole family.

About four days before we were due to leave for Devon a thick envelope appeared through the letterbox. It was an ITV script with a note from the casting director,

Dodo Watts, saying it was a natural for me. If I wanted it, rehearsals started next week...

After all the time I'd waited for work I wasn't going to fling up my holiday now I could afford to be a bit choosy. But I knew I'd read it anyway.

Three times that evening I read it. A play called *A Magnum for Schneider*, by James Mitchell. At 2 a.m. I woke Venetia and said: "Sorry, Love. I can't make the holiday."

That weekend I drove her and the kids to Devon, left the car with them, and returned to London by train. On the Monday I did my first rehearsal in the part of Callan. Bill Bain directed it—and has since become one of my dearest friends.

I'm not sure how long Callan will last. It has certainly helped prove to me that this business is so tenuous and so full of surprises that it's all worth it after all.

The disappointments and failures I've had will always help me keep a sense of perspective, no matter what I do in the future or have done in the past.

Naturally, Callan will always be a very special character to me. He brought me money and greater public recognition, and created openings that may not have happened if Callan had not become a household name.

He was to lead to me being asked to play Cassius and Scott Fitzgerald on TV. Then there was a singing role in a West End musical (based on *A Tale of Two Cities*).

I also was given a season at the National Theatre and when I look at pictures of myself as Cyrano de Bergerac with the long nose...

Callan, of course, very nearly "died" once. He was shot at the end of one series and I had more or less buried him and come out of mourning, when it was decided to resurrect him.

I'm told that when things were still in the air and it wasn't positive another series would be made, there was a huge, whitewashed slogan daubed over a Fleet Street wall that said: "CALLAN LIVES!"

For the future—well, as I have said, I don't know if Callan will be killed, retired or shelved after the new series, which begins in March. But I would like to make more films.

Callan has been my passport to wider things, but I don't want him to dominate me forever. But when I do put away my gun for the last time, it will be with more than a twinge of nostalgia and regret.



The two men behind Callan: James Mitchell the author and Edward Woodward the actor.

AS A YOUNG MAN I did a lot of travelling, mostly around the Mediterranean: Italy, France, Spain, North Africa. A lot of it was caused by simply running away—not so much from home, from my parents, as if I were 13 instead of 23, but from the place where I was born: from Tyneside, or more precisely from South Shields. I loved the town dearly, but I knew it would never let me go. If a break came, I would have to be the one who made it.

All the Geordies I have ever known have had this inexplicable love for the place they grew up in. Many of them travel vast distances from it, but most of them go back—to grime and harshness and a bitter north-east wind, but also to a matchless coast and a familiar dialect in the mouths of people they understand, who understand them.

In all love affairs, the beloved gives a lot.—and demands a lot. It is often easier to escape from the demands and forgo the favours; so I travelled.

I took jobs as a travel courier to help pay for my journeys. Mostly they were dull routine, but they did have their excitements. I remember one nightmare trip on a Folkestone-Boulogne packet-boat, with 15 children of assorted nationalities. It was a very choppy crossing and death by drowning seemed awfully possible. I rounded them up every few minutes and counted them, just to be sure that all 15 were there. It was an experience that was to prove very useful when I took to schoolteaching . . . As it happened, I didn't lose a single child. I did worse. At the last count I had 16 kids . . .

When I couldn't be a courier I worked abroad as an English teacher. That was at a time when every unattached male in southern Europe had only one ambition in life—to be a waiter in a London restaurant until he had made enough money to go to New York and be a waiter there.

Finding pupils was easy. Finding pupils with the ability to pay was rather more of a problem. Pay immediately, that is—in later years those English lessons paid for themselves again and again. In scenery, for example: the great set pieces in Rome, Salamanca, Marrakech; in love and hate seen through foreign eyes, and therefore observed more closely, analysed, retold in the mind; the very beginning of a writer's craft.

At the time, the lessons were enjoyable just for themselves. It was amusing to speculate which excuses you'd be offered for non-payment each week, and to mark down a new one as an astronomer marks down a new star. But even in the worst weeks, someone always paid. I always ate, and always learned something new. About spies for example . . .

THE CONTENTED SAINT WITH A KILLER'S GRACE

Was this the man who inspired the birth of Callan?

James Mitchell, born in South Shields, County Durham, in 1926, was brought up in what he describes as cheerful poverty. In 15 years as a writer he has produced 11 novels, three film scripts, and more than 30 television plays. His most famous character is Callan. In the first of three articles which look at the men who left their mark on his life, he recalls the events behind Callan's birth.

I FIRST LEARNED about spies in Spain, in 1952, from a man called Paco. Perhaps it was then that I first wanted to write about spies, too; perhaps then Callan was born—but what makes me choose a subject is something I can never analyse, nor do I want to.

Paco was about 5ft. 8in. tall, 11 stone, and handsome in a very Spanish way. By that I mean that he had very masculine, regular features and walked like a torero. He had the same killer's grace. It was a feline thing; the body pared down to essential bone and muscle, and nothing left over. That is a very obvious thing to see in any man, and yet it was not the most obvious thing about Paco. He had something else.

It was his laughter you remembered. Laughter can mean so many things: cruelty, insolence, even boredom. But Paco's laughter always meant one thing only: a pure, spontaneous joy. It was the laughter of a contented saint. Not that Paco had much time for saints; saints were a woman's business. Not that he had much to laugh about, either, in my opinion.

By night he was a waiter in a decrepit bar in a dingy street. The job paid nothing but free drinks and the chance of an occasional tip. By day he worked as a builder's labourer — "Hotels, always hotels" — and in his free time he hustled; selling pencils, melons, ice-cream, loading trucks or acting as half of a two-man removal business. They didn't own a truck, a mule cart or even a barrow. What had to be moved, they carried, regardless of its shape, size or weight. Inevitably it was a slow service, but it was cheap. In a good week, a very good week, he made £5, which had to keep himself, a widowed sister, and her five kids. Somehow it did.

And Paco was happy: he laughed all the time. He said it was for two reasons, both negative. He wasn't in the army,

and he wasn't in prison. He knew a lot about armies and prisons; he'd spent most of his adult life in one or the other.

When business in the bar was slack—which was most of the time—he'd sit and talk to me about what he'd seen, where he'd been—but not about his spying. At my age, with my background, I wasn't ready to bear the weight of that knowledge, and he knew it. He told me instead about the rest of his life, and he told me in Spanish, which I was still struggling to learn. It was a good discipline. If I didn't work at it, I missed the point of his stories, and they were too good to miss. I owe to Paco my ability to speak Spanish, and I'm grateful, even though to this day it tends to be a bit dodgy in mixed company.

Paco had fought in the Spanish Civil War on the Republican side. When they lost, he crossed the border into France, and was put straight into an internment camp. When our war came, and the Germans invaded France, he was sent to do forced labour alongside Russian prisoners of war, and when at last they were liberated by the Americans, Paco presented quite a problem to his liberators. Spain hadn't been in the war; he was neither an ally nor an enemy; so what were they going to do with him? They stuck to regulations. "All liberated peoples must be repatriated," the book said, so they sent him back to Spain, to the people he'd fought against for more than three years. They put him in prison: a year for every year he'd fought them. When he came out, incredibly, he was called up for National Service—in a penal battalion, army and prison combined. Two years of it at one new penny a day. Talk of America was the one thing I can remember that stopped Paco's laughter . . .

He spied, I learned later, against the régime in Spain. There was no doubt in his mind that the revolution would come, and when it did, everyone had to be ready, with weapons, training, information. And information meant spies like Paco. He had contacts everywhere, even in the police. They met him and talked, and a fact would be dropped into the gossip before they moved on. His technique, I believe, was excellent. Perhaps there had been K.G.B. men among the Russians he did forced labour with.

Often enough, I discovered, he used me as a cover. Who would suspect two Spaniards chatting with an Englishman over a cup of wine? And he made sure that even I couldn't betray him. When Paco and his contact got down to business they spoke in a dialect so thick that even a Spaniard from another region couldn't have understood them.

If anybody ever had suspected him, and his cover had been blown, I'd have been in for a hard time. Not nearly as hard as his, but hard enough. I don't suppose the thought ever crossed his mind, but if it had, the laughter would have continued. We liked each other well enough, but the revolution—that was *important*. Maybe his information was important, too, but I doubt it, except to himself. It made him a man of status; without it there would have been no laughter.

I only learned about what he had done after his death. After what he had been through and survived it was hard to believe that anything could kill him. But a drunk hit-and-run driver had managed it with ease. Paco had been selling ice-cream at the time, and the pink and white and lemon blobs lay around him like a wreath.

Hit and run? It was on his death certificate . . . but I wonder. Perhaps his information had been important after all.

5: Lisa Langdon feature: TV Times 18th March 1972



Callan gets into double trouble this week. He plays Hunter in a grim game of what he calls "tit for tat." We're going for the double, too—in a different way—with actress Lisa Langdon who is getting a slice of the action. That's her above and left with Callan (Edward Woodward).

Just like any pretty young secretary with talent, Lisa's promotion has been rapid. She started in the first series as a voice over the telephone, as secretary to Hunter, head of a special British secret service department.

When *Callan* came back Lisa was heard and seen. She was born in Sweden but has lived here for 12 years.

While she was a voice only in *Callan*, Lisa was seen on another programme a long way from the intrigue of secret service work. She lived in fairy tale land on BBC's *Jackanory* reading stories for small children. They were tales from Sweden that Lisa translated.

Gallant Callan casts a line ...

Not a woman in sight so the four regulars in *Callan* "paddle their own canoe" in buoyant spirits. But don't get them wrong ... the four men in the boat are: in the stern Anthony Valentine, left, Ronald Radd and Russell Hunter, and in the bow Edward Woodward

Edward Woodward who plays the title role in the series *Callan* on Saturday said at a party recently: "Women can cause trouble. *Callan* is the happiest set I've ever known, and the secret is that none of the regulars is a woman!" An indignant *TV Times* woman writer went to challenge him, and here is how he talked himself out of trouble

by ANN MORROW



LIKE most women I'd had a rather soft spot for Mr. *Callan* (Edward Woodward). I thought he was rather dishy with his lean looks and close cropped hair. But you can go off people rather rapidly!

Woodward met me with a disarming grin and a hat tilted rakishly over one eye.

He sensed my mood, poured soothing drinks, then said in the sort of voice used to placate rebellious children: "Oh dear, don't get me wrong. I am not anti-woman, not in the least little bit."

"I was only saying that the four regulars on the *Callan* set are men. Because of this it's the most relaxed set I've ever known. We are all great chums. Why we even give each other lines."

"But if there were a lovely lady appearing regularly in the series with us jealousy and tension would set in. The sexes being what they are, we would all want to play a romantic scene with her."

It was a charming and gallant argument. "Anyway," he said, "*Callan* would never get the girl because he is very unsure of women. Twice he had unfortunate experiences—once when a lady double-crossed him and another when his girl friend got killed."

When the *Callan* set got together I expected to find the

A-WAY WITH WOMEN!

kind of "boys night out" atmosphere ... over-loud laughter and boring jokes about "the wife."

Instead there was an air of camaraderie. They pinched each other's cigarettes and were generous with applause for Woodward—without a hint of jealousy.

You could never imagine this happening on a set with four women especially when one of them had the starring role.

Knowing that three of the regulars in *Callan* are married, I asked Anthony Valentine, the only bachelor on the set, if he agreed with Edward Woodward.

Valentine, who plays Meres, assistant to Colonel Hunter, said: "We are great friends on

this set, and this is because we are not competing for the same woman. It has been peace, perfect peace."

"Although there isn't one woman appearing regularly, we do have guest artists and they are all lovely."

Ronald Radd who plays Colonel Hunter, *Callan*'s boss, said: "The atmosphere here is marvellous."

Radd, who took over from Stanley Holloway in "My Fair Lady" on Broadway rolled his eyes to heaven at the mere thought of some of the troubles caused by "leading ladies I have known."

Russell Hunter who plays I onely, a crook, said: "We are such friends on this set. Why

we even listen to each other, and that's something new! You have this kind of relaxed atmosphere only if there are four men working together."

Woodward, who is 37, is married to actress Venetia Barrett. He is fascinated by guns and has a collection from all over the world.

Leisure time is often spent in the garden of his home on the Thames bank at Twickenham, Middlesex, teaching his son, 14-year-old Timothy, how to be a crack shot.

"We just fool around with a .22 rifle," he said. "It is only an air rifle, nothing dangerous. We set up wooden posts as our target area. Timothy is pretty good now."

Woodward's love of the Thames dates from the time when he was a Sea Scout and spent many hours at Teddington Lock.

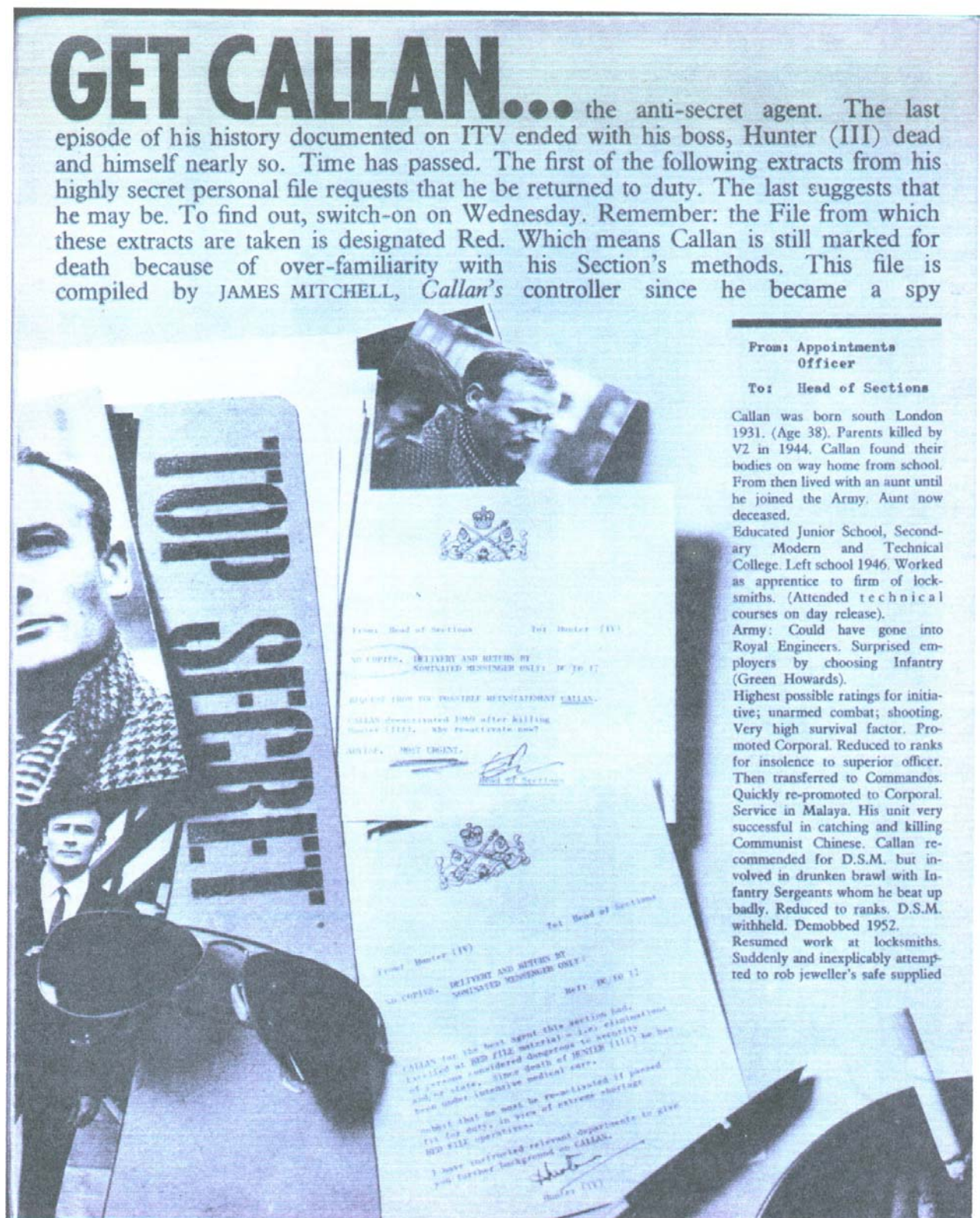
He has a cabin cruiser called Sarah Timpet, after the names of his three children, Timothy, Peter, 11, and Sarah, four. His great joy though is a little rubber dinghy which cost £13.

Whenever possible he rows himself to work at the studios at Teddington. "When the tide is with me that is! Then, when I am going home and the tide is against me, I use the out-board motor."

Before I left, the *Callan* charmers raised their glasses and drank a toast—to "The ladies, God bless them!"

GET CALLAN....

the anti-secret agent. The last episode of his history documented on ITV ended with his boss, Hunter (III) dead and himself nearly so. Time has passed. The first of the following extracts from his highly secret personal file requests that he be returned to duty. The last suggests that he may be. To find out, switch-on on Wednesday. Remember: the File from which these extracts are taken is designated Red. Which means Callan is still marked for death because of over-familiarity with his Section's methods. This file is compiled by JAMES MITCHELL, *Callan's* controller since he became a spy



From: Appointments Officer
To: Head of Sections

Callan was born south London 1931. (Age 38). Parents killed by V2 in 1944. Callan found their bodies on way home from school. From then lived with an aunt until he joined the Army. Aunt now deceased. Educated Junior School, Secondary Modern and Technical College. Left school 1946. Worked as apprentice to firm of locksmiths. (Attended technical courses on day release). Army: Could have gone into Royal Engineers. Surprised employers by choosing Infantry (Green Howards). Highest possible ratings for initiative; unarmed combat; shooting. Very high survival factor. Promoted Corporal. Reduced to ranks for insolence to superior officer. Then transferred to Commandos. Quickly re-promoted to Corporal. Service in Malaya. His unit very successful in catching and killing Communist Chinese. Callan recommended for D.S.M. but involved in drunken brawl with Infantry Sergeants whom he beat up badly. Reduced to ranks. D.S.M. withheld. Demobbed 1952. Resumed work at locksmiths. Suddenly and inexplicably attempted to rob jeweller's safe supplied

From: Head of Sections **To:** Hunter (IV)
NO COPIES. DELIVERY AND RETURN BY
NOMINATED MESSENGER ONLY. DC TO 17
REQUEST FROM THE TWENTY REINSTATEMENT CALLAN.
CALLAN demobilized 1952 after killing
Hunter (III). Now reactivated now?
ACTION. MOST URGENT.

From: Hunter (IV) **To:** Head of Sections
NO COPIES. DELIVERY AND RETURN BY
NOMINATED MESSENGER ONLY. DC TO 17
CALLAN for the best agent this section had.
Excellent at RED FILE material - low elimination
of - seems considered dangerous to security
and he state. Since death of HUNTER (III) he has
been under intensive medical care.
- brief that he must be re-activated if passed
fit for duty, in view of extreme shortage
RED FILE operatives.
I have instructed relevant departments to give
you further background on CALLAN.

by his firm. Caught by accident. Old night-watchman stumbled on to him, grabbed him and yelled. Callan, who could have killed him, didn't, and was caught.

Sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Wormwood Scrubs. Released after 15 months. (Here he first met the burglar known as Lonely). Hunter (I) took him into Section on basis of (a) Commando record; (b) burglary skill. Went to 'college' 1953-54. Developed skills in theft, unarmed combat and shooting. Dead shot with pistol. First operation involved him in blackmail and killing. Very high rating.

From then until 1966 Callan carried out 19 missions, including 11 killings: 15 were complete success; two failed because of inadequate briefing; two because of failure of colleagues. Callan prefers to work alone. (This may influence attitude to colleagues.) By 1960 Callan was second-in-command to Hunter (I) who rated him very highly. Very possible next Head of Section.

But in 1965 he killed a Russian spy whom he knew well and liked. From that time became too involved with the people who were his targets. Worked with the same skill, but increasing reluctance. Hunter tried hard to change him but failed.

Callan de-activated from Section 1966. Trained as book-keeper, worked for wholesale grocer who believed him to be ex-convict.

Re-activated 1968. Complete success with Hunter (II) — AA rating in all operations. Complete success with Hunter (III) until brainwashed by KGB into killing him. Shortly afterwards, Callan was shot by Meres. After critical illness Callan is about to be discharged from hospital. Medically A1. No extensive psychiatric tests have yet been carried out.

Callan is a non-smoker, drinks Scotch, cautiously on a job, heavily on certain other occasions. Never drunk.

From: Hunter (IV)

To: Head of Sections
(No copies. Delivery and return by nominated messenger only). Ref: DC/EO 17

Subject: Callan - Involvement with Women

MOST SECRET

Remarkably little on file. I suspect this to be because Callan is an operative alert enough to conduct his amours when his colleagues aren't watching.

He appears to be quite adequately normal sexually. There can be no doubt of his attraction to women. There is a remarkable charm behind that brisk and witty ruthlessness. He has used it several times on Section business, with success. He is, of course, also a risk to us, so far as women are concerned. That "capacity for involvement with other people" could, I am well aware, prove extremely embarrassing to himself and to my Section, but: (a) I am confident that I shall be aware of any danger from Callan in time to deal with it; (b) he himself has controlled the risk in the past, and I see no reason why he should not continue to do so, especially as his control is motivated by the fear that the woman involved may be hurt by others — or by this Section.

Hunter (IV)

From: A.T.W.G. Snell
(Psychiatric Consultant to Section)

To: Head of Sections
(Group)

Callan is a very healthy man with excellent reflexes, muscular co-ordination and eyesight. Physically he is again in good condition. There is no evidence at this stage to suggest that he has not fully recovered from brainwashing by KGB. However, tests in this area are incomplete and I consider this report to be an interim one.

I would add that since he has become aware of his responsibility for the death of Hunter (III) he has lost whatever little conception he had of the word 'duty'. The flaw — if one may so express it — already in his nature, i.e. his capacity for involvement with other people (consider his relationship with the petty criminal

Lonely) has intensified and I would consider it even more likely to imperil a Section operation. For the record, Callan's I.Q. is still well above average. (Actual score withheld, as is usual in this Section). Rorschach and other tests show him to be of very stable mentality other than under conditions stated. No evidence of inversion. Trend to sadism remains, but held in balance.

At this moment in time, despite his obvious abilities, I recommend Callan's withdrawal from the Section though finally, and no matter how irrelevantly, may I say this: I still like Callan.

A.T.W.G. Snell,
M.B., B.Ch.
M.R.C.P., D.P.S.

Extract from
transcribed tape
recorded by D.T. Judd -
Armourer, Hunter's
Section.

MOST SECRET

... So like I say the guy is good. Better than good. You know. Like great ... Listen, when I was in the States I carried a gun for a mob in Youngstown, Ohio. They're tough there, believe me. The way most guys think they're tough. Know what I mean? Back there they chew walls and spit bricks — but I tell you — we never had one like Callan ... The guy never misses. There's days I think he *can't* miss. All he has to do is point — and bang! — you're dead ... Brave? ... Don't ask me, Mister. Ask the guys he's killed. From what I hear they were mostly looking at him at the time — with guns in their hands ...

From: Head of Sections


To: Hunter (IV)

(No copies. Delivery and return by nominated messenger only).

Ref: DC/EO/17

Callan's background noted and acknowledged. Re-activation possible, *provided* Snell is completely satisfied that he has passed the further psychiatric tests that Snell himself will devise. *If* Snell is then satisfied, Callan may be re-instated, in view of your failure to recruit sufficient operatives to handle Red File subjects, but in that event Callan must be very carefully controlled. What do you suggest?

Head of Sections



Callan—dead or alive?

CALLAN. Once a Big Man Always a Big Man.
Thames.VTR ABC 7648

SCENE: Ambush. A pretty girl with a rifle has hit Tony Meres. Callan slips round the back way. Shoots. The girl is dead.

The question now—will Callan himself be bumped off? He has been dispatching people since the first Callan, "A Magnum for Schneider." (Magnum, in that instance, was a gun). This week, the Callan series ends. Producer Reg Collin is in a serious dilemma. He has filmed two endings to the series. Even the title, "Death of a Hunter," is deliberately ambiguous. It could mean curtains for the Hunter. Or for Toby or Callan, both of whom are hunters of a kind.

Collin told me: "Our problem is that this latest series has been fantastically successful. A year ago, we felt that this would be the last of it. Now we are not so sure. The difference between the endings we have filmed is that one leaves the way open for more; the other tends to close the book. Whatever is decided, I guarantee someone will die. Conan Doyle, of course, solved this quite classically. He killed off Sherlock Holmes. Then following public demand, he worked it out that he wasn't quite as dead as thought."

If you like Callan, now is the time to cheer very loudly.