PLEASE SIR!

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY

DAVID BARRY

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David Barry

Foreword by Peter Cleall

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To all my *Please Sir!* friends
and colleagues, past and present

Foreword

David Barry has a long history in the 'business of show'. He has worked successfully as an actor, director, producer and latterly as a writer. Here he has written an entertaining and informative story of his progress through the jungle of entertainment with the definitive account of the evolution of *Please Sir!* at its core.

The pages are filled with amusing anecdotes about his encounters with actors and directors. Household names are sprinkled throughout and many a reputation hits the dust.

I enjoyed working with David on *Please Sir!* and on a variety of projects since and have appreciated his friendship throughout the last fifty years.

Peter Cleall

Introduction

When I began working on *Please Sir!* I had been an actor for over twelve years, having performed my first professional role at the age of 12, since I attended Corona Academy, a stage school in west London. In those early teenage years, I worked with actors like Tyrone Power, Mai Zetterling, Paul Scofield, Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, all of whom knew me by my real name of Meurig Wyn-Jones. So why, in the mid-sixties, did I change my name?

It was at the suggestion of an older actor who pointed out that if I attended auditions, and with a name like mine, directors would expect to meet a young actor with a pronounced Welsh accent, not with the homogenized English way of speaking I had been forced to adopt during my first year at stage school; because in 1955, kitchen sink dramas had yet to become part of the theatrical scene and regional dialects were not yet de rigeur.

My journey as David Barry began with eight episodes of the five evenings a week soap opera *Crossroads*, but the least said about that, the better. I consider that to be a false start, not even a learning curve. And so, my far more fun and stimulating odyssey began in 1968, and it was an adventure that lasted far longer than I would ever have guessed.

I would like to take you with me on that trip, which I hope you will enjoy as much as I did. Of course, no journey is without its setbacks, and there have been many pratfalls along the way as you will discover as you read on.

But before taking that first step, I would like to give you a health warning, as I wouldn't want to cause offence. You will encounter some strong language in the book, because I have described as accurately as possible the way some actors behave. I could have

inserted asterisks into certain letters of swear words, but as your mind could fill in the gaps I thought this might be patronizing, and decided it was best to tell it as it is.

Despite some bad language, my aim is to entertain you with a behind-the-scenes view of what it was really like to work in a hit television series, a series that refuses to die and is still going strong after more than 50 years. And as a middle-aged man told me recently, he has fond memories of being taken when he was five-years-old by an older sibling to see the *Please Sir!* film when it was first released and gave him a lifelong love of film and television comedy.

And I guess, dear reader, that you already have a love of television comedy, otherwise you wouldn't have bought this book. So go on, enjoy it!

David Barry
October 2020

Back to School

For me, the sixties was a wonderfully childish decade. Not just because soup tins had become works of art, and Yoko Ono had made a film about naked buttocks and not much else, but mainly because I was about to start school again at the age of 25.

I nearly didn't get to sit behind that desk, though, because early that year I auditioned for the hippie, draft-dodging musical *Hair,* and the anonymous producers in the darkened auditorium loved my audition. There had been so much publicity about the show and its New York success, I knew exactly how to dress the part: shirt hanging out of torn flared denims, and a waistcoat made of what looked like an old carpet, and flip-flops on my feet. At least my attempts to look like an actor who knew what the show was about seemed to go down well. Unlike the young actress who auditioned before me. She wore a cute party frock, and in her total ignorance of knowing what the show was about, she sang 'I Enjoy Being a Girl' from *Flower Drum Song.* I don't know how many bars into her song she got before they hooked her. 'Next!' Which was me, and I managed to get through to the end of my song, singing (angrily) an Irish rebel song, which ended with 'Fuck the British Army', followed by my gesture of a V-sign – not the Churchillian one for victory. They loved it, and I made the recall audition. The first audition I had treated light heartedly, not really expecting a great response and not caring whether it was sink or swim, but now I was recalled I began to take it seriously. Big mistake. I should really have given them the same song again at the next audition. Instead, I sang a Manfred Mann number: 'My Name is Jack'. I don't think they liked it as much as the Irish rebel song, and so that was that. Which was just as well, because a part in *Hair* would have meant the loss of the

Please Sir! and *The Fenn Street Gang* series that ran between 1968 and 1973. Maybe my failed *Hair* audition was meant to be.

In the autumn I auditioned, along with about 30 other young actors for the series called *Rough House*. The auditions were held at Station House, the head offices and rehearsal rooms of LWT, the television company not yet a year old, which had won the franchise from Associated Rediffusion, and would be transmitting from early evening on Fridays until late on Sundays. Station House was a 20-storey building near Stonebridge Park station, not far from Wembley and the studios which were used by London Weekend Television.

Mark Stuart, the producer and director, and the writers, John Esmonde and Bob Larbey, sat in front of a long table. We the actors waited in another room and then three of us were ushered in to stand before them and read from a script. As soon as I read for the part of Frankie Abbott, I shrugged my shoulders audaciously and imagined reaching for the semi-automatic pistol concealed under my arm. I saw John Esmonde laugh and tug his goatee beard, which I took to be a good sign.

Once we had read, we were sent back into the other room, and Mark Stuart's PA would enter at odd intervals, tap someone on the shoulder and say, 'Thank you. You can go.' Then three of us would go in again to read for Dunstable, Craven and Abbott, which were the parts they were casting that day. Whenever I had given my reading, I dreaded the P.A.'s dismissive tap on the shoulder. Eventually, after nail-biting minutes, three of us were left in the other room: Malcolm McFee, Peter Denyer and yours truly. Then Mark Stuart came in and announced with a twinkle in his eye, 'Well, I guess you three will have to do. We'll be in touch with your agents.'

The three of us caught the train at Stonebridge Park to return to central London. It was mid-afternoon, and we wondered if we would hear from our agents before the end of the day. We chatted amicably, Malcolm mentioned he had recently finished filming *Oh What a Lovely War*, playing one of the Smiths in the Richard Attenborough star-studded film. Peter and I had previously worked

together the year before, and we reminisced about performing in *Zigger Zagger* a play about disenfranchised youth and football hooliganism, written by Peter Terson for the National Youth Theatre. West End producer Peter Bridge, responding to his son's love of the play and football, decided to mount a professional production, and it pretty much bankrupted him. The play had a cast of eighty, and every actor in the production was on a minimum Equity contract. Whether the public was not interested in the subject matter, or the play didn't satisfy their craving to see star names, whatever the reason the play opened to abysmal advance box office takings of only £34, which in today's money would be only equivalent to around £430. No wonder poor Peter Bridge, one of the loveliest producers ever, lost his shirt. It closed after only ten performances, and our first night drink's party became the last night's wake.

When I got home, I immediately phoned my agent, Keith Whitall, and told him I *thought* I had got the part, but he hadn't yet heard from LWT. 'Never mind, darling,' he said. 'I expect they'll be in touch tomorrow.'

I was married to Zélie in 1967, both of us having met a year before while working at Butlin's Repertory Theatre in Pwllheli, where we performed six plays a fortnight throughout the summer. It was always difficult finding a decent flat in London, so when we saw one advertised in the evening paper in the select area of Highgate Village, asking prospective tenants to ring after six, I dialled the number at five o'clock and patiently listened to the ring tone for a good hour before it was answered, but it meant I was first off the mark, and we moved into the small flat just a few doors from The Flask pub on Highgate West Hill. The flat cost us around £40.00 per month, which in today's money would be around £700 and to pay for it we both worked as messengers at J. Walter Thompson, one of the world's largest advertising agencies at that time, located in Berkeley Square.

Even though Mark Stuart had more or less told the three of us that we had got the job, I still suffered from the typical actor's insecurity as nothing had been confirmed yet, and I didn't know whether to celebrate or not, so Zélie and I spent the evening boozing in the

lovely Highgate Village pubs, a sort of tentative, half-celebration. The phone call came the next day, offering four episodes, with an option for a further three. Rehearsals began a week later.

The first read-through was in a large rehearsal room at Station House, and it was exciting sitting around a large table listening to the actors playing the staff members. I didn't ever remember seeing John Alderton before, not having been fond of hospital soaps. He played Dr Moon in *Emergency Ward 10,* during which time he met his first wife, Jill Brown. It was, apparently, a single appearance in *Never A Cross Word,* a comedy series starring Paul Daneman and Nyree Dawn Porter, that led to him being cast as Bernard Hedges. Deryck Guyler, cast as Norman Potter, the school caretaker, and Noel Howlett, as Cromwell, the headmaster, I remembered from different episodes of *Hancock's Half Hour,* one of my all-time favourite shows, both on radio and television. Deryck was the policeman in the episode *The Radio Ham,* and Noel was a vicar in an episode when various BBC characters get stuck in one of the Broadcasting House lifts with Hancock. And I could recall the funny line of Tony Hancock's as Noel was about to press the button to summon the lift: 'Ah! The ecclesiastical digit.' Joan Sanderson (Miss Ewell) I recognised but couldn't recall what I had seen her in, and likewise Erik Chitty (Smithy). I recognised Richard Davies, though, from *Zulu,* who played Private 593 Jones, who has a memorable speech about the confusion of so many Joneses in the regiment. And during our read-through, Richard also had some hilarious and memorable lines as Mr Price, the most seen-it-all cynic in the staffroom.

Peter Denyer, I knew from the ill-fated *Zigger Zagger.* His character in the series was Dennis Dunstable, a special needs teenager, referred to in the scripts by the anachronistic 'educationally sub normal' epithet. And I had met Malcolm McFee at the auditions. His characterisation of Peter Craven, dapper and laid-back, with a pimp roll in his gait, was perfect casting. As were the other three I met on that first day of rehearsals: Peter Cleall, as Eric Duffy, the class leader, tough, rebellious and disobedient but with a soft heart; Penny Spencer as the sexy Sharon, who underneath it all was far from dumb; and one of my favourite characters, Maureen Bullock,

played by Liz Gebhardt, who in later scripts would become F.A.'s tart (in his dreams), and in real life become a close friend of mine.

Frank Muir was LWT's Head of Entertainment, and he sat close to me during the read-through. I could hear him chuckling, and occasionally laughing loudly, which was encouraging. Most people recognised Frank Muir's very distinctive looks (he was a regular panellist on BBC TV's *Call My Bluff*). But it was his and his long-term partner Denis Norden's writing I was most familiar with. For years they had written *Take It from Here* for the radio, and *The Glums* segment was another comedy favourite of mine.

Following the read-through, it was coffee time, and a chance for the cast to get to know one another. Most of us were aware that there was a bit of a conflab going on between Frank Muir, Mark Stuart and Esmonde and Larbey. There were things to be ironed out in the script, and the title, *Rough House,* was a problem. However, after coffee we all began rehearsing, blocking the scenes in the makeshift set. There were six classroom desks for us, positioned where they would be in the studio, and Bernard Hedges' desk, raised on a three inch high rostrum.

The second day was a location shoot for the filmed insert, which was the start of the show, showing the pupils, including 5C, heading for Fenn Street School on a double-decker bus, which Bernard Hedges catches and finds himself sitting next to Eric Duffy. He has no idea that Eric is to be his 5C pupil and lights his fag for him. The harassed bus conductor was played by Bob Todd, an actor who began acting at the age of 42. He had, apparently, met scriptwriters Ray Galton and Alan Simpson in a pub, bluffed them into thinking he was an actor, and was given the part of a policeman in the Sid James comedy *Citizen James.* But we all recognised him as the actor from a Knorr Soup commercial.

On day three we were back in the rehearsal room, and the title was changed to *Please Sir!*' I can't remember the original ending to the first episode *The Welcome Mat*, but now in the story Hedges unwittingly gains a reputation as a karate expert. It was established that the classroom desk was rotten, and towards the end of the episode he enters the rowdy classroom and attempts to keep order

by striking the worm-eaten desk, which is split in half by what the pupils think is his karate chop. The show went from a weak ending to a big finish and we wondered if this suggestion came from Frank Muir.

On the day of the first episode in Wembley Studios, all of us 5C actors had to go early to wardrobe and get into the costumes we would be wearing, so that we were in our costumes for the technical camera rehearsal, when everything runs very slowly as the crew deal with all the problems we might encounter prior to the dress rehearsal, which would be in the afternoon of the following day.

After I got kitted out in my combat jacket, I went into the studio to find John Alderton already sitting at his desk in the classroom, looking just like a young teacher fresh out of teacher training college, wearing a drab, brown tweedy jacket. I went up to him and said something like, 'That is a brilliant costume, John, just the sort of naff thing a young teacher would wear.'

By reply I got a funny look, as if I was winding him up.

Later on I discovered he hadn't yet been to wardrobe to get kitted out, and those were his own clothes!

Our studio floor manager for this first series was David Yallop who would go on to write many true crime books like *Deliver Us From Evil* about the Yorkshire Ripper, and *In God's Name* a conspiracy theory about the murder of Pope John Paul l.

When the dress rehearsal began for episode one, we heard the distinctive theme tune, which kicked off with a school bell ringing. This instrumental was composed by Sam Fonteyn and used for each series. It was called 'School's Out', and years later I wondered if Alice Cooper had appropriated the title for his worldwide hit single in 1972?

The first series got as high as nine in the ratings, playing to 6.8 million homes, and the options were taken up to do seven episodes. The episodes were 40 minutes long, for a 45-minute slot, broadcast in black and white, as colour television was nearly a year away from its launch.

On the twentieth floor of Station House was the canteen and bar, and in those days a boozy lunchtime was not frowned upon.

Following a hasty meal, we invariably continued drinking in the bar, usually celebrating our jump into the ratings, although I don't think most of us needed an excuse to drink and socialise.

When I got to know Peter Cleall better, he told me he had appeared in *Crossroads* as a character called Chuck Feeney, and he said it was a heap of shit. I agreed with him, because four years previously I had appeared in eight episodes of this five nights a week soap, playing Ross Baxter. We both had a laugh as we imagined a television series starring Chuck Feeney and Ross Baxter, and envisaged scenes that were as naff as our *Crossroads* appearances.

It was great hearing the stories of the staff members of the cast. I remember Deryck Guyler telling us he did a voice over as a news broadcaster for the radio announcement in the long-running Agatha Christie West End play *The Mousetrap,* then in its fifth year, for which he received something like sixpence a week, and as there were forty sixpences to the pound, he would have earned one pound and six shillings annually. The change to decimal currency happened in 1971, so I guess it was adjusted. But what was so great about Deryck's royalty for *The* Mousetrap is that it has become a theatrical tradition. Writing this in early 2020, when *The Mousetrap* is in its 66th year, the production company informed me that it is still Deryck's voice over that is being used in the whodunit, and he hasn't missed a performance for almost 66 years, making him the longest serving cast member.

One of Deryck's most treasured memories he told us was when he worked in a West End show in 1945, and on 7 May, the day before the official VE Day celebrations, he was the performer who stopped the show, stepped forward with tears in his eyes and announced that Germany had surrendered and the war in Europe was over. The audience went berserk, he said.

Noel Howlett always greeted everyone with a bright 'good morning' whenever he arrived for rehearsals. When he was asked about his sunny greeting, he told us that when he worked as a young boy with Mrs Patrick Campbell, the renowned actress who knew and worked with George Bernard Shaw and was also a close friend of Oscar Wilde, Noel would always mumble 'good morning'. The

actress took him aside one day and said, 'Mr Howlett, whenever you greet me with a downward inflection, I feel depressed for the rest of the day. Kindly greet me with an upward inflection in future.' Noel said it stayed with him the rest of his life, so that he always used an upward inflected greeting.

The furniture that was used in the rehearsal room was similar to the studio furniture but remained in the rehearsal room and was not transported to the studio each week. Our rehearsal classroom only needed six desks for us as the main characters. While Mark directed the staffroom scenes, we would either sit at the edges of the rehearsal room and watch, or we might remain at our desks until we were required to work on the next classroom scene. Often while we waited behind our desks, we passed the time by writing quietly in the prop exercise books. One time I can remember we made up anagrams of our names, and Malcolm McFee became Fecal Memmcol; Liz Gebhardt was Zebard Light; Peter Cleall changed to Leper Cleat; but my favourite was Peter Denyer who became Deeper Entry. Peter became slightly nettled by his anagrammed name and we wondered why. What none of us realized at the time was that Peter was gay, or perhaps he hadn't realized it himself at the time. It wasn't until a few years later when Malcolm and I were on tour and we visited Bournemouth where Peter was appearing in a summer season that he was open about his sexuality and seemed a great deal happier.

We very quickly became a great team and enjoyed working on the series. And this expanded time slot for what was usually half an hour, worked very well. And so many of John and Bob's lines were great. I especially used to love Price's cynicism, with wonderful lines like the ones in response to Hedges wanting 5C to join his chess club. 'If your lot join my chess club, be like inviting the Gestapo to a bar mitzvah.' Potter's malapropisms were a joy to listen to, and I can recall one of my own favourite lines in the final episode when we were about to break up for the Christmas holidays and Maureen and Sharon were reminiscing about a nativity play. Sharon said, 'Remember when we were first formers, Maur, and I was the Virgin Mary,' To which Abbott chips in, ''Bout

the only year you could've been, weren't it?' Which barely got a laugh during the final run-through in the rehearsal room. This last rehearsal was always unnerving, because it was attended by the vision mixer, floor manager, cameramen and sound, and they were there to concentrate on the technical aspects of running the show, so our lines barely got noticed, everyone too busy listening to Mark pointing out various problems that might occur.

Mark's direction, we soon discovered, could be very basic. Once I asked him what my motivation was for a certain line, to which he replied, 'It's because you get fucking paid to say it.' And if any characters ended a scene with a visual shot, Mark's direction would be along the lines of, 'Come on, give me a mixed bag of reactions.'

The series was transmitted on Friday evenings at 8.30. Except episodes 4 & 5, *A Near Greek Tragedy* and *Barbarian Librarians*, these were transmitted at 9.15 as they contained a few swear words, though they were mild by today's standards.

7.30 PLEASE, SIR!
JOHN ALDERTON
DERYCK GUYLER
NOEL HOWLETT in
It's the Thought that Counts
BY JOHN ESMONDE AND BOB LARBEY

End-of-term at Fen Street, and the staff wait for their traditional presents from their forms.
Bernard's anticipation at the thoughts of what he might get from 5C is tempered by the news that the injured Mr. Wiggins will be fit to return as 5C's form master next term.
When Miss Ewell takes a hand, surprises are in store for Bernard all round.

Bernard Hedges	John Alderton
Mr. Cromwell	Noel Howlett
Potter	Deryck Guyler
Price	Richard Davies
Smithy	Erik Chitty
Duffy	Peter Cleall
Craven	Malcolm McFee
Sharon Eversleigh	Penny Spencer
Maureen Bullock	Liz Gebhardt
Dunstable	Peter Denyer
Abbott	David Barry
Miss Ewell	Joan Sanderson
Barman	James Beattie

DESIGNER BARBARA BATES: PRODUCER/DIRECTOR MARK STUART
London Weekend Television Production

Over the seven weeks and seven episodes, the time flew by, while everyone's characters were well established and expanded on, and London Weekend Television realized they had a hit on their hands. Although you would never have guessed it from their glossy photographs of all their shows in reception at Wembley Studios. There wasn't one of *Please Sir!* And it wasn't the cast members being paranoid. Whenever any of our wives, friends or agents came to a recording, they invariably noticed how our series was overlooked as far as the studio promotion went. But it was early days, and the series wasn't long established, even though it had taken off as far as the public was concerned.

But as we headed towards the last episode of the series, with the seven weeks zooming by with the blink of an eye, rumours went around that LWT would be recommissioning another series. As I loved working in this series, especially with a cast who got on so well and were already starting to feel like a family, I couldn't wait for the spring of the following year.

When is a Contract Not a Contract?

The last episode of the first series of *Please Sir!* was recorded and broadcast close to Christmas, and LWT, knowing they had a hit on their hands, quickly negotiated a further seven episodes to start in the spring. The contracts arrived early in the new year, and I thought this done deal meant the money from the first series might last until the new series began.

But none of us discerned that working for a big organisation like LWT was like swimming with sharks. On reflection, swimming with sharks might be less precarious or traumatic.

It wasn't long before our agents got a call from casting director Richard Price, saying that LWT wanted to make thirteen episodes but starting in the autumn. But, we all protested, what about the contracts we had already signed for the seven episodes starting in the spring? A done deal, surely? A contract is a contract and must be honoured. Not if we wanted to be cast in the longer series starting in the autumn. If I didn't tear up the seven-episode contract my agent was told, releasing LWT from having to honour it, then they would recast Frankie Abbott with another actor.

Because all six of us 5C actors had become friends, the telephone links between us now vibrated with our aggrieved calls, saying how LWT was shitting on us from a great height. I suppose we were all insecure as actors, wondering if it was a bluff about recasting if we insisted on them honouring the contracts. We probably thought that as our characters were not so firmly established with only seven episodes under our belts, and there being hundreds of other young hopefuls waiting for an opportunity to be cast in a television series, then LWT might pick on someone as an example and recast.

What we should have done, we all hypothesized years later, was to stick together and refuse to rescind the spring contract. It was doubtful they would have cast every single 5C character with entirely different actors. But doesn't hindsight create easy solutions?

I agreed to allow them to revoke the contract and accepted the new one starting much later in the year, as did all the others.

The year was off to a terrible start. Thinking the second series of *Please Sir!* was imminent, I turned down a small theatre job. And money from the first series would barely last until the end of February. It now became a huge struggle to live. I was fortunate that my loyal employers at Drury Lane Theatre, where I had worked off and on since my student days, gave me another stage-hand job, but this was part time, and just about covered our rent. I can recall one time of not having enough fare to catch the Tube at Archway to get to Leicester Square for the evening show at Drury Lane, so I had to set off early and walk at least two Tube stops. I walked as far as Kentish Town, from where I could afford the return fare, and as I walked I kept looking at the ground, hoping I might find some money and be able to get on at Tufnell Park, having only walked one stop.

No such luck. Where is that coin in the gutter when you need it?

The show at Drury Lane was the musical *Mame*, starring the legendary Ginger Rogers. I discovered her dresser was leaving, and they were looking for someone else to dress her. I told Zélie, she applied for the job, and was soon dressing Fred Astaire's famous dancing partner. Ginger Rogers was a Christian Scientist, only drank mineral water, and Zélie was often sent on errands to buy the star a bottle of her special spring water, not so readily available back then.

It is customary for actors to tip their dressers at the end of each week, and most actors, and even the chorus, gave their dressers at least a pound. Ginger Rogers tipped Zélie five shillings. But at least there were now two part-time salaries coming in. And there was another positive from working at Drury Lane in *Mame*. I met and became lifelong friends with Bob Bayne, a Glaswegian who later married and moved to Leeds, working as a prop buyer for

Yorkshire Television. After we moved to a bigger flat in Highgate, Bob lodged with us for a while as we had two bedrooms, and he occasionally came to Wembley to see a recording of the show. We didn't see so much of each other once he moved to Leeds, although whenever I worked at the Leeds Grand Theatre, he always came to see a performance and we would have a drink afterwards.

A little bit of relief financially towards the end of February when I was interviewed by television director John Glenister, and the producer of *Thirty Minute Theatre,* Innes Lloyd. I was offered the part of Gunther Goettling, a young East German student. The play was called *Frontier*, written by Don Shaw, based on a true incident when Peter Fechter, a young East German was shot trying to escape across the Berlin Wall. In *Frontier,* my character attempts an escape across a minefield and has his leg blown off, and while he lies in no-man's land slowly dying, neither the East nor West German military attempt to rescue him.

I was pleased to reacquaint myself with my old friend Larry Dann, with whom I attended Corona Academy Stage School in the late '50s and early '60s. We had already worked quite a few times together, and he was playing Lieutenant Klein, an East German border guard. Larry went on to have a successful career and had a long stint in *The Bill* as Sgt Peters.

Having rehearsed in the usual west London church hall for three days, on Thursday evening we were taken for a night shoot at a remote Army training ground, about an hour's drive from Television Centre. We the actors were ferried out to the location by mini-bus. When we got there, apart from the outside broadcast vans and unit vehicles, we saw that this no-man's land looked authentic with its thick forest trees and high barbed wire fence through which I would use my wire cutters to escape across the minefield until my leg was blown off. An observation tower manned by a sentry rose out of the ground in the gloom, and scenic designers had built temporary huts for the military, both East and West Germans, to discuss the problem of who should risk going into the minefield to rescue the student. The O.B. cameras were positioned in the distance, as if they were covering sporting events, almost hidden

behind the trees. Most of the scenes would be performed without a break, and we could see which cameras were shooting by the red lights glowing in the dark. Strange how this drama based on a true event became so very real as the recording progressed. Suddenly we were hit by a blizzard and the snow came down heavily. I lay for hours on the freezing ground while things went wrong because of the extreme conditions. Light bulbs exploded from the cold, and a technician had to climb a twenty-five-foot ladder to replace them. The cameras froze, and Innes Lloyd, the producer, came out of the O.B. vehicle to help unfreeze them. Someone managed to get me a wetsuit, and I changed into it in the Portaloo. There were no portable dressing rooms of course, because the dressing rooms were back at Television Centre in White City where we had changed into our costumes. Despite the wetsuit I was still frozen, my teeth chattering and my body trembling with the cold. But the most discomfort I suffered was because I needed a crap, and there was no way I was going to undress again in the unheated Portaloo. I clenched my buttocks tightly and ended up being constipated for the next three or four days.

Now, what should have been a night shoot ending before midnight, went on into the early hours of the morning. And because cameras were still freezing as the blizzard raged, and light bulbs popped melodically, the production dragged on, and I was told I would have to suffer the same torturous performance the following night.

Occasionally I was able to grab a hot drink and watch the other scenes, as Larry Dann as Lieutenant Klein discussed the problem of rescuing the student with Corporal Schabe, played by Tom Baker.

After the shoot, when taxis were summoned to take us home from Television Centre, they discovered Tom Baker lived in Archway, just a stone's throw from Highgate Village, and we shared the ride home. We chatted and became friends, and Tom often came up to the Village for a drink. While we waited for the pubs to open, we walked round Highgate Cemetery. Tom pointed out that opposite Karl Marx's tomb was the grave of a man named Spencer.