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* Transcript ID: AO-95-175AT002

* CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-175-17a-x

* Tapes: A0-95-175OT003

* CCINTB Tapes ID: T95-50

* Length: 00:41:10

* Manchester Piccadilly Station, Manchester, 9 June 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Arthur Orrell

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* AO=Arthur Orrell, VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Second of two interviews with Arthur Orrell; Sound Quality: Poor; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

[Start of Tape]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

[inaudible; background noise; tape briefly cuts out]

AO: Is it recording?

VB: Yeah. That's fine. It's just I always have to make sure, check I've got the, it's got an extra battery in here. [laughs]

AO: Oh, yes. Well, that's the main thing. It's like these automatic cameras these days, you know. Taking a picture and find out the battery's gone.

VB: That's right. Yeah.

AO: Yes.

VB: These are wonderful. I mean, was this a collection you started as a boy, or?

AO: Well, my brother started it about, oh, well before the War.

VB: Yeah.

AO: It's the fact that eh, [pause 3 seconds] cigarettes, you know, were the vogue in those days and eh, different companies, there must have been, you know, a couple of dozen companies, if not more. And they had cigarette cards in them. And they had a series up to fifty. And, eh, that was kind of an encouragement to, to buy cigarettes, I suppose. You know, such companies as erm, [pause 2 seconds] Star and erm Robin, Gallaher's, had some. They even had, erm, glossy photographs. But the more expensive ones, they had them, you know, roughly about the size of about two-and-half, eh, by one-and-a-half inches. Things like dogs, and erm, national events and things like that, you see. They were quite an interest in those days. And then, of course, now they're collectors' items.

VB: Right.

AO: There were lots about in these fleamarket sales and the likes. Quite often they tried to get a full set and then they can put them in a frame. But, you know, this is how it kind of started. There was one firm called Woodbines which, eh, men used to call coffin nails because they were, [laughs] a bit extra strong.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And eh, they didn't have cigarette cards with them. Erm, they were one of the most established companies making cigarettes. And eh, one firm started with eh, producing cigarettes in fives rather than tens which, they're out of tens.

VB: Ah, I see.

AO: And they were in little paper packets. And there were just five in the packet. There was one firm called [Cope Bros?] and they had a national campaign on [inaudible] and promoting. And they had coupons with them, the packets themselves, and you sent them off and you got things like erm, slippers and caps. You could always tell, [laughs] which chap who, you know, smoked certain cigarettes because of the gaudy colours of the erm, pullovers and the eh, caps that they wore.

VB: [laughs]

AO: They were really outstanding. But that was one encouragement. But we as boys used to [go straight up to them?] and we used to say, you know, "Have you any cigarette cards?" Sunday nights we used to spend where, before there were television and radio, in summer they would have, eh... Like for instance, when I was four or five years old in Farnworth, the one main street there was crowded with people. And two or three lads would go out and asking every chap they could, "Any cigarette cards? Any cigarette cards?" And they'd say, "Yeah. Come next Sunday. Bring a barrow."
[laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: All that tease kind of thing, but all in good fun. We used to collect them and we would have albums for them as well. But they were a source of knowledge for youngsters particularly, because on the back gives details of them.

VB: Mhm.

AO: If you can see there.

VB: Oh, yes. I see.

AO: It gives quite good, eh, biographies, although, you know, relatively short. But they certainly gave you literally the picture in those days. And eh, then of course, seeing the black-and-white ones, with you coming along, sharing this interest as well, I automatically will be able to tell all the different characters. Who they are, what they did, you know.

VB: It's amazing. 'Cause as you say, I mean, looking at this one on Greta Garbo it's sort of--

AO: Oh, yes, yes. Gallahers was a very big firm.

VB: Oh, I see.

AO: Mhm.

VB: Yeah. So these were ways of feeding information about--

AO: Well, these [audio distorted] were ways of youngsters getting, eh, assimilating knowledge. Not so much on the content, but at least it gave them an interest, didn't it? Albeit, just cigarette cards.

VB: Yeah. I mean, they're quite beautiful actually as well.

AO: Oh, yes.

VB: Lovely colours. There must have been quite a few things to collect from that point of view.

AO: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

VB: Erm, I mean there's Greta Garbo here.

AO: Greta Garbo. She was the one who, her saying was, you know, "I want to be alone." Not Mae West, you know. What was her, her particular thing?

VB: Oh. "Come up and see me sometime." [laughs]

AO: That's correct, yes. Yes.

VB: Did you like Greta Garbo?

AO: Well, yes. Some of it. Well there were a few. Greta Garbo, Jean Harlow, eh, Marlene Dietrich. Yes they all had their own particular niche.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause I was wondering about that erm, after we talked the last time, about the sort of qualities that appealed to you in a film star. 'Cause we mentioned people like erm, well Jeanette MacDonald, I remember was one that we mentioned.

AO: Eh, what MacDonald?

VB: Jeanette.

AO: Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Yes, it depends what the subject was. I mean, they were all in the form of erm, [pause 2 seconds] musical comedy. And eh, you'd got John Boles, they used to be in the, they would sing in, erm, one called *The Desert Song* and I think 'Air in the Mountains' was

another one [possibly referring to *Music in the Air*]. And of course you had, they were principally American but they had the eh, the British equivalent too. Yes, it eh...

VB: So was it more the type of film you enjoyed or was it the stars?

AO: It was a combination of everything.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I used to like thrillers, I used to like cowboys. [But at other times?] there were dramas with erm, you know, people like Marlene Dietrich. Of course there were lots of erm, war films, were animated in those days. The first one I came across was, there's not many would remember it in Bolton, for instance, was *The Battle of The Somme* and I think I was about erm, six or seven years old when I saw that in Bolton at a theatre, erm a theatre, a cinema called The Theatre Royal which was near to the Grand which was opposite the Capitol. And eh, that was one of the first ones I ever saw as pictures. Oh, there were about roughly, I think, [pause 3 seconds] and I say roughly, about twenty-three in eh, in Bolton. Different types of cinema, some on the outskirts, quite a lot on the outskirts, and probably half a dozen main ones in Bolton. The better quality, or should I say, the films would come into the better quality cinemas in the centre and then perhaps a week, a fortnight, perhaps three weeks, even later, they would find their way to the outskirts. And eh, they would find their way, as I mentioned before about individuals or small companies owning these cinemas. One would be one side of the town and one on the other and they would have, you know, three or four days, and they'd move onto the other ones, you see.

And eh, during the war, or soon after the war, they had certain stars come along. I remember at one, I think it was called the Lido, eh, Richard Tauber came with his, what was it? 'Land of Song', was it? [probably referring to *The Land of Smiles*]. And eh, his wife was Diana Napier. But he was, you know, one of the main singers in that particular period.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And another thing, I don't know whether it's been mentioned or not, but a lot of cinemas they had cinema organs.

VB: No, I haven't heard about that.

AO: Oh, have they not mentioned that? Oh, yes! Yes, Odeons, some Granada ones, erm, the Lido in Bolton, regular feature. Of course one of the top organists was Richard Dixon, eh, Reginald Dixon, rather, at Blackpool, at the Tower Ballroom. But they had these at eh, the main cinemas, like, in Manchester, just round the corner there, I think they had them. And the Gaumont had it. You know, kind of a fill-in, where the organ would come up from the eh, basement or whatever, and come onto the stage. And, you know, for ten minutes, quarter of an hour. And the strange thing [inaudible], erm they had the Christian name Reginald. There was Reginald Foort, Reginald Liversidge, Reginald Dixon.

VB: [laughs] Stage names, perhaps?

AO: Oh, yeah. Yes. Well, you know, they weren't nicknames, they were, well, I don't think they were real stage names. It's just coincidence. Yeah.

VB: That is interesting. 'Cause I mean, looking at these, they're in wonderful condition.

AO: Oh, yes. Well, they've been put away. They've been in cigarettes boxes and--

VB: Yes.

AO: I must have about two or three thousand of, not a complete set, but, you know, all different subjects.

VB: This is beautiful too. Madge Evans. An ex-child actress.

AO: Pardon?

VB: She was a child actress, apparently.

AO: Yes, like Shirley Temple. You do know Shirley Temple?

VB: Yes, [laughing] I know Shirley Temple.

AO: Well, I mean, yes.

VB: She was the same sort of type, was she? When she was--

AO: Oh, yes, yes, yes. And then of course you got, eh, a lot with comedians, you know. You know you had your favourite comedians and the likes. And eh, there was 'Schnozzle' Durante [referring to 'Jimmy' Durante]. He was well known for his big nose. [laughs] And you got the, erm, her that used to be erm, [pause 3 seconds] three, Three Stooges. They were real slapstick, spot on, you know, technicians with comedy where they would eh, they looked really comic. They looked really stupid. But the timing for that, when they, you know, their actions were so spot on. They would slap each other on the head, another one would, you know, erm, put his hands on his hips and eh, oh, lots of things like that. And of course, you got, they kind of evolved their own particular style. You knew what to expect but it so fitted in. Eh, the Marx Brothers, they were, each of those had a particular character. I think it was Harpo, I'm not sure absolutely, but I think he was deaf. But of course, they dressed up, you know, kind of half normal. They had a peculiar hat on and of course you got eh, one of the Marx Brothers, was it Groucho? Oh, he had a particular walk, like erm, what was that chap you called? Max Wall, he had a particular walk, you see. And he had a cigar, that was his trademark, and a moustache. And of course you got the more serious actor like Clark Gable. [sound of train horn] Tense drama, sea drama, some of them and a lot were with eh with prison [scene?], where you got Paul Muni who was either a fugitive from the chain game [referring to *I Was a Fugitive From a Chain Gang*], or something similar thing to that. Erm--

VB: I remember last time we talked a little bit about Spencer Tracy and I noticed he was in here, just looking through it.

AO: Ah, there he is! Yes. It's only the other week or so, it was mentioned I think on a cinema programme that was on television about how, what a nasty bloke he was.

VB: Really?

AO: Yeah. Well he was very hard to work with. I think they were interviewing one of his female counterparts. But eh, yes, it's revelations like that of course, that kind of diminishes one's original, erm, appreciation. Or course you got erm, who was the other chappie? Erm... [pause 3 seconds] Oh, well-known one, he was one of the first to be known to have suffered from AIDS and the likes. A very tall chap with erm, black hair.

VB: Rock Hudson.

AO: Yeah. Rock Hudson is the name. Yes, and eh, you know.

VB: And what were your impressions of him in the thirties? Did you think--

AO: Oh, a tough guy, of course.

VB: [laughs]

AO: The thing is he had erm, a back-up from youngsters, particularly him with Freddie Bartholomew these juvenile actors and ah, young girls coming up. Judy Garland was, I think, [inaudible] with them too.

VB: Right. I mean, on the back of this it mentions, I mean, he's dressed as a priest for a start.

AO: Oh, yes. Father so and so. He'd be in the eh, *Boys Town*, I was looking for there, when you get these youngsters who were, you know, types they've probably got now eh, the vandals and all like that. And he would form a club and he would look after them, and the likes. Yeah.

VB: Leslie Banks here as well.

AO: Oh, Leslie Banks. I remember him, he was British and he had a crooked nose. I don't know how he got that but eh, he was in erm, I'm not sure whether he was in [pause 2 seconds] *The 39 Steps*.

VB: Really?

AO: The original. Godfrey Tearle was. I'm not sure about Leslie Banks.

VB: But it mentions some of his films here. Things like *The Tunnel, Debt of Honour, Fire over England, Wings of the Morning, eh, Sanders of the River.*

AO: Oh, *Sanders of the River*. Yeah, that was eh, that was a real crowd, eh, puller. *Sanders of the River*, of course, eh, Paul Robeson. And of course he was a singer, a deep bass erm, singer. He was, eh, well, you know, it was a real crowd puller. And of course when they made these films they were on somewhat of a limited budget, and eh, you could tell quite a lot, the background scenes were obviously painted backgrounds. You could sometimes see ripples on the screen, [laughs] [inaudible], the continuity situation, you know.

VB: 'Cause his costume's quite something.

AO: Oh, yeah, yeah. That would have been *Sanders of the River*, that one.

VB: Right. And then there's Kay Francis here as well.

AO: Oh, Kay Francis. She was the eh, dark-haired one.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yes, yes.

VB: She was in *Stolen Holiday*, *Women Are Like That*, *First Lady*.

AO: Yes, course they were typical women's films, basically.

VB: So these weren't ones that you would have particularly gone out your way to see?

AO: Oh, yes. Well you could tell what films they were, sometimes by the title and they gave the same reviews as eh, [pause 3 seconds] erm film criticisms you're getting now, you know. There's another one. Joan Crawford.

VB: Joan Crawford, yeah. Was she someone you liked?

AO: Yes, well, eh, kind of familiar, you know.

VB: Yes.

AO: Eh, Jean Arthur was another one. She had quite a wide, you know she was in some of the westerns, I think, with erm, probably John Wayne and erm, you know, other well-known cowboys.

VB: You mentioned Bette Davis as well.

AO: Oh, Bette Davis. Is she still going strong? I think she is.

VB: I think she might be.

AO: Oh, yes! She's a bit like Katherine Harrison.

VB: Yes.

AO: Who was a British film actress. She's about a hundred and one now. And eh, she came from Blackburn, you know, kind of up the road from eh, well, about twenty-two miles from here.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm.

VB: And Jeanette MacDonald.

AO: Oh, Jeanette MacDonald. Yes, and eh, I remember seeing her and was it Nelson Eddy, in Reading during the wartime.

VB: Oh, really?

AO: Oh, yes.

VB: I just saw, erm, one of her films the other day. It was eh-- [mention of microphone having slipped down]

AO: [inaudible].

VB: It looks practically identical at each side.

AO: Yes, it does, that's right.

VB: I saw her and Nelson Eddy in *Maytime* quite recently.

AO: Oh, yes, yes, yes. That was a, that was, you know... there was a wholesomeness and a kind of, relaxation in those days. And of course, these were kind of, got people from humdrum life and you know, I mean if they could have had [their own?] [inaudible], that's two hours of freedom. [laughs]

VB: Yes. There was a lovely sort of light quality about it as well.

AO: Oh, yes.

VB: Well, I mean there's a [inaudible] murder at the end, of course. But erm, yes, it had a lightness about it that I quite enjoyed.

AO: Yes, yes, absolutely, yes. It's almost like going watching a movie, you know, in the theatre nowadays. You're, kind of, you're kind of, [inaudible] being there, almost like a propos, what we call, an expression you hear these days, fly-on-the-wall situation.

VB: Yeah, yeah. You get really lost in it.

AO: Oh, yes, yes. But eh, yes, I'm glad I brought these out for you.

VB: They're lovely, they really are. Erm, she was in *San Francisco* as well.

AO: Aw yes. That was one, I think that was one that starred with the earthquake'?

VB: Right.

AO: You know. When was the earthquake? Was it 1908, or something like that?

VB: Something like that, yes. It's a nice picture that. You get the sort of warmth of her personality.

AO: Yes, yes.

VB: Yvonne Arnaud

AO: Oh, Yvonne Arnaud. Yes, what does it say about her? Is she English?

VB: Erm. [pause 4 seconds; looking at book] Born in Bordeaux.

AO: Oh, yes. Oh, was she French? Yes. [pause 8 seconds] Yes, well, *A Cuckoo in the Nest*, that was erm, yes she would be in farces, you know, the erm, what did you call them? Aldwych farces, I think was, the erm, title of it. A set of various farces, they had a lot in, [coughs] 'scuse me, in Whitehall. Erm, *A Cuckoo in the Nest*, Robertson Hare, Ralph Lynn, Tom Walls. You know. They'd be stage plays probably initially and they ran for month, after month, after month, yes.

VB: Someone was telling me about Robertson Hare a few days ago. 'Cause he had a catchphrase didn't he? Erm, "Indubitably".

AO: "Indubitably", that's right. Now, I saw Robertson Hare round about the 1940s, probably about 1947.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, on the top of Regent Street in London. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: Just walking across, you know. I didn't speak to him or anything like that but eh, he had a stern face. He'd a bald head and eh, he looked somewhat kind of a gentleman and he spoke with a, you know, a deep voice. [inaudible]. You know, this was in touch with Ralph Lynn and Tom Walls. *A Cuckoo in the Nest*.

VB: Uhuh.

AO: They were superb. The Noel Coward period and the Ivor Novello period of erm [inaudible].

VB: Yeah.

AO: And of course you got another one, he was in one or two films, I think. Brian Rix, was in those, erm, Whitehall [inaudible], kind of thing. But yes, very good. I mean, you got chappies like them, they eh, [pause 4 seconds] their roles took different forms insofar as they got older so they had other type of parts and, you know, ironically, it seemed a pity that some had to resort to taking parts of villains.

VB: Yes.

AO: And eh--

VB: I was interested in what you were saying about erm, the Marx Brothers, for instance, and the sort of subtleties in, in comedy in the thirties.

AO: Oh, absolutely, yes.

VB: You know you were saying that like the Noel Coward--

AO: Oh, yes! Yes, yes, yes. They all had something to offer. They all had something, [pause 2 seconds]. To get on, you had to have something different. [pause 3 seconds]. Like I was saying about Max Wall, he had a particular walk and sometimes he had, a think, oversized shoes. And they tried to do something that nobody else could do. What I find these days a lot with TV entertainment, particularly comedians. There's no comedians I care for these days, that I could switch on and turn them on and enjoy. But there's so many, they're copying other people and if they're not doing that, they're acting silly. [inaudible]. Ah, you know, like Mr Bean. A lot of the kids like him because it's new to him, it's new to them. But eh, with adults, he can be straightforward and when you see that, you know, as a youngster, you kind of [make allowances?], so to speak. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: It's a crazy world. When you reflect back, you think "I wonder," [laughs] "what I [inaudible] that for". But then again, I mean that's a form of growing up, it was harmless sort of thing.

VB: So, were the comedies very popular, you know, with boys?

AO: Oh, yes, absolutely! 'Course, you'd get, you'd get Charlie Chaplin. [tape fuzzy] He, from what I can remember, you know, Bolton as it is, I think he came, came to Bolton. I would have to check that up.

VB: Really?

AO: It's part of what my mother used to talk about. I think Buffalo Bill, eh, came to Bolton or around here. He was, he wasn't a film star. People used to, you know, scores of them had taken Buffalo Bill off because he was eh, you know, the tail end of the war. You know. The Americans erm lay anchors against the [inaudible], so to speak. And he brought his own roadshow round here, including genuine, you know, erm, Indian, Indian chiefs. There was a programme on called 'The Wild West', and you know, it's depicting him being shown, being shown there. Eh, but quite number took off erm, William Cody, because he was only about sixteen or seventeen. And eh, he'd been an express rider. But eh, he was was thought great [in those days?], there was no world environment. I mean,

to shoot thousands of buffalo, you know, for buffalo meat for the railway constructors, you know. That was his particular theme after he kind of packed up doing Pony Express. Of course, doing Pony Express when he was sixteen. I remember going [inaudible]. [laughs] So it provided quite a theme, you know, for a picture story.

VB: That must have been so exciting though, I mean, to see someone like that in the flesh.

AO: Oh, absolutely, yes.

VB: A living legend.

AO: Yes, yes. Absolutely, yes, yes. Aye. What's the other ones? [referring to cigarette cards] That's Jimmy Cag-- no, that's not Jimmy Cagney.

VB: Erm. Lionel Barrymore.

AO: Oh, Lionel Barrymore.

VB: *The Return of Peter Grimm.*

AO: You're talking about the real actors there, real character actors. The kind of more modern, like Henry Irving, you know, type of people. They could take off different ones. There was Lionel Barrymore and eh, I think his more slightly famous one called John Barrymore.

VB: Oh, yes.

AO: I think he had a, I'm not sure whether he had a limp permanently or not. But eh, he would take off, you know, similar type to Doctor Kildare. You know. He did a series of those.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Another one bringing to mind. It comes out as a talkie and flashbacks so to speak was erm, Hardy, chap called Hardy. Erm, I forget his name. Oh, Stone [referring to Lewis Stone]. He took off a Hardy family, but his name was Stone, actually. And he had a kind of a family, of eh, who was it, Mickey Rooney and one or two others [referring to the *Andy Hardy* series]. And there were all kinds

of different escapades and whatnot. They were very much like the eh, nowadays they would call them soaps.

VB: Yes.

AO: You know how they call them soaps, don't you?

VB: Oh, from the American advertisers.

AO: That's right. That's it.

VB: Yeah. That's interesting, I mean, 'cause... [pause 3 seconds] Actually, I just saw John Barrymore in that *Maytime*.

AO: Oh, yes.

VB: Sort of 'Dynasty', as you say. This is one of the Crusades. [cigarette cards]

AO: Who's that?

VB: Erm, Loretta Young and Henry Wilcoxon.

AO: Oh yes, Henry Wilcoxon. Yes, he was a tall chap, stern looking but he was one of the, you know, Charles Heston type of person.

VB: Ah, right, yes.

AO: And he would, eh, I think he did a lot of these hysterical ones.

VB: Did you enjoy that sort of film?

AO: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I enjoyed them all, you know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: When I went to, I mentioned before, I went to the pictures seven times in a week. That's twice on Saturday and once every night! [laughs] For tuppence or threepence. But eh, yeah. Oh, there's Charles Boyer. He was a heartthrob. Who's the lady with him?

VB: Erm, Kay Francis.

AO: Oh, Kay Francis.

VB: It's George Brent actually.

AO: George Brent? Oh, sorry.

VB: He does look like Charles Boyer.

AO: He's got the same look, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Oh, George Brent. I used to like him very much because he was erm, in a lot of detective films.

VB: I see, yes.

AO: Yeah.

VB: That looks like some sort of mystery, doesn't it?

AO: Mhm. Of course, they all had the trilby, you know. And erm--

VB: Yes. [pause 2 seconds] *Chasing Yesterday*.

AO: Who's that?

VB: Erm, Anne Shirley after *Anne of Green Gables* and O.P. Heggie.

AO: Oh, yes. Gosh. [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

AO: I haven't got a clue what it was. And erm, *Anne of Green Gables* was like, you know. A lot of the American films, they kind of, what you call it, pinched British actors and they'd also pinch British stories. You know, like *The Railway Children*, *Anne of Green Gables*, erm, *Little Women*, and those, you know, Victorian type of things.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yeah. Norma Shearer. And then of course, two or three were, I think there were three in particular, they were sisters, I think. Was it Joan Fontaine, Olivia de Havilland, and eh...

VB: Mhm.

AO: I forget who the other one was. Mhm.

VB: They're very alike, Joan Fontaine and Olivia de Havilland.

AO: Ooh, yes! Yes, yes, yes.

VB: Erm. Yeah. Except, of course, one's blond, [laughs], and one's dark.

AO: They could even change, couldn't they?

VB: I really. One of my favourite films was *Rebecca* with--

AO: Oh! Heaven above! That's eh, that's been done time and again, hasn't it? I mean--

VB: Yes.

AO: Was Laurence Olivier in that?

VB: He was, yes.

AO: Yes, that's right. They've tried to recreate these but eh--

VB: Yep.

AO: But, eh, you know, once you get the feel of it, it's not quite the same.

VB: No.

AO: And eh, 'cause that's, they've not done, that part of the country, I don't suppose, the North Yorkshire Moors.

VB: No.

AO: Oh. They've a lot to do, to get, erm, you know, to get the feel of places.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, North Yorkshire Moors. You see, what's happening now is that, like with Ireland, they're getting a lot of eh, film crews coming from America.

VB: Yeah.

AO: You know, because of it costing so much in America, and then of course, the present one of course is erm, *Rob Roy*.

VB: Oh, yes.

AO: So I mean, we've got to film it for the Scottish, Scottish tourist industry.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Like we used to get John Wayne. What did he erm... He went to Ireland and he did one there, a very well-known one. And it was, I think, Maureen O'Hara [referring to *The Quiet Man*].

VB: Uhuh.

AO: And eh, [pause 2 seconds] you know, the scenery was part of it. Well, it is nowadays, particularly with colour. It didn't matter so much in the old days with just black and white, but when colour came into vogue it gave an additional dimension.

VB: Yes. Yeah. I know what you mean because, I mean, I have actually been to the Yorkshire Moors 'cause eh--

AO: Oh, yes.

VB: My husband's family lived in Halifax for a while.

AO: Aw, yes.

VB: So we used to go down there.

AO: Oh. You're near to erm, erm, the Piece Hall.

VB: Yes, yes.

AO: Oh! That's one of my favourites! I was there with, you know, family and erm, my son-in-law, he comes from Sowerby Bridge which is next door to Halifax. And this was just before the Piece Hall was opened. It went, it went out of use somewhat in decay and then somebody must have got, [some cash?], making an attraction.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But it's almost like a setting, you know, a Spanish setting, isn't it?

VB: It's lovely, yes. It really is.

AO: And eh, we were there just a few days before it was officially opened. So [that is a fair bit?; inaudible].

VB: Yeah.

AO: [coughs]

VB: As the weather starts looking as if it's changing--

AO: Ah, would you believe it.

VB: Tom Walls.

AO: Oh, it's obviously Tom Walls. Oh, yes. People used to think he had some connection with those ice cream [inaudible] came into being. I don't think so necessarily but eh, of course, as I say, he's with Tom Walls and eh, Ralph Lynn and Robertson Hare, you see.

VB: *The Memory Expert.*

AO: Oh, oh. Just a minute, that's eh, W.C. Fields.

VB: Yes. [laughs]

AO: Oh, yes. He was superb. You see, he had a particular, eh, [pause 3 seconds] technique. Eh, I forget, he had a particular saying, too. But he was kind of a, bit of a dominant character, always doing daft things, you know. For instance, I always remember going to the Regal in Bolton round about 1934, '35, I would think. Can't remember precisely. And he was playing golf. And he got the ball on the tee, and swung his club and then there'd be a funny noise. [laughs] It was his shoe squeaking, you know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And eh, you know, many other things like that. And of course you got Harold Lloyd as well. You know. He'd be clinging on the side of a skyscraper, albeit that the skyscraper was created by lying something horizontally. And he was clinging to it [thataway?] and he had glasses that never had any eh, lenses in them. You know, all different, you know, eh, created their own special, you know, special thing about them.

VB: Yeah.

AO: It's getting a bit closer [referring to weather]. We'll have a minute or two, and then we'll move.

VB: I'm back to the beginning, actually, with Greta Garbo.

AO: Is it? Oh.

VB: I skipped some out there, 'cause I went and looked at Spencer Tracy.

AO: Ah, yes, yes.

VB: Erm. Myrna Loy as well.

AO: Oh, Myrna Loy. Oh, yes, of course. She was a favourite. Erm, she was with William Powell in eh, a detective series. *The Thin Man* it was called.

VB: Ah, yes. It mentions that here.

AO: Does it? Yeah, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Tom Conway. He was a private eye, too, and got eh, quite a number of, you know, newspaper reporters and outstanding with Humphrey Bogart. And erm, you know, Lauren, was it? Lauren Bacall.

VB: Yes.

AO: His girlfriend. And then eventually you find out there was a lot of, you know, cohabiting, and all this, that and the other. And eh...

VB: I mean it must've. From what you're saying, did you get much negative publicity about the stars in the thirties? Or was it--

AO: What, scandal, you mean?

VB: Yeah. Or were they, did they seem quite sort of wholesome?

AO: Yes. There didn't seem to be much scandal, you know. Only little things like Charlie Chaplin. He was a real, you know, real ladies' man. He'd go from one onto the other and the likes. [laughs] Yes, there was a bit of scandal at the time but there must've been such a lot covered up.

VB: Yes.

AO: Nowadays, of course, it's so open. If you get two of them living together, it's in the newspapers that they've been together for the last fourteen years. Like eh, [name?] and eh, who was he with? Was it Dulcie Gray? I'm not sure. You know the English, the English couple.

VB: Yes.

AO: Yes, very good upstanding people. John Mills was always considered, you know, the erm, British type of gentleman. 'Cause they had a good era, after the erm, you know, after the War with all these various war films. Michael Redgrave and eh, Dennis Price. Well, he committed suicide, didn't he? And eh, there were lots of others like that, all about the same period. Ian Carmichael was another one. Yeah.

VB: 'Cause it's interesting, you know, the sort of, images of the stars. Specially just looking at these. They don't really tell you very much about them. They just say what nice people they are. [laughs]

AO: No. Yes, that's true. Well, this is the obvious thing that. The other thing is to, you know, get books about them, and scores, from the library, you know, biographies--

VB: Yes.

AO: Written by ghost writers and the like.

VB: I mean, were you interested in their biographies? In the thirties?

AO: In the?

VB: Were you interested in finding out about the stars?

AO: Eh, no, not a lot. Because, you know, the only way was either reading papers. I mean, they didn't tell you anything on the television. It was either, you know, reading in the library, and eh, I didn't get library books on, a biography, of people. And eh, there was no television or anything like that. But sometimes, in the paper, it was national news. Like, Rudolph Valentino. I think that was 1925. I was living in Farnworth then, which is three miles from Bolton. That's where I started all my

picturegoing. And eh, that was kind of a national disaster because he was the, you know. The great lover of the world and [film?]. He used to take off the, you know, lady and sheik and the like and eh. I always remember saying, "Dad, what did he die of?" [laughs] My dad said to me, "Eating too much ice cream!" [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: But I think what started off at the pictures was, going to sound a bit, a bit unusual, [inaudible] and then, eh, after about a year or two, you know, kids' toys and little [gimmicks?] for tuppence and threepence. They introduced, eh, little gadgets about a couple of inches long with a little type of lens, and they sold packets of erm, I think twenty-five in a packet, for about two pence. And they were really, eh, offcuts. That's one frame of eh, a positive film. When they made films, they produced a negative from which, you know, if cinemas wanted to show it all at the same time, whatever, [and also, respective of that?] they would have to produce positive. So there were lots and lots of positive films round. And instead of throwing them away, they would cut snippets off, so that, you know, you could look up to the sky and this thing was shining light through. And you could get, eh, you know, Tom Mix, a scene from Tom Mix, or something like that. And that really started me off as an interest in erm, photography, which erm, I used to see them in shots, so I thought I'd like to take pictures and the likes. And eh, most peculiar, I don't think anybody else, you know, ever thought of it, but... I saved my pennies for it and I got a camera, twelve and sixpence, I think it was in old money. And eh, I used to buy penny stamps at a post office. If you got a strip of papers with, I think it was twelve. If not twelve, it was twenty-four blank spaces the size of a postage stamp. And you'd get a penny stamp and lick it and stick it on. So you got either twelve, or twenty-four, and passed it into the post office counter, and you had a post office book for only about one shilling or two shillings. [laughs]

VB: Yeah.

AO: The little things are, you know, for the [inaudible] people. Erm, have you anything else for now? Or do you want to go and have a bite?

VB: Erm. I think we should go and have something to eat.

AO: Right.

VB: 'Cause it's definitely turning. [laughs]

AO: Well, that's true.

VB: Thanks for bringing these along so I could see them. That's really interesting.

AO: Oh, that's OK. Now eh, [inaudible]. How far have you got with your eh [inaudible]?

VB: Yes. I'm not too bad.

AO: Scottish people are more inclined to colder weather than we are.

VB: Yeah.

AO: [inaudible; background noise; mention of park, walking round by the canal]

VB: Yeah.

AO: You know that pub we went to? [inaudible].

VB: Oh, really!

AO: Yeah.

VB: It's a lovely spot that, actually.

AO: Oh, it is. Well [inaudible].

[audio distorted; recording stops]

[End of Interview]