

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1995 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

- * Transcript ID: DL-95-216AT002
- * CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-216-16a-ac
- * Tape: DL-95-216OT002
- * CCINTB Tapes ID: T95-135
- * Length: 00:58:15
- * Lowestoft, Norfolk, 13 November 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Doreen Lyell
- * Transcribed by Joan Simpson / Standardised by Annette Kuhn
- * DL = Doreen Lyell/ VB = Valentina Bold
- * Notes: Second of two interviews with Doreen Lyell; Sound Quality: Fair.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[tape introduction by VB]

VB: Interesting what you're saying. That the sort of social aspect of it was as much erm--

DL: Mhm. It was.

VB: I'll just put this over beside you. I'll just put it there. I've lost my little clip thing so I'm going to have to just lie it on the top. That should be okay.

DL: Oh dear.

VB: You say it was a question of seeing who people...

DL: Yes. Oh well we used to go and dress up, you know. We'd put on our best things to go. Twice a week. Erm, and we'd see people that we didn't normally see. You know while we were at work. Because our lives were work and our two evenings at the cinema. And eh, we didn't go much, any further. And eh, and then eh, we'd see who was with who, and the latest boyfriends. And, you know, what they were wearing and all the rest of it. It was more like [laughs] when the elderly population

go to church, [laughs] we went to the cinema. And eh, we saw lots of interesting things. [laughs]
Apart from the films.

VB: Yeah. [laughs]

DL: [laughs] Yes so, as I said, some of the films, they weren't that eh, they weren't that entertaining some of those. I mean, John Wayne he made some terrible films really. But eh, you could always rely on Spencer Tracy. I've never erm, been to a bad film that he made. He's a marvellous actor and he'd never made a bad film. And neither had Clark Gable as far as I remember.

VB: 'Cause I was wondering about that. Erm, you mentioned a lot of different stars. Were there particular qualities that you admired in a film star do you think?

DL: Well, you know, erm. Well they were marvellous actors to start with. I mean theatrical people dismiss the stars that sort of thing. Movie stars. But I mean a lot of them were wonderful actors. I mean I didn't really care for many of the women. But erm, the men stars were marvellous. And eh, you know, and they were all good, I liked it when they were good characters. [laughs]

VB: Mhm. So was it the story and the--

DL: Oh there were some marvellous stories. Yes. I mean you could lose yourself in the films. That was the point. They were really, I mean, we'd come out sometimes and we'd be stuffing the handkerchiefs in our mouths. [laughs] Crying. It was a release of tension and emotion and everything else. And erm, that was part of growing up to do that. You know, we got our experience in the cinema without any trouble. [laughs]

VB: That's interesting. So do you think that you were learning--

DL: Oh I'm sure. I'm sure.

VB: About eh--

DL: Life. Yeah. I know that kind of life was a bit over the top. You know, I mean we'd never experienced that. But at the same time, emotions and things were there that, to come out. And eh, I think that was half the enjoyment, you know. And you'd go home and, if it was a musical, you'd be

singing the songs and sort of living the part that erm, the people in the film portrayed for you. And so it gave us a wider aspect of life than we would have had if we hadn't. You know, living in a small town there wasn't much, [laughs] much else except the cinema. I mean there was the dance hall but I never went there. I know my sister did, she loved it but eh, I preferred the cinema. So did my friends. We all went. I mean my generation, we typically went twice a week. And erm, we saw some marvellous films.

VB: I'm interested when you said that about eh, sort of learning about another way of life.

DL: Mhm.

VB: Did it ever make you want to erm--

DL: No. [laughs]

VB: Go and live in America. [laughs]

DL: No. No.

VB: No.

DL: No. I was quite content with the experience that I could see. I suppose it could give some people. But I mean we saw all sorts of films there. Em, films like *The Good Earth*, you know, that showed you China.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Eh, the way the peasants lived in China. And eh, and lots of foreign films. Foreign locations like that. And it showed you so many aspects of other people's lives. I didn't particularly want to go and see them. But it was very interesting, it did broaden your horizon a lot.

VB: It's very interesting what you're saying. Erm, I mean the only thing I can think of in terms of today is maybe some of the things that you'd see on television. Eh, I mean things like maybe 'Dallas'.

DL: Oh well.

VB: You watch it and you enjoy it but you wouldn't want to go and live it.

DL: No I liked 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty'.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I must admit I thought they were hugely entertaining.

VB: I mean was it something like that or am I taking the wrong track?

DL: Well yes some of it, some of it was. But eh, I liked the erm, the emotional films, you know.

VB: Ah I see.

DL: The really deep emotional films that I wasn't experiencing at that age. [laughs] And erm, that's what I liked about it. It was more like reading a deep novel.

VB: I see. Yeah.

DL: And seeing all the different countries, the different people. Of course, some of the films, I mean these American films were very lavish. And of course we would never aspire to have anything like that. Didn't want it.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You know we were quite content with our lives. But that was just something that boosted us up and, unlike our daydreams and you know--

VB: Yes. Do you think it affected you growing up then? Did it--

DL: Oh I'm sure. I'm sure they did. I'm sure the films did. I think erm... I think everybody would say that. They're not the same today. I mean people experience, people are out in the world. They've been to places. They've eh, they're not like their parents' world is it? And eh, they've all been. Well,

they go to university. They to go different cities and live, to get jobs. But we were, we were the generation that stayed at home. Until the war came. And eh, that was our entertainment. That was our release from eh, mundane existence if you like. But eh, we never wanted, I didn't want anything more than I had. Really. Jolly entertaining though. [laughs]

VB: I mean, when you say it was eh, a sort of release from your everyday life, how did you actually feel when you came out the cinema?

DL: Well we felt elated you know. And that sort of stayed with us for the... till the next time we went to the cinema. [laughs] I don't think it made us feather-headed you know.

VB: No.

DL: I don't think it gave us silly ideas and that. We just enjoyed it, you know. Like you enjoy a book or a song or something like that, you know.

VB: Yeah.

DL: It was really entertainment. Not like, I mean half the stuff on the television is rubbish to me. It's not... it's not my cup of tea at all. And nowadays they just seem to try and outdo each other to get as near as pornography as they can. Well there was nothing like that. The censors were so strict, you know. It was just all left to your imagination which I think is much better than the actual thing.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You know. That's how I felt anyway. I don't know what the other people thought.

VB: That's an interesting point as well, I mean the imagination.

DL: Mhm.

VB: Do you think it did eh--

DL: Oh yes! I'm sure it does help you--

VB: Yeah.

DL: Broaden your horizons I'm sure.

VB: Did you ever find yourself sort of daydreaming about the--

DL: Well.

VB: The pictures.

DL: Oh yes. We often did that, you know. We often used to imagine ourselves, you know, in, specially in the eh, in the active films. You'd think of yourself in that setting you know. And you'd go through it in your mind several times during the week, you know. It did stay with you. It made a big impact.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And that's why I think that the films today are so violent and eh, sexist that that would make an impression on the younger generation today. Because it made it on us but it was light-hearted and eh, there was no erm, no undercurrent in it. And we just enjoyed it for what it was.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We could forget it and just enjoy it as it was at the time. Helped us through the week.

VB: Yes. So it was a different sort of model than people are getting from films.

DL: Well I think so. Yes.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I think so. I think it was all very harmless and good for you. It was a tonic really in a... I mean the thirties were very poor. Very poor generation we were. I mean today people don't need what we needed. Like that. They've got everything they want. They've got cars. They go everywhere. They've got... they can get to the theatre. They can go on holidays abroad and things like that. They get all different aspects of life in their own right now.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But I doubt whether all that gave them the pleasure that we had when we went to the cinema.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That's what we thought was wonderful about it. And we couldn't wait to go the next time, you know. Films changed on a Thursday. We used to go, I think we used to go Fridays and then Wednesdays during the week. [laughs] Twice a week. See what was on. And we didn't really mind what it was! It was a different way of life. As I say we saw everybody. I mean, our generation didn't go in pubs. We didn't go in pubs. There was no coffee bars. Nothing like that. And that was where we met. And saw people. And then we walked along the sea front and might meet up with them again. [laughs]

VB: Ah.

DL: But that was a different world then wasn't it?

VB: It sounds lovely the way you describe that.

DL: Well.

VB: Walking along the front.

DL: Well it was lovely. Yes. That was what we enjoyed about the seaside. Being in a seaside town. But erm, and in those days you could walk along the sea front and not bother about anything, you know. I mean everybody was doing that. There were dozens of people. They were all out for an evening stroll. And eh, but now you'd be afraid to go on there.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Oh it's all changed, hasn't it? I'm glad I lived when I did, you know. I enjoyed that part of my life.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Even though [laughs] I wasn't taking an active part in anything. It helped, I'm sure it helped my mind. [laughs]. Yes.

VB: It's interesting the way you're describing it 'cause erm, someone I was talking to a couple of days ago was saying that eh, going to the pictures sort of set them up for going to work the next day.

DL: Yes that's true. You could cope with it then.

VB: That's, exactly! Yeah.

DL: You didn't have much in your lives. I mean we weren't paid very much and by the time we'd given our mother [laughs] her money and we'd been to the pictures there was nothing left, you know. Clothes, well, we didn't have... we paid for clothes out of, for birthday presents and Christmas presents and things like that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But eh, the cinema was everything to us really. It was to me. And eh, you could cope with your life. And eh, well as I say, they can live it all now themselves can't they? I mean they get quite a lot of money. They can buy things every week.

VB: Mhm.

DL: They can go on holidays abroad and eh, well I did later on in life but none of it gave me the same pleasure that I had when I was a teenager and I was going to the cinema. I didn't eh, I didn't find that that was a tinsel world. It wasn't. There was something so real about it. The acting and the people who acted. I found them very real, you know. [pause 2 seconds] And even though, I mean the television, it doesn't have the same impact. To me. It doesn't have the same impact. But then, I'm sixty years older now. So that makes a difference.

VB: I'm sure you're right though. Because you do miss out on the things you were talking about. Going with your friends and everything.

DL: Yes. Yes.

VB: **Sitting watching it's not really--**

DL: No. But see that was all there was for us to do, I suppose.

VB: **Mhm.**

DL: Eh, and that's why it meant so much to us, and that was a way... I mean, look at the cinemas we had. I mean there was such a choice. Such a choice for a small town. We were marvellously served. And we used to get the London films the next week after they had their premiers in London. And eh, so we were very fortunate for a seaside town.

VB: **Mhm.**

DL: I mean Yarmouth was a bigger resort and they had lots of erm, lots of entertainments in Yarmouth. Erm, but we had the cinemas which were much, much nicer for us.

VB: **It must've been quite exciting as well, being a keen reader of the film magazines.**

DL: Oh yes. Oh yes. That was another part of it. We used to go and buy our 'Picturegoer'. And any other book we could get. And we used to change with somebody else. And eh, [laughs] cut out what you wanted and pass it on! [laughs] That's where my scrapbooks came from.

VB: **Ah. It's wonderful seeing these.**

DL: Yes. Yeah. Yes it was marvellous. The photographs, I mean, of some of the stars. They were marvellously done, you know.

VB: **Mhm.**

DL: I mean that was an industry in itself wasn't it? The stills. And the sale of the, the eh, the sale of the photographs. I mean we were always sending away for something. And then if you... I mean some of them were all stereotype erm, names on them. You know, signatures on them.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We thought that was marvellous. That was addressed to us alone.

VB: Yeah.

DL: [laughs] Oh, it was a fabulous industry wasn't it, the cinema industry? I mean look at the millions of people's jobs it generated and, and, well you can't imagine it today.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Really, not Hollywood. I mean what it was turning out in those days, in the late thirties. And erm, and of course it went on even better. But look at the people it provided work for! And pleasure for. Which you didn't believe half you saw! I mean you didn't want to! But eh, it just gave you that much of a zip in your own life.

VB: Mhm. It's interesting what you're saying about erm, you know being aware that it was--

DL: Oh yes. We realised--

VB: Fantasy [laughs] sort of thing. But also that it was quite real.

DL: Well we came back to work the next morning you know, in our homes [laughs] and our mother shouting at us to get to work. [laughs]

VB: Ah.

DL: And eh, ye know.

VB: But yet when you were watching it, it was quite--

DL: Oh yes. Yes.

VB: Believe it at the time sort of thing.

DL: Oh you did. You did.

VB: Yeah.

DL: You lost yourself in a cinema world. You really did. I did anyway. I don't know about other people. But my friends, you know, as I say, my best friends have both gone. But I used to go regularly with them. And we were the same, you know. There was three of us and we used to meet and eh, and we were walking... we were walking on cloud nine when we were going home, you know. From the cinema. Lots of times. [pause 3 seconds] Another world.

VB: I'm just going to turn this over 'cause it must be coming, no, it's all right. It's okay. Getting a bit nervous there. But erm, so I was interested as well in erm, the sort of qualit... particular qualities that attracted you to a film. Erm, I mean you mentioned the sort of action, adventure sort of...

DL: Mhm. Yes well, we saw some wonderful films. It's difficult now to remember which ones were so attractive to us. But they were all good. You know, there were adventures on the high seas. There was the gangster films. Every week we had something different. We had the musicals which were fabulously staged. With all the dancers and everything. We'd never seen a stage show. We'd never seen anything! I mean the cinema was like a highlight on every aspect of life there was in the world. And we could never have covered it wherever we lived! But it was always, always there for us to go to.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Something different.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And eh, and then the westerns. I mean, I enjoyed those. You knew where you were with those. There was the eh, the goodies and the baddies. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: And the Indians. [laughs] Excitement. And love interest. And clothes. And wide open spaces. And another country. And eh, everything about it. you know, was new to us. We'd never have that

experience. You know, whatever we were. [If] we were millionaires we couldn't have had, we couldn't have had a wider experience than we did at the cinema. every film was different.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean they weren't all stereotypes. There was all different types of films.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And erm, we loved them all! [pause 3 seconds] You know it's difficult now to remember the particular ones that you really enjoyed.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Well I can remember them but I can't remember the dates! You know. [laughs] If I tell you they're probably ones that, they might be after the war you know. [laughs]

VB: Sure.

DL: Our memories are not, not eh, not like that.

VB: Yeah.

DL: But there were some wonderful adventure films. Swashbuckling films you know. Of the olden days. Sword fights and... [pause 2 seconds]

VB: Sort of Errol Flynn and--

DL: Oh yes, Errol Flynn. Yes. He was a real buccaneer. And there was the high seas. And every aspect of life was there really. We were, we were lucky. No doubt about that. I don't think we'll ever see it again because people don't go to the cinema now do they?

VB: I don't think it's going as regularly as you did at all.

DL: No. Oh no, they never would. But we had to. We had to go. It was something that we looked forward to. It was so much a part of our lives, the cinema. That eh, we couldn't do without it. We'd have been very miserable if we couldn't have gone to the cinema every week. [pause 2 seconds] I mean we didn't resent our jobs or our homes or anything like that but it was, it was something extra in our lives--

VB: Mhm.

DL: That we wouldn't have been able to have got otherwise. And erm, we didn't envy the people who were in the films. That was just pleasant to look at, you know. You'd save all the pictures.

VB: You never felt you'd like to experience that world first hand?

DL: No. No. [laughs] No I was quite content, as I was. But it's like as I said, losing yourself in a book. I mean you know what it's like when you read a marvellous book. I mean, you're there with them aren't you? And eh, and you enjoy it all. Instead of reading it to yourself it's there on the screen for you. And eh, and you think about that for days. You can't wait to get back to it can you?

VB: Mhm.

DL: It's just the same thing I think.

VB: Did you ever imagine yourself in the film when you were watching it?

DL: No.

VB: No.

DL: Not me. No.

VB: Yeah.

DL: No it was something that was going on that you could be part of but, well, I suppose you used to sit there and grin and laugh and cry and all [laughs] this. We didn't think we were part of it.

VB: No.

DL: I didn't anyway.

VB: So I mean did the stars seem, 'cause I was wondering if the stars... if you felt you got to know the stars. Or if you felt they were something--

DL: Well. Well, no.

VB: Different.

DL: Well I think you did feel that they were friends of yours. Eh, specially the better ones you know. Like eh, Clark Gable. If you'd walk down the street you would, you know you'd, think you'd met him! You would think. You knew them so well. I mean it's like the soaps on there. The characters were so well known to you that if you did happen to see one you'd go up to them and so, "Oh, hallo!"--

VB: [laughs]

DL: "Haven't seen you for a long time," you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You really thought you knew them. You did.

VB: And what was it about Clark Gable that you--

DL: Oh well, he was the strong silent type.

VB: Ah. [laughs]

DL: [laughs] He was one of those people that you thought you'd like. Although you were a bit afraid of him. You know. Because he was strong and masculine. But, you thought you could tame him.

[laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: And erm, no, he had a very great presence. I thought. So did Spencer Tracy. He was marvellous.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Really marvellous.

VB: Was that something that you liked in the male film stars? The sort of strong, silent--

DL: Oh yes. Yes.

VB: Type of star.

DL: Yes. I didn't like wimps. [laughs]

VB: No. [laughs]

DL: No.

VB: Do you think... Was there a difference between the English films and the American films in the thirties?

DL: Well the English films were very stereotyped, you know. I don't know whether you'd see any now but they were stilted to me.

VB: Mhm.

DL: The direction wasn't so fluent as the great American directors. Some of those epic films, they were wonderful. And eh, but the English people were very stilted I thought, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean there have been some marvellous English films. I love English films. I like them now better than I did when I was younger. When I was younger, I wanted flamboyance. I didn't want to see erm, my life as it was. As I was living it. I wanted to see something a bit better than that. But that I didn't

have to move away from home to get it. I could go to the cinema seat and sit there and then wallow in it. Eh twice a week. And then come out on cloud nine and erm, then go back the following week to something entirely different. But very enjoyable.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That's the way I felt about the cinema.

VB: It is interesting. Cause it sounds like at that stage in your life, as you say it was flamboyance and--

DL: Oh yes. It was. Yes I suppose it was.

VB: Mm.

DL: I suppose, I suppose you could've been [laughing voice] swept off your feet by it! But eh, [pause 2 seconds] we had to keep our feet on the ground. We were poor and we were rooted in our homes and our jobs. We couldn't move. We had nowhere else to go. People didn't leave home in those days. We just stayed at home and had our lives until we met somebody that we could marry and eh, and before that we got all the experience we needed by seeing what other people did on the screen! [laughs] Well I didn't ever play sports or anything like that. And eh, so, I was quite content to be an armchair watcher.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I suppose more like people do with the television today, but I don't think the television's half as interesting as our lives were when we saw the films. They were really good in those days.

VB: Mhm. I mean do you find, say if you're watching a film from the thirties now, is it a different experience--

DL: Well, it is.

VB: From what it was then?

DL: We-ell I've been through life. I'm a bit of a cynic now. [laughs] I mean nothing is as magic as it was to me at sixteen, say. Eh but I still enjoy them. If there's a black-and-white film on I switch it on. I love black-and-white films. I think they have more impact than the coloured.

VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] Yes it is interesting when you say that. Erm, you know, when you were sixteen. Obviously you must've been eh, the whole way you looked at the world must've been quite different--

DL: Yes.

VB: At that time.

DL: Oh yes, it was. 'Course. We had high hopes of everything. The war wasn't there. Erm, we didn't expect to amount to much. We expected very little out of life. But, you know, we could, as I say, we could always improvise. [laughs] Going to the cinema!

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh people were content in those days. They were content with their lot. But the cinema certainly made our lives a lot better than they would've been.

VB: Mhm. [pause 4 seconds] I mean when you're talking about it. Obviously you got so much pleasure out of the--

DL: Oh I did.

VB: Out of the films.

DL: Definitely, yes. We all did. All our generation did.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You know, the people I speak to now, we often go back and talk about the old films. We wouldn't dream of discussing something that we'd seen on television! Even now! And I doubt whether young people, these things that they see, they're instant and they don't stay with them.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But I think that's because people have got so much more in their lives today. I mean the cinema was everything to us. And I don't think you'll ever get that back again now.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Because people have got too many other interests. They've got sports. They've got erm, as I say, holidays abroad. They go to different cities. And towns. Universities. And we all... we all stayed at home.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Well, we did in this town anyway.

VB: Well I was going to say, I mean, you don't really need to go away for holidays.

DL: No.

VB: It's so beautiful.

DL: No, we didn't need anything like that. I don't know what we'd have done if they'd taken our cinema away.

VB: [laughs]

DL: We'd have been very subdued.

VB: Was it quite busy in the summertime? Were there a lot of visitors?

DL: Oh yes. Yes, we have a lot of people here. Not as many as Yarmouth but that was a big, bigger draw with entertainments you know of, well, the eh, the fairgrounds and things like that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And the streets were all full of slot machines and things like that. But Lowestoft was more of a, the beach and the sand and the sea. And eh, place for young children. And the parks and everything were lovely.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

DL: We didn't know how lucky we were really.

VB: Yeah. Was it quite a lot different over the winter?

DL: Well, as I say, the winter didn't make any difference to us. We still went to the cinema. [laughs]

VB: Right. [laughs]

DL: We used to get some awful winters but eh, we still managed to go there. The only place we ever went to. Well I, I mean I didn't go to Norwich till I was, I believe it was during the war.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Erm, we went to Yarmouth for half a day a year. We didn't have holidays. We couldn't afford them. And eh, but we were never deprived of the cinema. It was relatively cheap. And you could sit round and see the same film again without paying extra. In fact we often did, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We used to go early and see it twice.

VB: [laughs]

DL: Good value for money.

VB: Ah.

DL: And the cinemas themselves were lovely. You know. They were all plush seats. And erm, the decor was nice. Well some of them were terrible. [laughs] Some of them were rattly old seats and things, but places like the Odeons, they were wonderful.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I believe they're coming back again. Erm, I was reading where Ips, no not Ipswich, Colch, is it Colchester or Chelmsford? They're building a three million pound complex of cinema. So let's hope that will take on. If they showed some of the films that we saw I'm sure they would.

VB: Yeah.

DL: 'Cause they're really well made and well acted. Without all this hype that they have to put in today.

VB: Mhm.

DL: To draw people in. There's got to be a gimmick. But you don't need that. If you tell a straight full story and the scenery's good and the stars can act. And you get familiar with the people. And you go and see their films over and over again. We did.

VB: I mean was that part of the appeal of it? You mentioned the scenery there.

DL: Mhm.

VB: Partly the way everything looked?

DL: Ooh yes. Everything, well I mean you imagined how they used to stage it all. I mean we didn't know... I mean we didn't know what the backgrounds were. I mean when they show, I think it spoils it all now. They show you how it's made and how you make up these wonderful things. But, we didn't want to know that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We just wanted to enjoy it as it was. As we imagined it to be. And I still think eh, I don't like too much realism.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I like to think of things as I want to see them. Not as they want me to see them. I don't want to be brainwashed.

VB: Mhm. I was very interested when you said that about the sort of black-and-white films.

DL: Mhm. They seem to have a depth, more depth than the eh, than the coloured ones. The coloured ones seem to be more flat.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And the black-and-white ones seem to be deeper. You know. I mean you didn't have colour for a long long while.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Oh it was wonderful. It was like having colour, I mean when we had colour television, you didn't want to go back to black and white.

VB: Yeah.

DL: But I still enjoy the black-and-white films.

VB: Yes.

DL: And I think there would be a market for them if they brought them back. In fact I think there ought to be a cinema somewhere. If they can still find them, erm, because they destroyed a lot of films after the war because television came in and they thought there would be no market for them. But I'm sure there would be.

VB: Yes.

DL: I mean, the older generation make up half the population anyway.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And so, we were the generation that liked, well, I mean a lot of them have gone, we know. But we were the generation that liked cinema.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And we would still pay to go! If they showed us the films that we enjoyed when we were young.

VB: Yeah.

DL: It's nostalgia. Isn't it?

VB: I don't know if it is actually. 'Cause I think the films that you're talking about are very special.

DL: Yeah.

VB: Erm...

DL: What do you enjoy in your life? I mean, what, what, what--

VB: Well I enjoy cinema very much erm--

DL: Yes.

VB: But I think [pause 2 seconds]--

DL: Something that you, you watch and--

VB: Some of these films have got something extra.

DL: And then you go out and do something else. People today would probably go to the cinema and then out later for a meal--

VB: Yes.

DL: Or something like that.

VB: Yes.

DL: Or on to a party or something. But they were... that was the centre pivot of our lives. And it meant so much to us. And I'm glad I lived then, and not now. You know, not now in my youth.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean there were a lot of disadvantages. We wouldn't have called our lives attractive. But, at least we had that. And the cinema was growing all the time. And they were learning all the time. It got bigger and better. And of course as we got... after the war, I think after the war was the boom time.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And oh! Films then well. If they've destroyed them well that's it. It's a crime really.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I would flock to see what I saw when I was younger.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Don't suppose I'll see anything like that again. [said sadly] But as you say it was more like that 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' feeling.

VB: Yes. I mean I don't know how to describe it but it sounded a bit like them.

DL: No. It was euphoric really.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We didn't want to BE like them. [laughs] Afterwards we'd laugh about 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty'.
[laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: What idiots we were for enjoying it.

VB: Yeah.

DL: But eh, we didn't think that with the films. You know, we really thought they were real.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I mean we knew this was all hype.

VB: That's interesting. Yeah.

DL: And erm, but the cinema was all real to us. It was really real.

VB: Do you think erm, would I be right in saying that the cinema was something that was more important in your life than say, you know, the 'Dallas', the 'Dynasty'?

DL: Oh definitely.

VB: Was it something that you valued?

DL: Something, something deeper. Yes.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And I think the messages from the films were a lot deeper than they are now.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I'm sure, I'm sure it was deliberate. Well of course the censorship had a lot to do with it. I mean they weren't allowed to show cleavages. Or you never saw a man in bed with a woman.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh, things like that. And I think it kept a kind of innocence about the world. We knew nothing. We were quite happy not to.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But nowadays they want to explore everything. [laughs] So young too. You know, I don't, I've never wanted to. But, there you are, it's a different way of life now. The world is so small.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Now. You can experience everything that you want to. [pause 2 seconds] Overnight really. You can fly from here to New York. Or go out to Africa.

VB: Yeah.

DL: All the wonderful things. The countries we saw, I mean they're available to you overnight aren't they?

VB: Yeah. It's very interesting--

DL: We saw all that. We had all that experience--

VB: Yeah.

DL: Just by sitting in a seat in the cinema. And we were with our friends. And we saw them afterwards. And it was a social occasion and we loved every minute of it. And we saw things that we would never have seen. Even now, I mean we wouldn't, we wouldn't see them. [pause 2 seconds]

We didn't have to move out of our little shells. [laughs] We were quite happy in our little cocoons. And eh. [pause 2 seconds] Oh it was a magic time. I thought so. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: It's so interesting. From what you're saying as well the films had a sort of special quality then.

DL: Oh they did. Definitely. The scriptwriters, I mean they were all novelists. A lot of them were novelists erm, writing scripts for Metro Goldwyn Mayer and all the other big companies.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And they employed the best technicians. I mean the photography was absolutely wonderful. I mean there was some marvellous photographers! And the locations! Were amazing! And eh, I mean some of the stars were a bit dim. But eh, I mean, that was the only thing. Erm, I mean the coaching of the acting I suppose was a bit, was a bit false.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But eh, you believed in them. You believed in them. I mean eh, specially the men. That's why we liked the tough men you know. 'Cause they were so believable. And erm, what an industry it was. [pause 2 seconds] Yeah, it must've generated millions of jobs.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And kept people happy at the same time.

VB: Mhm. A thing that struck me when you were talking about that just now as well. It sounds almost as if you kind of knew what to expect--

DL: Well we did.

VB: In the films. When you say like the strong men.

DL: Yes.

VB: Do you think that's right?

DL: Well I think there was a pattern to it. Yes. I think there was a familiar pattern that you got used to. They were all different but you, you know, it was a pattern of your life. You went to the cinema and you saw this film. And you saw a different aspect of life. And then the next three or four days you'd see something entirely different, which was good.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh, light, sometimes it was light. Sometimes it was very deep drama. But it was all part of... [laughs] life's experience in, in the space of three hours!

VB: Yeah.

DL: And erm, I mean today they've got no excuse. They've got, they've got everything that they could want. Well I mean I know there's a lot of unemployment--

VB: Mhm.

DL: I'm not talking about that. But eh, experience of life is at your fingertips. If you want it. And if you can afford it, naturally. But that still isn't enough for them. They've got to turn to drugs. And get stoned out of their mind to have a proper experience. We didn't need drugs. It was real to us. And eh, that was what made it so wonderful. We didn't need any stimulants. We got that from the cinema. And eh, [pause 2 seconds] we had our lives and we were happy with it.

VB: I think that's such an interesting point about giving you all these different experiences--

DL: Yes.

VB: And as you say, stimulation of looking,

DL: I know, I know the cinema was made to make money. I mean what isn't? You expect that. But, someone's got to make money in the world and if making money meant thousands of jobs--

VB: Mhm.

DL: And enjoyment for millions of people, that's how the money should be used.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I think they did the world a great service. The cinema makers. I mean I know they treat us as though they were just Mongols who, moguls [laughs]--

VB: [laughs]

DL: Who were out to make a quick buck! Well, obviously they were! I mean they wouldn't have succeeded if they didn't.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But I mean to make all those people love those films was a great thing wasn't it?

VB: Very much so.

DL: And I mean eh, we weren't brainwashed with them. We enjoyed it. And left it. And went back to it again and again.

VB: Yeah.

DL: It didn't make us into monsters or, or discontented or revolutionaries or anything like that. It was something that was so different from what there is today for them. They're not contented. They're not contented today. With what they've got. They've got the world at their fingers! And I can't understand it. [pause 2 seconds]

VB: It is, I mean, the way you're describing it, it's so different from... I mean I find if I sit and watch the television often I just have to turn things off because they make me too anxious or agitated or-

-

DL: Mhm. Mhm.

VB: Or bored even.

DL: Yes.

VB: But what you're saying about--

DL: Oh we were never bored.

VB: The films, never like that.

DL: No! We were never bo, I, we did get bad films. I mean there were badly acted films. Erm, sometimes. But eh, we'd gloss over that. We'd say, "Oh well, next time." You know, we'd see a really good one.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And eh, [pause 2 seconds] we were never really disappointed with what we saw. It was all interesting. Some films... some films made the box office better than the others. Anyway I think they did the world a great service myself. I know they're American and [laughs] everything American is... [laughs] is over the top!

VB: Mhm.

DL: But they could make films. There's no doubt about that. They could make films. I mean the British people, apart from one or two real good directors, they've never, they've never come up to... But, I mean I love the British films. The understatement in some of the British films. I loved that. But I can understand it not having the worldwide appeal that the American films had.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Sad but true. [pause 2 seconds] British films are more like cinema [sic] performances.

VB: Yes.

DL: The scope wasn't there. I, I, when I think of what we saw on that screen. Over the years. The size of it. When they take us into the Coliseum in Rome, there would be chariot races! There would be

Christians being thrown to the lions. You were there, you know. You were absolutely there! And the scale of it! All that money'd been spent. But course, worldwide they got their money back, didn't they? And eh, but you'll never see the like of it again. I'm sure you won't.

VB: Mhm.

DL: There'll have to be something else thought of. I think it's much more interesting than playing with computers! [laughs]

VB: Oh yes! [laughs] I agree with you on that. [laughs] Ah.

DL: I don't want to know about computers. [pause 2 seconds] They're unreal to me, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: They're not something that you're really taking part of. It's all pre-planned. But when you're in the cinema, the world is there for you to be there, with. And eh, you can make of it what you want to. And everybody made a different assessment of it I suppose.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But in my case, it was a wonderful world to me. And I really enjoyed it. [pause 4 seconds]

VB: I mean it's lovely listening to you 'cause you obviously did enjoy it so much.

DL: Oh I did enjoy it. Oh yes. Yes I, you know, I wouldn't mind meeting other people of my generation and talk about the old--

VB: Mhm.

DL: Old things. In fact there ought to be an old, old person's cinema club.

VB: Yes.

DL: That'd be nice.

VB: A wonderful idea. Yes.

DL: Yeah.

VB: If they could get the use of a cinema and just show--

DL: Yeah.

VB: These ones.

DL: Oh I doubt whether you could find the old films now.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We'd all have different ideas of what were the best anyway. I mean we had such a choice. I mean, twice a week for years, we had it. And eh, how they, how they managed to turn them out I don't know. [pause 4 seconds]There's very few now but, of memorable films--

VB: Mhm.

DL: Very few. Or acting for that part. And you know too much about them too. I mean in those days the stars were protected. I mean, what they were really like was never revealed to us. I mean some of them were drunks. Some of them were creeps. And, but we didn't know that. I mean I know there was a certain amount of hype with it. But basically it was so well done. You know that you couldn't object to any of it. And you'd never believe that these people weren't real.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You really thought you knew them. And, you know, they made up for the people in your lives!

VB: Mhm.

DL: Made up your world. Nowadays you can go... fly anywhere and meet hundreds and thousands of people if you want to. We couldn't. We had a very small circle of life. [pause 2 seconds] And that was what was so attractive about it to us.

VB: It's interesting put like that. Knowing these things about, certain things about the stars.

DL: Yes. Yes. Oh well of course we were all interested in their love lives.

VB: Ah. [laughs]

DL: I mean sometimes they were manufactured for the sake of a film! I mean they still do it.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean they put two stars together and then they leak--

VB: [laughs]

DL: Something about them being interested in each other. Well the same things go on television [laughs] today. I don't know if you watched 'Pride and Prejudice' did you?

VB: Eh, I didn't actually.

DL: Oh didn't you? Oh!

VB: I missed it through being away.

DL: It's one of my favourites. And erm, and the two stars, D'Arcy and Elizabeth Bennett.

VB: Mhm.

DL: They were supposed to be having an affair while the film was on!

VB: Ah.

DL: But as soon as the film's off they, they, they're parted.

VB: [laughs]

DL: And they did the same thing with the major stars over there. But there mustn't be any scandal about them. They didn't have, nothing that was wrong about them. I know, I know it was a hype. I mean, we realised afterwards it was. But when you're young you accept everything at face value and you could enjoy it. You'll never enjoy anything as much as you did then.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Because you know too much now. You'd been in the real world and it isn't very nice. I prefer the old world. When I was innocent and I accepted what I saw at the cinema and loved it all.

VB: So you could enjoy the sort of romances.

DL: Yes. That's right.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Without worrying too much about what it really meant.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I didn't want to think deeply about anything. I just wanted to be entertained. I think that's the trouble now. You know. They think they've got to either educate us or make us think deep thoughts. Well I don't want to! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: Life is real enough--

VB: Yeah.

DL: When you have to live it. [pause 5 seconds]

VB: It is, it's very interesting what you've been saying. About it supplying something to--

DL: Oh yes.

VB: Enhancing your life.

DL: Oh it did. Absolutely.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Yes it would've been very, [pause 2 seconds] very poor in spirit indeed if we hadn't had that. [pause 6 seconds] And as I say, it's hard now to remember which ones were your favourites. Because it is, well sixty years ago it is.

VB: And if you're going twice a week it's a lot of films.

DL: Yes. That's a lot of films.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We rarely saw a bad film.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We didn't see many British films. They didn't make a lot in those days.

VB: Mhm.

DL: It was after the war that the British films came on. Tch! Oh the actors.

VB: Of course a lot of the English actors were going to--

DL: America anyway.

VB: Yeah.

DL: They became very popular there didn't they?

VB: Yeah.

DL: Ronald Colman. Greer Garson. Ah no, I don't know about Greer Garson. Walter Pidgeon.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh, Errol Flynn. And eh, lots of the British, Cary Grant was born in Britain. Even Bob Hope was born in--

VB: Yes.

DL: Born in Britain.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause I remember we talked a wee bit about Ronald Colman when I was here before.

DL: I don't remember mentioning him.

VB: We touched on him.

DL: Pardon?

VB: I think we briefly--

DL: Did we?

VB: Passed over him yeah.

DL: I remember eh, I remember seeing him in eh, [pause 2 seconds] in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

VB: Yes.

DL: When I was erm, oh I, oh I don't know. I think I was fifteen.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh, I remember my sister was away at the time and so I didn't think I was going that week, you know. And eh, her boyfriend said would I like to see this? It was on at the Palace.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And so I said "Yes, I would really." So he took me. And erm, I had to stuff a handkerchief in my mouth to stop myself from sobbing.

VB: Aw-ah. [laughs]

DL: [laughs] When Sydney Carton went to the guillotine! That's how real it was. And it was a wonderful performance. It was on, it was on here [television]. Not too long ago.

VB: Ah.

DL: On Channel Four. There is some advantage with the... with the television.

VB: Yeah.

DL: At least you get the old films. And, and it stood up today, you know, amongst today's films as good as it was then. Erm, I mean his accent was a bit cut glass.

VB: Yeah.

DL: You know, he was a bit too British. But, that film was wonderful! It really upset me. I really thought I was there with him, going to the guillotine. I thought, that's just not fair, [laughs] you know.

VB: [laughs]

DL: I was, by the end of the film. And I said to this boy, "I'm ever so sorry," I said. He said, "Oh no. You don't have to worry," he said. "I got my handkerchief out as well." [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: Aw. Poor boy. He's gone now.

VB: I've never seen that. I'm really sorry to have missed it.

DL: Really good that is. Yes.

VB: 'Cause I liked him very much in *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

DL: Yeah, oh yes! He was good in that. They're remaking it with eh, they've made... they've remade that so many times.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Douglas Fairbanks Junior I think was in the first one. [possibly mistakenly referring to Douglas Fairbanks]

VB: Yeah.

DL: Was it? And erm, Stewart Granger was in one of them.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And erm, now they're going to make it with eh, what's his name? Sean, Sean somebody or other.

VB: Ah.

DL: I can't remember his surname.

VB: Not that chap that's in lots of things.

DL: No, he's in, he's in. I don't know if you saw him in 'Sharp'. The eh, 'Sharp'. That's him [referring to Sean Bean in 'Sharpe'].

VB: That's it! Yeah. Sean erm--

DL: What's his name? I've forgotten now.

VB: Something like Sean, Sean Bean? No.

DL: No, I think Sean Bean is somebody else.

VB: Yeah. I know the chap you mean.

DL: Yeah.

VB: I'm struggling for his name as well.

DL: Mhm. And he's going to play erm, the man that takes the place of the king. Well, I can see him more as the villain of the piece.

VB: Yes.

DL: [laughs] The casting--

VB: I wouldn't have cast him--

DF: I can't see the casting in that.

VB: No.

DL: But that's been made so many times.

VB: Cause that's another, a bit of a tearjerker isn't it?

DL: Oh yes! Yes, yes.

VB: At the end he has to leave her. [laughs]

DL: Yes.

VB: Ah.

DL: Yeah. But that's a bit Ruritanian to me. You know, I mean it wasn't as real to me as Ronald Colman in eh, *Tale of Two Cities*.

VB: Ah.

DL: Not as real. We knew when things were really well done and real to us.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean, we were aware of that. We weren't stupid.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We were just immature and inexperienced. And young. And happy. And innocent.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Which we never will be again. [pause 3 seconds] I think they grow up too quickly today. I don't think they can really enjoy anything. They're looking for the next experience. We weren't. We had it all there. We had it all there. We could make of it what we will. Some girls did fantasise about it. I mean they'd sport the hairdo of the latest film star.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean, some would imagine they were Norma Shearer or [laughs] something like that! I mean children's minds, I mean we were children. I mean children's minds are impressionable. I mean you are. That's what worries me about these, these, these modern films. I mean I'm sure that they influence young minds. And if they're given the wrong message--

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean at least the film industry of my day gave the right message. I mean I suppose it was a bit of brainwashing really. But it was better that way than the other way.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And it didn't do us any harm. I mean we still had our lives to come. We had our lives to come. And eh, but, you know, some of the lessons from the films like being a good egg and all the rest of it. It washed off on us you know. And eh, and if you were, it doesn't matter how poor you were, you might make it to the White House sort of attitude. And then everybody can make themselves better than they are.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Em, it gave you hope. There were a lot of good lessons from the films. They weren't all bad. They weren't all just sitting there and wallowing in unrealism. It wasn't that at all.

VB: Yeah.

DL: It wasn't like that for me anyway.

VB: 'Cause when you mentioned erm, Spencer Tracy--

DL: Yes.

VB: Just when I first came in. The sort of roles that he played I think--

DL: Oh he was wonderful. I mean he wouldn't accept a role unless it was really believable.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And he was believable in everything he did.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But there again, you see, the image. [laughs] They never told us that he was parted from his wife. Eh, and that he was living with Katharine Hepburn.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But they didn't tell us that. But we didn't want to know!

VB: Mhm.

DL: And eh, he did drink. I mean, but, we saw the best side of everything. I think that helps. When you're young and impressionable I think it helps to see the best side of everything. It doesn't make you expect more. Eh, but it just gives you that little lift in your life. [pause 2 seconds] They're all so, they're all so grown up now. Before they even get fifteen.

VB: Mhm. It certainly sounds very different from a teenager now--

DL: Oh absolutely.

VB: What you were describing.

DL: Absolutely.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Yeah well we were, we were brought up not to expect much. You know, in the material things. Or from our lives. Eh, we weren't going to be film stars... we weren't going to be film stars. We didn't want to be. But we realised that eh, we'd got to be content. Mostly what we got... we could get on. We did get on. And eh, but there was something just nice about it. Cosy about it. Going to the cinema. Yeah. Lovely days they were.

VB: Mhm. [pause 8 seconds] Can't think of anything much nicer actually, the way you're describing it.

DL: Mhm. It was good. [pause 4 seconds] Wish I could remember more about it, you know. But at the time it was, it was something that filled your life.

VB: Mhm. [pause 5 seconds] It is interesting erm, the way that you're talking about it. It does... it does sound like as you say something...

DL: Mhm. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: You sort of get the impression of the overall pleasure that you had from films.

DL: Mhm. We did. We did. We all did. I mean there was nobody who didn't. Well I didn't know of anybody who didn't go to the cinema.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That was our one topic of conversation. As I say you met everybody that you knew there. Discussed the films. Next day at work you know it was like people discuss 'Coronation Street' now, I suppose. If they'd seen something on another cinema that you hadn't seen, well then you, you'd go there as well.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So you'd go three times a week! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: We had such a choice! We had the Grand Cinema. The Palace. The Playhouse. The Hippodrome. The Ideal. The, the eh, the Cosy Corner. Oh there were several others. The Marina. And then of course later on, I think, I don't know whether that was before, it must've been before the war, the Odeon. Yes! Course it was. Before the war the Odeon. And that was the real gem, the Odeon. It was real plush. And it was like going into, into a lovely building. Yes, it's a pity they, we lost that one because that was the best cinema in the town.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And they kept the Marina, which was much older. And eh, W.H. Smith took over... [tape cuts out].

[End of Side B]

[End of Interview]