

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.

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\* Sudbury Hill, Harrow, 18 July 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Eileen and Joe Barnett

\* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

\* EB= Eileen Barnett, JB=Jo Barnett, VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: interview with Eileen and Joe Barnett; Sound Quality: Fair (second tape, T95-92, blank).

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[setting tape up]

**EB:** [inaudible; setting up tape] trying to do some research on the origins of our family. [inaudible]  
And our family is, at least my side of the family, originated from erm, it's called, it was called Bessarabia. And it's now Moldavia.

**VB: Ah I see.**

**EB:** Or Moldova they call it now, which was once Romania, once Russia. It went back and forth. And I mentioned Bessarabia to him. And he immediately started spouting erm, about the origins of the country. From the year 700 or so AD, whatever, to the present day. Who had owned it, how it had been overrun by this tribe and that tribe and, just from memory. It was absolutely incredible. And I did check it up after in the encyclopaedia. Every single detail was absolutely correct.

**VB: It's amazing. Especially if you hadn't had a chance to--**

**EB:** No! He had no idea what I was going to talk about. No. None at all. But he is an amazing person, isn't he?

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** He used to work in the British Museum at one time. Not quite sure doing what. But erm, he's worth listening to.

**VB: Yeah. Well thanks very much for giving me all these contacts, 'cause it was really useful.**

**EB:** That's okay. The people themselves were very interested. I've got a couple more there--

**VB: Ah.**

**EB:** If you should need them.

**VB: Yes.**

**EB:** But you've probably got enough I should think.

**VB: I'd like to take a look anyway.**

**EB:** Yeah, take them! By all means.

**VB: That would be great.**

**EB:** Yeah.

**VB: Thanks very much. I'll just leave these there just now.**

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: While we're talking. This is amazing to see this sort of card.**

**EB:** I was just looking through a load of old birthday cards. The way the design of cards has changed, over the years. They look so old-fashioned now. Well they are old-fashioned, aren't they? Let's face it.

**JB:** [They sometimes still print them, you know?]

**EB:** What, the old ones? Mhm. Yeah.

**VB:** **So Tyrone Power was obviously your hero.**

**EB:** Oh. I had his picture inside my desk lid. We had lift-up desks. There was two, two competing factions in the school. There was the Tyrone Power group and the Robert Taylor group.

**VB:** **A-ah. [laughs]**

**EB:** [laughs] Did you have anything like that?

**JB:** Me?

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** You must be joking.

**EB:** [laughs]

**JB:** Must be joking.

**VB:** **I mean that must've been very exciting then to, as you say, go and see Tyrone Power.**

**EB:** Oh boy! In the flesh.

**VB:** **In the flesh.**

**EB:** Ah. [laughs] Remember the film.

**VB: Marie Antoinette.**

**EB:** Mhm. [pause 3 seconds] What sort of information have you, have you gathered up to now?

**VB:** Erm, well what I've been really been asking about and I'm interested to hear from you is things like erm, how often people went to the cinema.

**EB:** Mhm. Very often. At least, well, two or three times a week. Erm, because the programmes changed often, didn't they?

**JB:** Quite often they changed anyway.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** But the thing I get is when they weren't booked to change but they were no damn good so they whipped them off.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Yes.

[noise of scaffolding being moved in the background]

**EB:** But erm, it was worth going to the cinema. Because you didn't just go in and see a film and that was it. You went and saw two films. Because one was the major film and one was like a B film. You always saw a cartoon. A newsreel. Forthcoming attractions. And the cinema organ used to play in the interlude. And at one cinema we used to go to, there was a stage show as well. So you got your money's worth.

**JB:** Actually while you're in Harrow, [pause 4 seconds] I would go into the Granada Cinema.

**VB:** Yes. I have actually. It's a--

**EB:** It's an old one.

**VB:** Yeah. It's a beauty.

**JB:** Who did you speak, who did you see there?

**VB:** Erm, I spoke to the manager.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** Did he have a history?

**VB:** Yes, he gave me the fifty years eh, the pamphlet.

**JB:** Because erm, this lady we mentioned, her brother, he used to be the manager there, you see. Because they, they had one of the best organs. One of the original organs. [inaudible]

**EB:** Yes. It was a beautiful organ.

**JB:** And they used to have wrestling matches there and everything.

**VB:** Really?

**JB:** Yeah. Wrestling matches and everything.

**EB:** Did they?

**JB:** Oh yes.

**EB:** I didn't know that.

**JB:** As well as stage shows.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** It's a very, it was a very big theatre. It's now been made into three but it was very big.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Oh it's a, erm, not a shadow of its former self. Most of them aren't.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**EB:** But this particular one that I can remember we used to go to most often, it was in Finsbury Park [referring to Astoria]. That's in North London. And it was a beautiful cinema. The interior, it was several, you went there, didn't you as well? The ceiling was painted as the sky and the lights looked like stars. Absolutely. Just like a star, star-filled sky. It was beautiful. And the whole of the proscenium arch, they called it, the whole of it was decorated erm, like Spanish villas. There was the little windows, there were balconies, there were rugs hanging over the balconies. And lights in the, in the windows. It was absolutely beautiful. It was just a pleasure to go there. And on the main foyer as you went in, there was this gorgeous waterfall. D'you remember?

**JB:** Mhm.

**EB:** It was beautiful.

**VB: Which one was that?**

**EB:** This was called the Finsbury Park Astoria. And erm, that was quite a place. It really was.

**JB:** In those days the cinemas were all full. There was queues for every performance.

**EB:** Oh talking about queues. [laughs] The erm, the films were U films or A films. And children could go into the Us but you had to go with an adult to the As. So what erm, my friends and I used to do, we used to walk up and down the queue to look at the, see which was the most likely candidate, and approach somebody and ask them to take us in. Which they did! I mean you could, they never refused. So, you could get into any film you wanted to. You just had to ask somebody and they'd take you in as if you belonged to them, you know.

**VB:** [laughs]

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** Were there other cinemas where you were that you--

**EB:** Mhm. Oh yes. Stamford Hill. We lived in Stamford Hill. Well we lived on the borders of Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington. They, they connect. The main one was the Regent. That was the big one. And then there was the Super Cinema was round the corner, wasn't it? Yes, that was going down towards Stoke Newington. And then in the main Stoke Newington there were three or four.

**JB:** You're missing one out.

**EB:** Am I? Which one.

**JB:** The Rink.

**EB:** I don't remember that. Where was that?

**JB:** With your back to the Regent.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** Diagonally across the road, where the shops were.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** There was the Rink. Very big cinema.

**EB:** I thought it was called the Super [Cinema].

**JB:** No, the Rink. Actually edging on [Clapton Common?].

**EB:** Yeah, that's the one I meant.

**JB:** That was the Rink.

**EB:** Called the Rink.

**JB:** Oh no that was in, I'm sorry. The Rink was in eh, [pause 3 seconds], call it Hackney.

**EB:** Ah, so that was the Super [Cinema], where I said. And yours was further down.

**VB:** Mhm. I mean were there differences between these cinemas? 'Cause the one you describe is obviously very grand--

**EB:** Oh yes. Yes.

**VB:** Were some of them less--

**EB:** Some of them were fleapits.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Absolutely. Well the Super [Cinema] was eh, a bit downmarket. [laughs]. Bit grotty. Some of them were.

**JB:** Do you only want the Harrow area, or do you just want knowledge of the cinemas?

**VB:** No, I'm interested in your--

**JB:** Because you know who it would be useful to see while she's down here. Roy.

**EB:** Roy [surname redacted]. He worked in the cinema industry. Yeah. Just retired.

**JB:** He was with Rank.



**VB: Ah right.**

**JB:** For years.

**VB: Yeah.**

[pause 6 seconds]

**VB: It's amazing once you start thinking how many people are--**

**EB:** Connected with.

**VB: Connected with the cinema.**

**EB:** Oh yes. Because we had a, at least, Joe's family had a shop in Wardour Street [Soho].

**VB: I see.**

**EB:** It was a erm, newsagent--

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** Tobacconist and the rest of it. Well it started off as a hairdresser's but it changed its course. And Wardour Street is the centre of the film industry.

**JB:** Always has been and always will be.

**EB:** So it was a very interesting place to have a shop and different characters coming in and out.

**VB: I was wondering actually if you'd mind if I asked one or two questions about yourself.**

**EB:** Do what you like. It's for your, for you! Not for me! [laughs]

**VB: I mean nothing too intimate or anything.**

**EB:** Yes!

**VB:** It's just to get an idea. Erm, you know, your own background.

**EB:** Mhm. Won't you have a biscuit?

**VB:** Eh, I will. Definitely. [laughs] They look lovely. Erm, I've got a sort of standard form for that.

**EB:** In contrast, we hardly ever go to the cinema these days.

**JB:** Don't enjoy it.

**EB:** Don't enjoy it. It's not the same at all.

**VB:** Do you find that there's a lot of difference between the films that you were seeing in the thirties?

**EB:** Oh! And how! I don't like modern films, at all. In fact we were talking about it last night with the children. And they were talking about these marvellous films that they were watching. I saw a couple of them on video. To me they were absolutely nothing.

**VB:** [coughs]

**JB:** I think when they put the three cinemas in one, [pause 3 seconds] psychologically it spoilt it.

**VB:** Uhuh.

**EB:** It doesn't seem an event to go to the cinema now. It's not, there's no glamour. It's... very mundane.

**VB:** I'm sure that's right.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: Because when you were speaking about the cinema you described just now--**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: And, as I say, I've been in that Granada. And it's very much, it's a small screen 'cause it's been split up.**

**EB: That's right.**

**JB: It wasn't before.**

**EB: No! No. 'Course not.**

**JB: It always was a good house. And a lot depended on the manager.**

**EB: Oh they were personalities, weren't they?**

**JB: Yeah. If the manager was good, the cinema was good.**

**VB: Uhuh.**

**JB: If he didn't do his job... [pause 3 seconds]**

**EB: Mhm. Go on, shoot away! [laughs]**

**VB: Right eh, well I know you were born in 1924.**

**EB: That's right.**

**VB: Erm, can I ask where you were born?**

**EB: In, well it was, the Borough was called, it was Hackney, wasn't it?**

**VB: Hackney.**

**EB: No. Hang on a minute. Would Stamford Hill have been there?**

**VB: I'll just put Stamford Hill.**

**EB: Yeah, it was Amhurst Park.**

**JB: Mhm. Amhurst Park Road, London.**

**EB: I think the Borough would have been called Stamford Hill.**

**VB: Mhm. Well that's near enough. Erm, can I ask what your father did?**

**EB: He was in the retail textile.**

**VB: And did your mother work at all?**

**EB: Yes. She was in it too.**

**VB: So it's a sort of family business.**

**EB: That's great.**

**VB: And, do you have any sisters or brothers?**

**EB: One brother.**

**VB: That's great. And can I ask what year you were married in?**

**EB: 1949.**

**VB: And can I ask what your husband's occupation is--**

**EB:** Yes.

**VB:** Was.

**JB:** [laughs]

**EB:** Well, salesman extraordinaire.

**VB:** Ah! [laughs]

**EB:** He has sold everything and anything that you can possibly think of.

**JB:** I finished up doing administration.

**VB:** Ah I see.

**EB:** Originally in the fashion industry. Mainly in the fashion industry, I would say. Well, the majority of the years. But it varied.

**VB:** And do you have children yourself?

**EB:** Yeah. Two boys.

**VB:** Two boys. That's great. And the only other thing is, do you have any strong political views or are you a member of a party or anything like that?

**EB:** No.

**VB:** That's great. Erm, I'm wondering actually if I should ask Mr Barnett the same things as we're all talking together. Erm, if you don't mind.

**JB:** No.

**VB:** Obviously some of them are the same anyway. Erm, can I ask what year you were born in?

**JB:** '23. 1923.

**VB:** That's great. And where you were born?

**JB:** Hackney.

**VB:** That's great. And were your family involved in the cinema industry then or--

**JB:** [pause 8 seconds] If it wasn't then, it was shortly afterwards.

**EB:** It was round about.

**JB:** It was my father's uncle owned the cinemas. A man called [Donner?]

**VB:** Yeah.

**JB:** Who owned the cinemas.

**VB:** That's great. And did your mother work?

**JB:** Not then. Not [at leisure?]. She did afterwards. Because my father left the cinemas in about '33, '32, something like that.

**VB:** That's great. Erm, and do you have sisters and brothers?

**JB:** No.

**VB:** That's great. And can I ask how old you were when you left school?

**JB:** Fourteen. I think.

**VB:** And I've just found out your occupation so, [laughs] I don't need to ask that. Erm, do you have any strong political views or...

**JB:** I did have.

**EB:** [bursts out laughing]

**VB:** That's a different story. Erm...

**JB:** I was Conservative but now I don't know what I am.

**VB:** Ah, I see.

**JB:** I'm looking for the truth and I can't find it.

**EB:** You won't find it in politics.

**VB:** And, have you always lived in London?

**JB:** [nods]

**VB:** That's great. That's that eh, sorted out. Erm, the other thing that I'd like to ask is, because I'm tape recording us talking just now, erm, the University asks us to get people to sign a form. Basically to say that you know you're being recorded.

**EB:** Oh yes.

**VB:** And that I haven't slipped a tape out of my pocket. [laughs]

**EB:** No problem. Don't worry.

**VB:** Erm, and that if you wouldn't mind us quoting--

**EB:** No.

**VB:** What you're saying just now, in book form or anything like that.

**EB:** No. 'Course not.

**VB:** So I'll, I'll leave you with this form.

**EB:** Ah.

**VB:** There's a bit for you to sign. And a bit for me to sign.

**JB:** Sign it.

**EB:** Yeah okay.

**VB:** I mean if you decided after I've gone that there was maybe something on the tape you weren't happy with--

**EB:** No.

**VB:** There would be no problem in changing that form.

**EB:** I'm sure that's not--

**VB:** It would be confidential. It's just at the top there.

**EB:** Just here?

**VB:** Yes. It's one of these things. I think they're terrified of people suing us.

**EB:** Oh sure! You have to do it. One has to protect oneself. What's the date today?

**JB:** Seven, eighteenth.

**EB:** Is one signature enough?



**VB: Erm, it should be, I think.**

**EB: Mhm? Do you want both?**

**VB: Erm, if you like, I mean just to keep it perfectly straight.**

**EB: Yes. No problem.**

**VB: It's just one of these things as I say--**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: It'll get filed away somewhere and promptly forgotten. [laughs]**

[signing papers]

**JB: I tell you another good contact that we have in London for this sort of thing. And that is the magazine 'Screen International'. I don't know if you've been in touch with them.**

**VB: Erm--**

**EB: 'Screen International' it's called.**

**VB: I'm not sure. But there's a magazine called 'Screen' that's based at Glasgow. But I suspect it's something different from what you're saying.**

**EB: The one in London.**

**VB: Yes.**

**JB: That's the big one.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**JB:** And who was the bloke that was there for a long time?

**EB:** Noble.

**JB:** Noble. Peter Noble.

**EB:** Peter Noble. Peter Noble who has now left the entire industry. He had a helluva lot of knowledge. [inaudible].

**VB:** I'll take a note of that and see if I can get hold of him.

**JB:** They used to be in eh, [pause 3 seconds] in Wardour Street.

**VB:** Uhuh.

**JB:** But they're a worthwhile visit.

**VB:** I'll definitely look into that.

**JB:** 'Cause they'd have the information, the knowledge, the archives.

**VB:** Yeah.

[pause 4 seconds]

**EB:** What else?

**VB:** Erm, did you go mainly, 'cause you've mentioned a lot of local cinemas.

**EB:** Uhuh.

**VB:** Was it local cinemas that you went to? Or did you ever go into the centre of London?

**EB:** Well, you're talking about the 1930s, aren't you?

**VB: The 1930s, yeah.**

**EB:** Well you see, erm, I was fifteen in 1939 when the war started.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** So I wouldn't have gone up to town much before that. And of course, once the war was on, it was a little difficult. But in later years, but obviously in the 1940s time, we used to go to the West End cinema quite a lot.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** And most of them were very, very lovely cinemas. Very comfortable. I remember when the erm, when the Curzon first opened, in Curzon Street. That's in erm, near Park Lane. And they had literally armchair seats. Each one was a separate armchair. They were so comfortable. One of the other funny things about the cinema which erm, might be worth recording. When you went in to see a programme, erm, you didn't wait particularly for the programme to begin. You just went in anytime. It could've been halfway through or whatever. And then you sort of sat through the programme and then waited to see the bit that you'd missed. And then sort of went out when you came in.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** That was quite usual. And on the other hand some people stayed and watched the programme through twice if they felt like it. You didn't have to leave. Once the thing was going, you know, you could just stay.

**VB: Did that not interfere with your--**

**EB:** With what?

**VB: With your enjoyment of the film?**

**EB:** Well, it wasn't ideal to come in the middle, but it happened sometimes. If you'd been queueing up for instance, and maybe erm, some people were already in there, and they had decided to see it again. Or one of the films again, it could cut into the programme.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** It wasn't like now. A set time and everybody out and then everybody in. It was just continuous, wasn't it? The whole time.

**JB:** Are you going to the [Dean?] Centre in London?

**VB:** No, we're concentrating on Harrow.

**JB:** But after Harrow, are you?

**VB:** No, no.

**EB:** That's it for this part of the world.

**VB:** That's it for this part of the world.

**JB:** It's a shame.

**EB:** Ah. Why did you focus on Harrow?

**VB:** Oh, it's a long story but--

**EB:** [laughs]

**VB:** Erm, basically we wanted to get areas that represented a different type of cinema.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** So, Glasgow and Manchester are both very urbanised, obviously.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** Erm, but we also wanted to look at a more suburban area, so we chose Harrow from that point of view.

**EB:** Ah. You see I wouldn't know what Harrow was like in the 1930s at all.

**VB:** I mean there were some quite major cinemas as well.

**EB:** Oh sure! Well there was this one on the Hill anyway.

**JB:** What's his name who wrote the book?

**EB:** What book? What Don Walter?

**EB:** Well yes. See, there's a local Harrow Historical Society as well.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Erm, this Don Walter who wrote a book about Harrow.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** It's a pity John's not still living here. John from the [tuck?] shop.

**JB:** Oh.

**EB:** It's good way to talk to people who've been residents.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** In the Borough, for many years, isn't it?

**VB: That's right. We wanted to get a mix as well. People who've come in.**

**EB: Oh sure. Yes.**

**VB: Because I think, from what we've been finding out, it's quite typical to have people here--**

**EB: Uhuh.**

**VB: That haven't spent all their lives so it's nice to--**

**EB: That's right.**

**VB: To get a representative mix--**

**EB: Yes! Yes!**

**VB: I suppose.**

**EB: Yes, and you can just pick up the bits and pieces that you want to use.**

**VB: That's right.**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: But I mean, another thing I was wanting to ask was, erm, when you went to the cinema, was it mainly on your own? Or did you go with friends, or family.**

**EB: Never went on my own. Never. I don't think mother would've let me.**

**JB: She wouldn't have known, would she?**

**EB: What?**

**JB: She wouldn't have known.**

**EB:** She wouldn't have known. Erm, no, always with a friend. Or friends.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Talking about my mother, she would have gone to the cinema. She was born in 1902 so she would've gone to the cinema, say from 1912 onwards. And that was in the East End of London. And they used to pay tuppence to go in. But if they only had a penny, they would allow them to go and sit behind the screen and see it upside down! Which they did! [laughs] Yes!

**VB: It's amazing when you say that, 'cause that must've been in the days of silents as well.**

**EB:** Oh sure!

**VB: So she would be reading the titles. [laughs]**

**EB:** I don't know how they managed! I just don't know. And there were just forms [benches], you know.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** No backs or anything, just forms [benches] to sit on.

**VB: Did you mother continue to go to the cinema, when she had--**

**EB:** Oh yes, she loved the cinema.

**VB: Yes.**

**EB:** Very much. Did your parents?

**JB:** No, they didn't have to [because they were in it?].

**EB:** Of course, he was there.

**VB: Of course.**

**JB:** He was only there for, well, it finished in the late thirties, middle thirties, I suppose he finished. Came out of it.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** I mean what sort of films did you enjoy going to in the thirties? I mean obviously Tyrone Power [laughs] films.

**EB:** Obviously. You know, I honestly can't remember. I saw so many.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** I couldn't even tell you. But erm--

**VB:** I mean I've got some stills with me from--

**EB:** Have you?

**VB:** From thirties films and I don't know obviously if they'll be stars that you liked.

**EB:** Oh, boy. Have a look.

**VB:** Erm, I've even got some cinema adverts from the Harrow cinemas--

**EB:** Have you?

**VB:** Erm, which you might interesting--

**EB:** Mhm. Mhm.

**VB:** From the films, are obviously the same. Erm...



**EB:** I'll just get my glasses.

[EB gets glasses]

**VB:** These are some from the--

**JB:** That was a good... That's now a bingo hall, most of it.

**VB:** The Odeon.

**JB:** South Harrow.

**VB:** Yeah. I've got a whole, [laughs] pile of them, so. I think you saw that one that there.

**JB:** Yes.

**VB:** Look at the other.

**EB:** [inaudible] used to be Wordsworth. [laughs]

**JB:** The Coliseum was a theatre. Erm, which was pulled down, and now the buildings are there. Erm, it wasn't a cinema.

**VB:** Mhm.

**JB:** Not to my knowledge.

**EB:** Mhm. The Gaumont cinema had a good organ as well.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Do you remember, Joe?

**JB:** Yeah. The organ was a big thing.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Aw, Spencer Tracy. Yes. 'Course a lot of these films'll be familiar to people of this generation because so many of them are now shown on television, aren't they?

**VB: Mhm. Do you find that yourself? Do you watch--**

**EB:** Ah! I watch loads of films. Well Bette Davis was one of my favourites. I'm not sure if that wasn't the forties though. I think. I couldn't tell you who... [pause looking at stills] Mhm, people like, I don't know erm, James Cagney and Spencer Tracy and all those. I'm sure they were later.

**VB: Well, I mean they were making films.**

**EB:** In the thirties? Yes.

**VB: Yes. I mean did you like these sort of American gangster films?**

**EB:** Well, James Cagney, certainly.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Yes. And erm, what was the name of that chap who used to play a priest, Pat O'Brien!

**VB: Oh yes.**

**EB:** He was terrific. I liked him. Bing, well Bing Crosby.

**JB:** They weren't so name conscious as they are today.

**VB: Ah.**

**EB:** Romantic films. There was a wonderful film. Did you ever see Elisabeth Bergner in *Escape Me Never*?

**JB:** I don't know.

**EB:** Ah, that was a fantastic film.

**JB:** People went more to enjoy the film rather than a particular star. That was secondary.

**EB:** You just went to the pictures, you know. It was just, "Are you coming to the pictures this week?" Right, off you go. [pause 3 seconds] I don't think it really mattered what was on, did it? [laughs]

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** What else have you got there?

**VB:** I've got one here, actually for the opening of the Granada.

**EB:** Oh!

**VB:** With Jessie Matthews and Sonny Hale.

**EB:** Oh my God! In person. 'Course she lived locally.

**VB:** I heard that.

**JB:** Did she?

**EB:** Oh yes. Jessie Matthews did. Mhm. Yeah.

**VB:** Did you like the English stars of the thirties? Did you like Jessie Matthews?

**EB:** Oh, very much so. very much so. Eh, *Evergreen*.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** I remember that one. 'Dancing on the Ceiling'. 'Over my Shoulder Goes One Care', yes. I could sing that to you. [laughs]

**VB: Ah.**

**EB:** And Astaire and Rogers. Were they in the thirties too?

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Marvellous. I saw all Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. All Fred Astaire's films. Every one. But he was absolutely super. He still is. And some of these films are as fresh today as they were then. Some of those when you see them now, they're so old-fashioned and dated that it's really not much pleasure to watch them. But some don't date. And I don't think Fred Astaire's dated at all. Do you?

**JB:** No.

**VB: Mhm. Some of the scenes in films like *Top Hat* are just--**

**EB:** Oh the dance routines.

**VB: Timeless. Yeah.**

**EB:** The Busby Berkeley routines. They're better than anything that's done today.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: Was that part of the attraction of the films?**

**EB:** Oh erm, the spectacle. Yes, of course. Like the *Ziegfeld Follies* and things like that.

**JB:** That's what I said. It wasn't personalities.

**EB:** Yeah. Those were wonderful, weren't they?

**JB:** Mhm.

**EB:** And erm--

**JB:** The Nicholas Brothers.

**EB:** Oh, yes! Laurel and Hardy, of course!

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Very popular.

**JB:** Marx Brothers.

**EB:** I never liked the Marx Brothers much. Charlie Chaplin.

**VB:** Laurel and Hardy.

**EB:** Oh!

**VB:** I mean what was it about these comedians that made you laugh, do you think?

**EB:** Well the, the contrast. You had the great big fatty and the little skinny one, was always being put upon. Poor chap. And you never felt sorry for him somehow. Because he was meant to be made fun of.

**VB:** And you said Charlie Chaplin as well.

**EB:** Well, I can't remember a little, I think that was a bit before...

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Wasn't it?

**VB: Mhm. Oh certainly, yeah.**

**EB:** Yeah. But erm, [pause 2 seconds] I can't remember a lot about him. I mean, obviously I've seen him. I'm not sure now if I've seen it more on this [television] than actually in the cinema.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** But talking about it, Joe, the spectacle films were the ones that were the big attraction. The dancing and the gorgeous costumes and... And I still think black-and-white films are better than coloured.

**VB: I mean did you think so then as well?**

**EB:** Well, didn't know, did we?

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** You know what was good was when this Cinerama first came out. That was terrific. Did you ever see the Cinerama?

**JB:** That wasn't in the thirties though.

**EB:** No, that was later. Yes, that was later.

**VB: Was that the great big long--**

**EB:** Great big screens. But you had the feeling that you, that you eh--

**JB:** Were in it.

**EB:** Actually in it. Was that Cinerama or CinemaScope? Cinerama, I think. But you literally, there was a film where you erm, the plane was flying over the Grand Canyon--

**VB: Uhuh.**

**EB:** And you were actually in the plane. And you were actually flying over the Grand Canyon. It was absolutely wonderful. I don't know why they didn't do that more. It just died a death.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Because it was really an experience. Shooting over the rapids and all sorts of things.

**VB: I mean, it raises an interesting question as well. Did you feel [tape cuts out]**

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**EB:** [tape starts mid-conversation] Oh. Well I think the thing, if I'm watching something that's really good and captures my imagination, I'm in there, in there with it. Absolutely.

**VB: 'Cause I was wondering about, I mean seeing someone like Tyrone Power.**

**EB:** Oh.

**VB: How did you feel when you were watching a film like *Marie Antionette*?**

**EB:** I was in his arms, just the same as she was. Absolutely. [laughs]

**JB:** Oh.

**VB: [laughs]**

**EB:** Crying my eyes out. [laughs] We-ell. [laughs heartily]

**VB: [laughs]**

**EB:** Mhm. Very romantic.

**VB: I mean what was the appeal of someone like Tyrone Power?**

**EB:** [pause 3 seconds] Well, he was absolutely beautiful to look at. And erm, well we thought so then. I'm not so sure if I would now.

**VB: Oh. I don't know.**

**EB:** And, he had a very nice voice too.

**VB: Did you feel he was approachable as a star? Could you...**

**EB:** I don't know. I don't know.

**VB: Mhm. 'Cause I'm interested in as well, erm, you know the way that you thought about the stars. Were they people that were accessible? Or were they--**

**EB:** I don't think so.

**VB: Sort of up there on the screen.**

**EB:** No, I wouldn't think so.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** I think eh, I think that the attraction was that it was, it was fairy tale stuff really. Escape, escapism.

**VB: Mhm. [pause 4 seconds] I don't know if some of the other people I've got here eh, stars like George Formby. I don't know what you--**



**JB:** Oh well, he wasn't in films so much.

**VB: Mhm.**

**JB:** He was more radio. And stage.

**VB: Ah.**

**JB:** He only did the odd film.

**EB:** In fact Gracie Fields was more radio and stage than...

**JB:** Oh yes. Definitely.

**EB:** And some of them didn't transfer very well to films.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Especially if you just hear the voice rather than see them.

**VB: I've got one here of Gracie Fields from, I think it's from *Sing As We Go!***

**EB:** Oh yes.

**JB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: Was she very popular?**

**EB:** Gracie Fields?

**VB: Yes.**

**EB:** Oh-h! Absolutely! More so than Vera Lynn in her era.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Oh, absolutely! [pause 2 seconds] Right until she was very old. And even when she appeared when she was old, she brought the house down at the Palladium. But I'm not sure about her films.

**JB:** Vera Lynn was not... Gracie Fields was more the ordinary man in the street's type of person. Whereas Vera Lynn I don't think was.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** I think that's really interesting. Because when you see a still like this, I mean she's got her hands, [laughs] in the sink.

**EB:** Oh, absolutely. Yes.

**VB:** She's not the glamorous star by any means.

**EB:** She was a very down-to-earth sort of person. Even when she was interviewed, there was no eh, airs and graces.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** On the other hand I've got Joan Crawford here who's--

**EB:** Oh yes.

**VB:** The other extreme, [laughs] I suppose.

**EB:** She wasn't very well liked, was she?

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** They said she wasn't a very nice lady in her personal life.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Very aloof.

**VB:** 'Cause she changed quite a lot in the thirties too, didn't she? I mean she started off as a sort of erm, quite, not chubby faced but sort of erm, young and fresh, I suppose.

**JB:** Mhm.

**VB: And then she ended up with the...**

**EB:** Sunken cheeks. [laughs]

**VB: Sunken cheeks and so on. So she wasn't really a favourite.**

**EB:** I never liked her very much. No, no. [pause 2 seconds] Oh I loved Claudette Colbert.

**JB:** [She was?; Inaudible].

**EB:** She was absolutely gorgeous. And Merle Oberon.

**VB: Ah.**

**EB:** And eh, and Bette Davis, of course. She was a fantastic actress.

**VB: I was just talking about Claudette Colbert this morning.**

**EB:** Were you?

**VB:** Erm, there's that film she made with, was it with Clark Gable? *It Happened One Night*.

**EB:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** She was lovely. And you know which films were lovely, then again, I can't, I can't say if it's, was the erm, Myrna Loy and erm, William Powell films.

**VB:** Yes, yes.

**EB:** With the dog.

**VB:** Yes.

**EB:** What was the dog's name?

**JB:** Don't remember the dog's name.

**EB:** Yes. Oh, there was a whole series of films [referring to the *Thin Man* series]. Can't remember now. But erm, but she was nice.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** Yes I've got erm, Shirley Temple here as well.

**EB:** Oh my god! I used to wear Shirley Temple dresses.

**VB:** Really!

**EB:** My mother used to take me to this place in the East End. It was called the Houndsditch Warehouse Company. And erm, retail, you could buy retail there as well. And they used to sell these dresses, a whole range of dresses that Shirley Temple wore.

**VB: Something like this probably. [laughs]**

**EB:** Well, when she was maybe a little bit older than that.

**VB: Yes.**

**EB:** And eh, oh, we thought they were wonderful. We would have a show of dolls, you know the cut-out dolls where you pin the clothes on?

**JB:** Mhm.

**VB: Did she do your hair like that?**

**EB:** No.

**VB: No. Not quite that far. [laughs]**

**EB:** Not quite that far. No, no. I just liked to wear the dresses. And I used to follow what she did in the magazines. I remember they used to have Shirley Temple's Day. And what she used to eat. What she had to eat for breakfast, for lunch and for tea. And I'd want to have the same thing. And we read through this thing. Breakfast was something, something and a glass of milk. Lunchtime something and a glass of milk. Tea the same. She must have drunk more than us.

**JB:** [laughs]

**EB:** [laughs] But eh, she was a great favourite.

**VB: It sounds like your mother liked her as well then.**

**EB:** Yes!

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB: Yes. Indeed.**

**VB: I mean did you like the younger stars? I mean, I was thinking when you said that, of people like Deanna Durbin as well.**

**EB: Oh yeah. Oh absolutely. She was erm, she was good. Deanna Durbin and erm, was Judy Garland around the same time or later?**

**VB: I think just coming to the end of the thirties.**

**EB: A bit later.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB: Mhm. Yeah. But yes Deanna Durbin was erm, [pause 2 seconds] very very good. I was always going to be another Deanna Durbin. 'Cause I used to sing a bit you see.**

**VB: Ah I see.**

**EB: And erm, [pause 2 seconds] but I wasn't... [bursts out laughing]**

**JB: Is your microphone picking all this up?**

**VB: Yes, it should be. Yes. Yeah.**

**EB: Mhm. You've been looking for something else, haven't you?**

**JB: Well no.**

**EB: No but you were.**

**VB: I know they're very good. They do...**

**EB: What make is it? Sony.**

**VB: Sony, yes.**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: Yes. 'Cause it's interesting when you say about Deanna Durbin. She had quite a small, a short career didn't she?**

**EB: Yes.**

**VB: Didn't erm, make that many films.**

**EB: She married young.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB: Better that way. You remember them when they're good.**

**VB: Yes.**

**EB: Rather than Judy Garland who erm, was making appearances when she shouldn't have done. She's not the only one. Did you ever see Tony Bennett in one of his reappearances?**

**VB: Yes.**

**EB: Embarrassing! Was Danny Kaye at that time?**

**VB: Eh, just--**

**JB: No.**

**EB:** No.

**VB:** Just slightly.

**EB:** Bit after.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** He's good as well. [laughs]

**EB:** We saw him in person at the London Palladium.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** When he came over. Wonderful. Mhm.

**VB:** Talking about your gangsters, I've got one of--

**EB:** Edward G. Robinson.

**VB:** Edward G. Robinson.

**EB:** Oh the ultimate gangster.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Oh yes! The man you love to hate.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Wonderful face, hasn't he?



**VB: He really has.**

**EB:** [laughs] Mhm.

**VB: Did you like erm, people like Cagney?**

**EB:** Yes, I did like Cagney.

**VB: Spencer Tracy.**

**EB:** Particularly Cagney when he did those films with the Dead End Kids. Oh, they were great.

**VB: You mentioned Pat O'Brien as well.**

**EB:** What a crowd. How they handpicked those I'll never know. And Mickey Rooney, of course! Mhm.

[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: The last one is erm, I've got Robert Montgomery and Janet Gaynor.**

**EB:** Janet Gaynor's a bit before that, isn't she?

**VB: Yeah. Just coming near to the end of her career, [laughs] I think.**

**EB:** Yeah. 'Cause she was going quite a long way before that. Wasn't she the one that was in *Daddy Long Legs*? [pause 3 seconds] When was that film? Can't remember. But I don't think I ever saw her. Mhm.

**VB: Mhm. So she was a bit before.**

**EB:** I'm sure she was. Mhm.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** You haven't mentioned Garbo.

**VB: I know.**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: Was she one of your favourites?**

**EB: No! [laughs]**

**VB: [laughs]**

**EB: I could never see what people saw in her. She was droopy.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB: Mhm.**

**VB: What about Marlene Dietrich? Did you like her?**

**EB: Nnn-ot a lot.**

**JB: She wasn't that well known in the thirties.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB: No, not a lot.**

**JB: Bit later than the thirties.**

**EB: I think so because those films like *Destry Rides Again* were later, weren't they?**

**VB: Yes.**

**EB: 'Cause she was probably making German films till then.**

**VB: Mhm. Was there much opportunity to see European films? In the thirties.**

**EB:** Erm, there again, I wouldn't have known that till the forties at least.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** But yes, we did see a lot. Specially at this Curzon cinema that I mentioned.

**VB: Yes.**

**EB:** That was the place to go to see them. And the Regent, in the Regent [Street] Poly, I think there was a cinema there.

**JB:** Uhuh. The Academy in Regent Street [referring to Academy Cinema, Oxford Street].

**EB:** That's right. The Academy. That was the one. We saw loads of Fre-, mostly French. And they were wonderful films.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** They were so different.

**JB:** Yeah, all their films, it's films to do with religion.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**EB:** That's right. Yes, they've changed it all round. Mhm.

**JB:** Well they have speakers there.

**VB: Ah.**

**JB:** The 'Gallery'. New Gallery.

**VB:** I mean did you like erm, the sort of epics of the thirties? Films like *Ben Hur*. Well that's slightly earlier again.

**EB:** Don't think I ever saw that then, but I've seen it since.

**VB:** Yeah.

**JB:** We weren't in a position. People at that [time, sort of thing?], really didn't have an opinion in these days. Whether they liked a thing, whether they didn't.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** So did you more or less go to, I mean it sounds from what you were saying as if you more or less went to the film that was on.

**EB:** Yes.

**VB:** Did you make much...

**EB:** I don't think you looked at the paper and said, "Aw, such and such is on. I must go and see that." You were just going out the pictures and what was on was on.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** I mean you had your favourites. Perhaps, you know, but I don't think it really mattered.

**VB:** Mhm. Did you talk about film much then with your friends?

**JB:** Erm, just reminds me, [pause 2 seconds] I was reading, I'll just show you, I was reading the 'Digest' this morning and there's something which I think, in two lines--

**EB:** The thing, the thing that, we used to buy the magazines, you know--

**VB: Ah.**

**EB:** The 'Picturegoer' and the 'Picture Show'. And we used to have those in school and talk about them, talk about the bits and pieces in there. That I remember. I don't think we really talked an awful lot about the films otherwise.

**VB: Mhm.**

**JB:** [comes back into room with 'Digest'] I think this sums up the sort of, this generation as against that time then.

**EB:** I tell you one thing. We didn't have cinemas stinking of popcorn and Coca-Cola like you do now.

**VB: [laughs]**

**EB:** Horrible.

**VB: Did you take things into the cinema?**

**EB:** No. No. Might have had an ice cream in the interval. Drink or something. Certainly, I've watched the kids going into the cinema when I went with my grandson once. They go in loaded! Enormous things. Popcorn and hamburgers and drinks. They don't go to the pictures. They go for a picnic!

**VB: [laughs]**

**EB:** Must cost their parents a fortune! What with going in and the stuff.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** When you think, it used to cost about ninepence.

**VB: Did any of the cinemas you were going to have erm, tearooms or cafes?**

**JB:** Oh yes.

**EB:** Did they? Can't remember.

**JB:** The majority, yes.

**EB:** Did they?

**JB:** Yes. Quite a lot of them.

**EB:** Mhm. You've got a better memory of that than me.

**JB:** Erm, I always remember the one in Tottenham Court Road, I'd go every Saturday. Erm, 1935 [possibly referring to the Dominion].

**EB:** But what about the local ones. Did they?

**JB:** The local ones did. The Regent [Stamford Hill] did.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** The Granada had a very good tearoom.

**EB:** Oh the Granada did. Yes. I remember that.

**JB:** The Dominion, no. Certain ones did. The Granada now has a bar up there or something.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** But eh, no, what I was reding was that... [pause 3 seconds] They're talking about this being the lucky generation. [pause 2 seconds] Eh, and like other countries, Britain's going through a period of economic transition. All these industries are in decline. New ones are taking their place. Constant change has become the only certainty. There are always two sides to everything. New technology is adding to unemployment. It's also making life easier in the home. [pause 2 seconds] The office and factory erm, [rest inaudible]. [pause 4 seconds] There was poverty in the 1930s. So they couldn't

charge much for the cinema, so anybody could go in. Ninepence you got into the cinema. Sometimes less. Erm, but they say this is the lucky generation. Because people born after the war finished, they've never seen a war. And up to then, if you went to the cinema and sometimes the bombs would be coming down...

**EB:** Not only not a war. Not a Depression to the extent that there was.

**JB:** Yeah. There's a bit of a Depression now, but not really. It's only to, it says here, to make people work more efficiently. And the same applies to the cinemas. These last places which we went to, they made them into three cinemas.

**VB: Mhm.**

**JB:** I don't like them, but they've made them into three cinemas. But erm...

**EB:** Yeah, but don't you think that's partly because of television? Because people don't want to go out. They can hire a video.

**JB:** That hasn't helped it. But the film people are in the video business.

**EB:** Yes! Oh yes. Mhm. I don't think you, you can't compare seeing a video at home with seeing it in the cinema.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Can you? Really.

**VB: No. [pause 3 seconds] I mean what sort of other entertainments were there available?**

**EB:** Mhm. Dancing. Oh yes, dancing was a big thing. We used to go, there were Palais de Danses all over the place. Used to go to, erm, which were very nice. And there were tea dances.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Mind you, they're coming back a bit. Mhm. And, the usual things erm, we had clubs. Youth clubs and that sort of thing.

**VB: Did you spend a lot of time out of doors when you were a child?**

**JB:** No, you'd play in the street sometimes.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** I was never allowed to play in the street.

**JB:** Well some people did.

**EB:** We had a garden. [laughs]

**JB:** Even if you had a garden! People used to play in the street, you know.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: Did you listen to the radio?**

**EB:** The radiio. A lot. Oh yes. Very much.

**VB: Yeah.**

**JB:** Yeah, the radio wasn't eh...

**EB:** What?

**JB:** Before the thirties, the late twenties, you had crystal sets, you didn't have a proper radio.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** And you'd fiddle about with the [whiskers?] when they came on.



**EB:** Really?

**JB:** Mhm.

**EB:** I don't remember that. But I remember we used to hear the radio a lot. Erm, I still do listen to the radio a lot. I still think a play on the radio can be more interesting than a play on the television. If it's a good one. There were a lot of good programmes and they were regular. Saturday night was always music hall and 'In Town Tonight' and things like that. Erm, [pause 3 seconds] 'Children's Hour' of course, that was a, a must. [pause 2 seconds] Can't really remember what else we did. Just played with friends I suppose.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** I wasn't a great sports fan, so I didn't do much sport. We had a park. We had a good park. Which we all congregated in. And bought our Walls ice cream at the gate, [laughs] from the man with the van. No it wasn't a van it was a pedal thing. Mhm.

**VB:** I mean do you think erm, going to the pictures influenced you at all?

**JB:** No.

**EB:** I--

**JB:** No.

**EB:** I don't know.

**JB:** No way. No way. Not me anyway.

**VB:** I don't mean , sort of, going out and being Edward G. Robinson [laughs] but erm--

**JB:** Not as much as it does today.

**VB: Mhm. I mean did you ever--**

**EB:** There wasn't the violence to start with.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** Not the mindless violence of films today.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** Okay, there was the goodies and the baddies.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** The goodies usually won. Erm, I don't remember... [pause 3 seconds] strange, that's a very difficult question.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** I truly don't know.

**VB: 'Cause I wondered when you said that erm, you know you admired Deanna Durbin erm, eh--**

**EB:** Yes.

**VB: You would've sort of liked to sing like her.**

**EB:** Oh I've always been stage-struck.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** Ever since I was little. That's just me.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** Erm,

**VB:** I mean did you ever try to say, erm, dress like the stars? Well you mentioned Shirley Temple.

**EB:** Well, we did do that. Oh yes.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** But other than that no. Not when I was older.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** No. Not even as far as make-up was concerned. Because we didn't even use much make-up.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** I wasn't allowed to anyway.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** No, I don't think so. Erm, and we didn't copy the way they spoke either. We didn't suddenly introduce Americanisms into our conversations.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** That we didn't do. [pause 4 seconds] It's a long time ago!

**VB:** Yes.

**EB:** [laughs] It's difficult to remember.

**VB:** 'Cause I mean the reason I'm asking is well--

**EB:** Yes.

**VB:** Is I've heard people say they felt they got to know America through watching the films.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** That they would've felt eh, fairly at home say walking down 42nd Street or...

**EB:** Ye-es. Mhm.

**VB:** I just wondered if you felt that was right or if was different for you.

**EB:** Well, obviously if you've seen it on the films, you know. It's a place that we never thought we'd ever visit.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** People, they're much more impressed with films. Youngsters. That's why you got all this erm, rough stuff and gangsterism and that. 'Cause they see it on the television or the films. And they try to imitate it.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** There wasn't, there wasn't that much violence in the films, was there? Not that I can remember. I don't remember. I can only remember the beautiful stuff.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** And eh, well obviously the erm, tragedies and such like you know, in the theatre. But not particularly, not mindless violence.

**VB:** Yes.

**EB:** Not, can't remember anything like that. In the old films, at all.

**VB:** Yeah, and even, I mean the gangsters seem to get punished.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** Or caught or, erm--

**EB:** Absolutely!

**VB:** Quite a strong moral sense I suppose.

**EB:** Yeah. Specially James Cagney.

**VB:** Yes. [laughs]

**EB:** Mhm. I always remember the one where he was pretending to be frightened,

**VB:** Oh yes.

**EB:** As they drag him into the chair [referring to *Angels With Dirty Faces*]. Ah, yeah.

**VB:** That was, ah Pat O'Brien was in that too, wasn't he?

**EB:** That's right. He was the priest.

**VB:** Yes.

**EB:** Mhm. [laughs]

**VB:** I mean talking of the musicals, did you like erm, Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy? That sort of musical.

**EB:** Yes, yes. All those.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** And having seen them recently, she didn't have a particularly good voice. Unless it was the sound.

**JB:** The sound wasn't so good.

**EB:** The sound wasn't as good.

**JB:** No.

**EB:** But she was lovely.

**VB: Mhm. I just saw *Maytime* quite recently.**

**EB:** Oh yes.

**VB: Which I enjoyed very much.**

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB: Yeah.**

**EB:** They made loads of films, didn't they? [pause 5 seconds] Just thinking about it, nothing particularly stands out. Erm, in my mind. Apart from the musicals. The *Ziegfeld Follies*.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** And various musicals and... [pause 3 seconds] Oh, you know who was good? Sonja Henie, the skating star. Mhm. She was very good.

**VB: Mhm.**

**EB:** Terrible actress but good skater. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs] **Did you go skating yourself?**

**EB:** I did, 'cause I was a supporter of the local ice hockey team.

**VB:** Ah I see.

**EB:** Used to go every week. And then we used to go on the ice after the skating was finished. I was never very good but, went around a bit, you know. But we idolised those ice hockey players. Used to wait for them outside their dressing room, you know, till they came out. [laughs]

**VB:** Just after I came in when we were talking about the, that you'd gone to see Tyrone Power--

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** Erm, were there a lot of people there to see him?

**EB:** Oh yes, indeed!

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** Mostly young girls.

**VB:** Where was that again?

**EB:** Was at the, erm, Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** [laughs]

**VB:** Was he as handsome in the flesh as he was in the--

**EB:** Couldn't, couldn't see him, [back to you?].

**VB:** Ah right.

**EB:** You just sort of looked out of the window.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** But erm, that was enough. Mhm. Easily satisfied. [laughs]

**VB:** Do you think there were certain qualities that you liked in a star? Erm, say the male stars. Were there--

**EB:** [pause 3 seconds] Mhm.

**JB:** I don't think so. See judgement in those days was entirely different to today.

**VB:** Mhm.

**JB:** Today the first thing you do is, "Who's he been sleeping with?" Or hasn't been sleeping with. And these days, "Who's been taking drugs?"

**EB:** [laughs]

**JB:** In those days you didn't think about anything like that. If it was a good show or a good film, and he was in, and he's a nice fella, and that was it!

**VB:** Mhm.

**JB:** Not today. "Is he gay?"

**EB:** We didn't really delve into their private lives.



**JB:** Not then. "Is he gay? Is he homosexual?"

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** "Is he a drunk?" All of these things come to you before you even [find out?] the person's name. It's a different, different ball game.

**VB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Mhm.

**VB:** 'Cause I was wondering as well, I've heard a couple of people saying that they particularly, saying that they liked men with moustaches. Like Ronald Colman and erm--

**EB:** Ah!

**VB:** [laughs] Errol Flynn and erm--

**JB:** It had its day. It was the fashion.

**VB:** Yeah.

**EB:** I've never liked moustaches personally.

**VB:** [laughs]

**EB:** Still don't.

**VB:** Yeah. Men without moustaches. [laughs]

**EB:** I would've gone for them.

**VB:** Yes.

**EB:** Yes. Mhm. Mhm. I think the voices were very--

**VB: Voices.**

**EB:** Mhm.

**EB:** Very much so. Specially Charles Boyer.

**JB:** And also, in the early thirties, you came to the cinema, you're hoping you heard the whole thing right through. You didn't get interruptions or something. Will the film break down? You'd sit there while they prepared the film. That happened many times.

**EB:** Mhm.

**JB:** That's what people talked about. Not today.

[pause 5 seconds]

**VB: Aye, it does sound from what you're saying, it was a completely different experience to going to the cinema today.**

**EB:** Oh absolutely! Oh yes. Would you like a cup of coffee?

**VB: That's be lovely, yes. Thanks very much.**

**VB: Lovely thanks. Your biscuits are delicious.**

**EB:** You may have another.

**VB: I might just do that. They're lovely.**

**JB:** It's a pleasure.

**VB: It's interesting what you were saying though about erm, the films. Just going to the pictures and not the stars. Erm, [pause 3 seconds; voices speeding up] I suppose in some ways you were spoilt for choice eh--**

**JB: Yes, because there were so many cinemas--**

**VB: Yeah.**

**JB: And so many films.**

[pause 5 seconds]

**VB: Did your father ever go to see a film outside his own cinemas?**

**JB: I doubt it.**

**VB: No.**

**JB: I don't know 'cause I was very young in those days.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**JB: But eh, I know he managed two cinemas as well. And eh--**

**VB: 'Cause they had a lot of trade shows and things, didn't they? [voices speeding up] For the cinema, eh, if you worked in the industry.**

**JB: Eh, I don't know much about that.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**JB: Possibly did. But I don't know.**

**VB: Yeah.**

[pause 6 seconds]

**EB:** That's a very small microphone to carry... [tape cuts out]

[End of recording; second tape, T95-92, blank]