

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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- * Stowmarket, Suffolk, 17 October 1995: Valentina Bold interviews E.J. (Jim) Godbold
- * Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn
- * EG = E. J. Godbold/ VB = Valentina Bold
- * Notes: First of two interviews with E.J. Godbold; Sound Quality: Good; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner. The original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection; please contact Lancaster University Library for more details.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

EG: A new tape, is it?

VB: It is. Yes. So that looks like that's working a lot better. So we'll just eh...

EG: [I've got my notes out]

[sound of tape being set up]

VB: Would you mind actually if, before we start talking about the cinema, I asked you one or two more questions about yourself?

EG: No, I don't mind at all. No, no.

VB: Just so that--

EG: No.

VB: That would be great.

EG: Specially if you send me a book and that. [laughs]

VB: Well, I just want to make sure we get that straight.

EG: And I'm mentioned in it.

VB: Right. Erm, you were born in Stowmarket. Is that right?

EG: That's right. Mhm.

VB: Erm. Can I ask what sort of work your father did?

EG: He erm, he was erm, a shoe mender because he got wounded in the First World War.

VB: Mhm.

EG: And erm, they taught him how to mend shoes, you see.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But prior to that he was a butler.

VB: A-ah!

EG: In a big house but when he went in the Army he got wounded and, in the First World War. And erm, they taught him shoemending and he made a living out of that. A poor sort of living, you know. But there. There was lot of depression after the First World War and erm, people, you know, unemployment an all that sort of thing.

VB: Mhm. And did you mother work? Or was she raising--

EG: Eh?

VB: Did your mother work?

EG: No. She was an old-fashioned wife which eh, stayed with the children at home and that. She took in washing and different things like that but. They didn't work in them days.

VB: Mhm.

EG: It was only after the Second World War when women started to go to work. After they'd married, you know.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Went to work before they married, you know.

VB: And can I ask how many sisters and brothers you had?

EG: Pardon?

VB: How many--

EG: Five.

VB: That's great. Erm, and have you always lived in Stowmarket?

EG: Mhmm. Yeah, yeah.

VB: That's great.

EG: Apart from, you know, when I was in the Army but eh...

VB: Sure. And can I ask what year you were married in?

EG: Pardon?

VB: What year you were married in. Were you married yourself?

EG: Was I what?

VB: [laughs] Erm, can I ask what year you were married in?

EG: Oh, it was 1943.

VB: That's great. And--

EG: During the war.

VB: Ah. And does your wife work? Or did she work?

EG: She was working on the war work, you know. She wasn't very old then but eh, she just. She left school at fourteen and you went to work in them days--

VB: Mhm.

EG: And she was on war work during the war. That's where I met her. 'Cause I was. She lived at Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire and I met her when I was stationed there.

VB: Ah, I see.

EG: Mhmm.

VB: Ah. So she wasn't a local girl then.

EG: She wasn't local here. I was going to. After the war I was gonna go and live at Hemel Hempstead but I, I didn't sort of, I didn't like it. But I said, well would you come back to Stowmarket. And she said, yes and, and then we got this house. We've been in here ever since the war ended, you know.

VB: Ah! It's a nice, a nice part. I like it.

EG: I've done a lot of work to it.

VB: Yeah.

EG: But eh, that's nice. That's very nice. I wouldn't like to leave it, you know.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Even if I won the pools.

VB: [laughs]

EG: But I know the wife wouldn't.

VB: [laughs]

EG: But they would say, well you know. Well you shouldn't be in a council house if you've got all that money and. You'd probably have to buy something else.

VB: Mhm. And do you have a family yourself? Do you have children?

EG: Yeah, I've got three children. Yeah.

VB: The only other thing I wanted to ask was if you had any, erm. Were you brought up in any particular religion? Church of England, or...?

EG: Church of England, yeah.

VB: That's great. And, do you have any strong political views? Have you ever been--

EG: Yeah. I em, I'm Labour, really. All me life I've voted Labour.

VB: Right.

EG: I was secretary of the local Labour Party at one time.

VB: Ah, I see.

EG: In the fifties and that.

VB: Yeah.

EG: But erm--

VB: Well, that's, that's great,

EG: I'm not, you know, sort of dogmatic about it and all that. I can see the other side have got some good points and all that sort of thing, but. I think at least we should have a good Labour opposition. If we don't win, to stop them doing, you know, sort of things so. Which, they sorta get drunk with power. Like I mean, I think Mrs Thatcher was drunk with power at the time--

VB: Mhm.

EG: And she was doing all sorts of silly things and then she brought the Poll Tax in which is absolutely ridiculous. So, if you're, even if you don't get in, you have a good Labour opposition.

VB: Mhm.

EG: That's something, I think, isn't it? 'S what my dad used to say. You want good opposition.

VB: Mhm. Well I agree with you there. [laughs] You won't get an argument from me on that one.

EG: Are you eh, Conservative, yourself?

VB: Eh, no. Far from it. [laughs]

EG: Eh?

VB: Far from it. I think the Conservatives are thin on the ground in Glasgow.

EG: That's right. Yes. What would you be? Nationalist?

VB: E-erm. I voted Labour myself. I have sympathy with the Nationalists but eh--

EG: Mhm.

VB: I usually vote Labour myself.

EG: Yeah.

VB: So--

EG: Good!

VB: Yeah.

EG: Mhm.

VB: But eh. I mean that was really all I wanted to ask. Erm, before we got onto the cinema. Just to, erm, so, really to get an idea, a bit of an idea about your own--

EG: Yeah.

VB: Background.

EG: Yeah. Here comes our coffee.

VB: Oh lovely. A-ah.

[sound of cups clinking]

OP: Oh, sorry, darn it!

EG: That's on the tape! [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Thanks very much.

OP: [whispers] Sugar? That's yours. Table mat. Ta.

VB: Thanks very much. That looks lovely.

OP: [something about the tablecloth]

VB: [laughs] 'Cause I mean I was very interested with what you were telling me on the phone about the cinema.

EG: Yeah.

VB: I mean, how often did you go to the cinema as a child?

EG: As a, you mean, in the thirties? Or--

VB: Uhuh.

EG: Well, we used to go three or four times a week.

VB: Really?

EG: Yeah. Mhm. That was the only thing to look forward to. Erm, see I was in the building trade, erm, in the thirties. And erm, you'd be cold and that, outside on a cold day, and you'd just look forward to going to the... We had two cinemas in Stowmarket. We had an old erm, sort of eh, fleapit, what they call it, you know [referring to The Institute]. And they had the new Regal built and eh, so we had, you know, quite a choice of films and that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: I used to go three or four times a week.

VB: Did you prefer the Regal to the old--?

EG: Pardon?

VB: Did you prefer the Regal to the older one?

EG: Oh yeah. That was a new, new place and modern and that. And it had a better sound system. The other place, you know, they just sort of didn't have a very good sound system. That would break down and all sorts of things and that. [laughs] A bit of a laugh really when you went there. In the finish they made a good sound system, but then that was pulled down in the finish.

VB: Mhm. Was that? That wasn't The Institute, was it called?

EG: That was called. Well, yeah, that was part of it.

VB: Yeah.

EG: And this chap hired the part of the Institute.

VB: Ah, I see.

EG: How did you know that?

VB: I saw a book about East Anglia cinemas, [laughs] and so I looked up Stowmarket.

EG: Oh, yeah, yeah.

VB: E-erm. But I, and it. Did it change name later on?

EG: Pardon?

VB: Did it change name later to the Palladium?

EG: Well, yeah. They called it the Palladium.

VB: Yeah.

EG: When, when it went into. Actually it was silent films when we used to play the piano. In 1928 when erm, sound come in, eh, they had a sort of a sound system. But you used to get a mix of, of silents and sound.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But with the Regal one, it was built in about 1934 [according to various sources, the Regal was built in 1936]. That was erm, complete. You never had any silent films there. That was complete. 'Cause there was lot coming off the production line. You know, musicals and gangsters and, and eh, westerns and all that, you see. But erm, we used to play them now and again because sometimes you'd get a film at the Regal which you... The British weren't any good at making films really, you know. They were corny really and we used to say, oh, that's an old British film there. We won't go. We'll go to the Palladium and that, you see.

VB: Mhm.

EG: It's a bit of a laugh now.

VB: Mhm.

EG: They used to... They used to open the doors at half-time and everybody used to go to pubs. And there was a sweet shop over the road called the [Bell?]. And they used to keep crisps and sweets and all that. When the unemployed were waiting round the door like this, and they all used to pile in. They hadn't paid, you see. [laughs] But they hadn't got the money. I think we all realised that, you know. You didn't do nothing to stop them. Because you knew they hadn't got much money.

VB: Mhm.

EG: And they used to pile in and see the main film, you see. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

EG: It was a joke, really.

VB: What was it like inside?

EG: At Palladium?

VB: Mhm.

EG: Well, it was not very, not very good really. It was eh, you see the Regal being brand new sort of well, made it in comparison, terrific, you see.

VB: Mhm.

EG: They never used to charge much. You'd go for about fourpence, old money and that, you know. It was quite, quite reasonable, really.

VB: Do you remember the opening of the Regal? Did they have a star then?

EG: Yeah. I do remember when it opened 'cause everybody was looking forward to going and that. And eh, but I can't really remember much about it then. They used to, there used to be big queues to get in and that and everything. But they did up Ipswich at the Regent and that. There was always big queues. If you went before four o'clock, that was cheaper.

VB: Ah, I see.

EG: Yeah, we used to bike up sometimes and, the twelve mile, and go in before four o'clock and that was, bit cheaper, you know.

VB: That's quite a way to go.

EG: And they used to have continuous performances then, you see. And eh, they used to have a man on the organ and that. Eh, there were no cinemas in Ipswich, you know [referring to Stowmarket]. The Regal was quite good, really. That suited us really.

VB: What was it about the Regal that you liked?

EG: Well, being brand new and the sound system was good and everything. Very nice in there. You know, you're really warm and everything. You really enjoyed the... Specially if you'd been out in the cold all day and that.

VB: 'Cause that's... It's quite a long way to cycle there and back.

EG: What to Ipswich?

VB: Yeah?

EG: We never used to think nothing of it.

VB: Did you not? [laughs]

EG: We could do it in half an hour.

VB: Mhm.

EG: On our bikes. Me and my brother, we used to go up. There was plenty of pubs where you could leave your bike and nobody ever touched them and all like that, not like they do today. Can't leave your bike anywhere else they get stolen.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Mhm.

VB: Did the weather not bother you cycling?

EG: [coughs] Well, we wouldn't go if that was erm, pouring with rain. Eh, I remember once we started. We got along towards Needham and erm, we packed up and come back. You get sodden wet you don't enjoy, enjoy it like that. But, mainly we wouldn't go if it was, you know, a bad day. Then you could go up on the bus for one, one and sixpence old money. In them days. People went, the buses were crowded. They went and done some shopping then all went to pictures and that, you

see. And there were late buses. They would, you know, come back about 11 o'clock at night if you wanted to.

VB: Mhm. It sounds like people had a good day out in the town.

EG: Oh yeah. You could. Yeah. Yeah. And there was hardly anybody had a car, you see.

VB: Mhm. So was it mainly with your friends you went?

EG: Pardon?

VB: Was it mainly with friends that you went?

EG: Well, when I was on the building trade,

VB: Mhm.

EG: It would be chaps on the same building, you know. And they were all friends, I suppose. And we used to say, well, "Ah'll see ye. Be there and that", you see. Used to go in there. But erm. You know, people say, you know, television erm, eh, have an effect on people. I really think it do. They see something, specially these children, see something on television. And eh, I think they, they could do the same thing quite easy, you know. I think. I saw once erm, where this youngster ran a coin down the car, you see. It was on television. Well, I mean, that put it in the mind of thousands of people. Well, my point I'm trying to make is that, I think. I used to go with a chap and when we went to gangsters, he'd really come out, you know. He was aping the gangsters. He'd strike a match on the wall and that. And all this sort aw thing. With his fingernail. You could see that, you see, it did have an effect on people, you know.

VB: Did you particularly, were the gangster films ones that you particularly enjoyed?

EG: Yeah. But the gangster films didn't last very long, you know. The erm, the history of the gangster film. You see, the golden age of the gangster movie was the thirties. You got James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni and Humphrey Bogart. George Raft and he was the one that used to toss a coin up all the time. That was his well, gimmick, I suppose. Brian Donlevy, Alan Ladd and Barton MacLane. But you see, that only lasted for a very short time really. The gangster films were made in three or four years. You see, the Hays Office eh. You see, gangster films were glorifying the gangster and that, you see. And that was having an effect on people. And you had this Hays Office which was

eh, seeing that things should be. You should never. In the Hays Office you could never be in bed. A man and woman could never be in bed, you see.

Eh, and they had this code, ye see. An then the FBI, you see, complained about the eh, glorifying of gangsters. So they made a series of films which they erm, the FBI was the hero, ye see. Like *G-Men* and *Bullets or Ballots* and *Dead End* and that. You see, where the gangster come off worse at the finish and the FBI come trumps, you see. [laughs] See, that's eh, that was all done because of the Hays Office. And pressures from the Catholic League of Decency, you see.

VB: Mhm.

EG: So erm, gangster films didn't really last a long time. But they've come back since with erm, *Al Capone* and things like that. But erm, you'll never see any blood in them days. It was not allowed. If a gangster was shot with hundreds of bullets, but today it would show all the blood and--

VB: A-ah.

EG: See, Hays Office wouldn't allow it. Wouldn't allow the erm... Erm, that was all the gangster code, you see.

VB: Mhm. It's interesting when you say that--

EG: Eh, you see erm, today, I don't like films where everybody's jumping in bed and that sort of thing. I think it's unnecessary. Now I saw a gangster film where this, this gangster was in a speakeasy an he picks up this girl. And he said, you come back to my place. Well, somebody wanted to see this gangster later on so he knocked on the door of the hotel bedroom. And the gangster come in a dressing gown and the girl was in a nightgown [possibly referring to *Scarface*]. Well that conveyed just as much to you, you see. I mean, you thought to yourself, he's a lucky bugger! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

EG: And eh, you know. You didn't want to see all this writhing about on the bed and all this. I think it's one of the reasons why people drop off going to cinema. I mean, I expect youngsters erm, think that's grand and that. But that must put ideas in their head, mustn't it? They must think that's normal to pick up the man along the way and go to bed with him.

VB: Mhm.

EG: You know. Seems wrong to me. But then. [drinks coffee] What's your next question?

VB: Ah. Well, I was really interested in what you were saying there. Erm, eh, thinking of a... The scene was going through my mind of, you know that film where James Cagney dies and he goes up some steps and--

EG: Yeah.

VB: Goes down the other side. And he's full of bullets but, as you say, not a drop of blood on him [referring to *The Public Enemy*].

EG: No, no.

VB: And it's all very dramatic.

EG: Oh, and another thing. When the FBI, when Hays Code said there's too much of this glorifying gangsters. You gotta repent at the finish or something like that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: So James Cagney in one of his films erm. He got all is Dead End Kids and they glorified him. They thought, he's marvellous, he's a hero and all that. And erm, the padre went to James Cagney and said, "Can you go yellow at the finish?" And James Cagney said, "No, no way!" and that, you see. "No," he said, "I got my public" and all that. 'Cause he'd got to go to the [electric] chair. And when he went to the chair, he blubbered and all like that [referring to *Angels With Dirty Faces*]. See you don't really know whether he was really 'fraid and frightened of dying. Or whether he was doing it to suit this padre, you see. But that, that was all part of the Hays Code of erm--

VB: Ah.

EG: Of making the gangsters not so, you know what I mean--

VB: Mhm.

EG: Glorified.

VB: Was that the one with Pat O'Brien in it as the priest?

EG: Pardon?

VB: With Pat O'Brien?

EG: Yeah, that's right.

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

EG: I can't remember what it was called?

VB: It's not *Angels with Dirty Faces*?

EG: There was erm *Little Caesar*, 1930 [1931, according to iMDB]. *Public Enemy*, 1931. *Scarface*, 1932. Main characters were [name?], Al Capone.

VB: Who was your own favourite amongst the gangsters?

EG: Pardon?

VB: Did you have a favourite actor in the gangsters?

EG: No, I liked them all really.

VB: Mhm.

EG: The, em, Brian Donlevy, erm, Barton MacLane. Paul Muni. All good. Edward G. Robinson was good.

VB: Mhm.

EG: George Raft. With the time [inaudible] man, you know.

VB: Eh, I brought some eh, stills with me. Eh, I think I did bring one of Edward G. Robinson 'cause I remember you mentioning him on the phone. Erm--

EG: Oh yeah. Where d'you get this from?

VB: Erm, these are from the Film Institute in London.

EG: Oh yeah.

VB: Eh, obviously it's a photocopy of a, the photograph but--

EG: Yeah, he was good, he was.

VB: Yeah.

EG: Yeah we used to like looking forward to gangsters.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Because eh, gangsters. I mean, we used to like westerns too.

VB: A-ah.

EG: And erm, at the time we got the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, *Top Hat* and *Rebecca* and *Follow the Fleet*. Judy Garland. Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland--

VB: Mhm.

EG: An that sort aw thing. Deanna Durbin.

VB: Ah.

EG: But she come in late really. [coughs] She was eh, *The Wizard of Oz* was made in 1939. [pause 2 seconds] Horror films. People used to be really horrified with horror films. If you was with a girl she'd clutch you. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

EG: It was all very nice, imagine. But erm, *King Kong* and Boris Karloff, *Frankenstein* and I don't know how you'd pronounce that.

VB: Oh, em, Bela Lugosi?

EG: You see and Count Dracula, Peter Lorre.

VB: Did you like horror films yourself? Were they--

EG: Yeah. It was eh, all right at the time. As you say, 'specially if you was with a girl 'cause you erm-- [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

EG: Cuddle close to you. It really used to frighten 'em. You got people call out, "You do!", "Look out, he's behind you!" [laughs] and all that. 'Cause they thought it was real. 'Course a lot of people sort of come from country districts and that, you know. They couldn't realise that was only just a film. [laughs]

VB: Ah.

EG: They'd call out something and that.

VB: And you mentioned the westerns there. Did you have favourite stars and...?

EG: Westerns? Well I think eh, [pause 2 seconds], John Wayne was the--

VB: Mhm.

EG: The best. *Stagecoach*, 1939. That was, I think he was the best. But I liked Henry Fonda and Victor McLaglen.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Errol Flynn made one in 1939.

VB: A-ah!

EG: *Dodge City*.

VB: Mhm. I can't imagine him in a western somehow. It's--

EG: Errol Flynn?

VB: Yeah.

EG: Well they try everything really, don't they, sometimes--

VB: Mhm.

EG: And that. When they're a big star. [pause 2 seconds] James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart in *The Oklahoma Kid*, 1939.

VB: Oh. And then you mentioned the musicals. I think one of the other ones I've got here is from, eh, one of eh, it's an advert for *Top Hat*.

EG: [sneezes] Oh, yeah.

VB: Were they favourites of yours?

EG: Oh yeah, they were in them days. Nobody could touch 'em really.

VB: What was it about Astaire and Rogers that attracted you?

EG: That was the tap dancing. I got so I could tap dance a bit in them days.

VB: A-ah.

EG: Yeah, I used to be out with the boys and they'd say, give us a tap dance, Jim.

VB: [laughs]

EG: Sometimes at a dance and the band would stop and say "We have Jim Godbold here tonight."
And I'd say, "O-oh no!"

VB: [laughs]

EG: I would say. Give a demonstration.

VB: Did you go to lessons or--?

EG: Pardon?

VB: Did you have lessons in dancing?

EG: No. I just eh, picked it up from the eh. Never had any lessons or any steps. I just picked it up from seeing eh, you know, erm, the thingy.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Musical. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and that.

VB: Did you go to dancing? I mean, did you go out dancing?

EG: Oh yeah. We used to go to all these hops. At threepence. At threepence old money and that, you know. British Legion Hall an. And erm, we had a, had a friend, he had a car. And he was about the only one, you know. There was hardly anybody had a car. And he used to run out to these village dances at Sudbury and places like that. He used to run out. You'd see no other car. Eh, once you got out the town, pitch black, no lights and... You'd go to Sudbury and have a drink in the pub and then to go the dance. Kersey, Kersey, ever so pretty village. Erm, see a picture of Kersey. I saw, lovely, lovely village. And there used to be nice dances there.

VB: Mhm.

EG: And we used to [coughs] call round to Ipswich and there used to be a restaurant open and we'd have eggs and chips there about twelve or one o'clock in the morning.

VB: Mhm. Did you have other favourites among the stars of the musicals?

EG: Well, I s'pose, eh, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire were the best.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But Judy, Judy Garland, come in later really. And Deanna Durbin.

VB: Mhm. I think I've got one from--

EG: Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland.

VB: There's one of eh, Deanna Durbin from--

EG: Yeah, 1938. See they come in a bit later.

VB: Yeah. I just saw *Three Smart Girls* quite recently. E-erm. I mean was Deanna Durbin one of your favourites or...?

EG: Yeah. Oh yeah.

VB: What was it--

EG: She, she could sing lovely. [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

EG: Yeah.

VB: Right.

EG: Yeah, I saw her [inaudible].

VB: Aye. What was it about her that you liked? Was it her singing that you liked?

EG: Her singing, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

EG: She was such a lovely singer. She was pretty too. You know. Pretty.

VB: Mhm. She must've been very young actually. I mean--

EG: Yeah, yeah. Well Mickey Rooney was ever so young when he, him and Judy Garland in *Babes in Arms* in 1939. They were, you know, very young really.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But he had a charisma really. He was brilliant really. He's still on the go, isn't he? You see him ever so old and that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Well he can't be eh, that much older than me really.

VB: Uhuh.

EG: I've got that 'Hundred Men and a Girl' [sic: *One Hundred Men and a Girl*] down there, see. *Naughty Marietta*.

VB: Oh yes. That's Jeanette MacDonald?

EG: *Three Smart Girls*.

VB: Yeah. Was it, was it Jeanette MacDonald that was in *Naughty Marietta*?

EG: Could've been, yes.

VB: Yeah. Did you like her as a singer?

EG: Yeah. She was quite good, yeah.

VB: Mhm.

EG: [drinks coffee] Uhuh.

VB: Yeah. Any stars you didn't like?

EG: Well, we didn't like British films at the time--

VB: Mhm.

EG: Because they're a bit corny and that, you know. And eh--

VB: I remember you mentioned George Arliss to me on the phone--

EG: Yeah.

VB: As someone you didn't like. [laughs]

EG: That's right, yeah. [laughs] Today I'd probably appreciate it.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But, you know, that was too long drawn-out and too much dialogue for us youngsters, you see, at the time and that. But they did make one or two. Jessie Matthews made one or two musicals. They were never up to the scratch of Busby Berkeley, *Gold Diggers* [referring to *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *Gold Diggers of 1935* and *Gold Diggers of 1937*]. He used to make these hundreds of girls all dancing and that. And all the pianos moving. They had a man underneath. If you looked closely you could see the man underneath sort of moving all these pianos around. But he was brilliant, wasn't he? Busby Berkeley.

VB: Mhm.

EG: But erm. And of course, you've got Technicolor and that but, British films, they wouldn't have 'em in America.

VB: Mhm.

EG: You know. Not, not good enough.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Mind you, they had all this star system and erm, all this erm, studios. They weren't gonna let anybody else come in.

VB: Uhuh.

EG: And of course foreign films were in the foreign languages, weren't they? So...

VB: Mhm. So the British ones you tended to avoid?

EG: Eh. [looking at photos] Margaret Carr. She's an authoress. And she put down erm, the decline of the cinema to the swing of the kitchen sink dramas and sex [next word?] to the constant design, de, decline in audiences. I think she got stuff in there really. You see they... The real decline started after television come in. They jumped on anything really to get people to go the cinema. They got so my children were teenagers and that and they had a lot of these kitchen sink--

VB: Mhm.

EG: Dramas and... And, and sex scenes and that. You see, they tried to get people to go. But I think that's where they done wrong. But of course now they've come back to making really decent films. But I don't think people, the television. They're not gonna leave their homes--

VB: Mhm.

EG: Unless there's something very important to see. I have been occasionally but-- [drinks coffee]

VB: Mhm.

EG: Lotta things I don't like about the cinema.

VB: Mhm.

EG: [coughs] But we were young in them days. So, probably eh, we lapped up everything really. 'Cause eh, that was somewhere to go, another one that you see.

VB: Did you enjoy, erm, the news and...?

EG: You what?

VB: Did you enjoy seeing the news in the cinema? The Pathe--

EG: Oh, yeah, yeah. They used to have a thing called 'Time Marches On' [referring to *The March of Time*].

VB: Ah!

EG: That was ever so good. Do you remember that?

VB: I've heard people talk about it. But I don't know--

EG: Yeah.

VB: Much about it.

EG: That's made in America. That's a kind of a thing that you'd see on 'Panorama' today or something like that. And, you used to say "Ti-ime Marches On!"

VB: [laughs]

EG: Yeah, the news. I mean we, you wouldn't see like. You'd see the final of the football. Just the goals and things like that. Cup final and that. You wouldn't see it otherwise. Only in the newspaper, you see. That's quite good. I used to like the news. Ye-ah. There used to be two films when you went. Erm, the Regent, Ipswich, you see, had sort of a second, they called a second. And then the main film, you've got two films on one night, you see.

VB: Mhm.

EG: They have a lot of adverts now and that, don't they?

VB: Mhm. The other thing I meant to ask you about was eh, comedies. Did you have--

EG: [laughs] Marx Brothers and that. Yeah. We didn't mind them. We didn't mind them.

VB: Yeah.

EG: They were quite funny really [laughs]. You'd get people coming out and poking someone in the eye with two fingers. [laughs]

VB: [laughs] So comedian, I've got. Erm, I don't know if you liked them at all. Laurel and Hardy. [laughs]

EG: Yeah. Quite good, weren't they?

VB: Did you like? Did you like, 'cause it's a different sort of comedy, isn't it? The Marx Brothers to--

EG: Oh, yeah, yeah.

VB: Eh. Was it that sort of clever humour that you enjoyed more or...?

EG: Well, erm, it was the effects a lot too. I mean we would erm. We'd get Buster Keaton and he'd be high on a building, wasn't he? They'd show how they done that. Yeah. In them days you didn't know. You'd think he was actually dangling from a high building. There was a sort of a platform underneath him so he couldn't have fell anyway and that, you see. But you didn't see that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: They were pretty good with the cameras in them days. *King Kong* was eh, wonderful really, how it was made. And eh, that was all erm, staged and that, wasn't it? You know.

VB: Mhm.

EG: The backdrop and that sort of thing. You know. Models and things. I've seen *King Kong* not long ago, you know. They put it on during the week, I think, on the television. But sometimes King Kong looked ever so big and another time, [laughs] he looked terribly small! Where they got the, got the bit wrong, you know.

VB: Mhm. Did you enjoy these sort of special effects at the time. Was that--?

EG: Oh, yeah. 'Cause it, I mean, we thought it was wonderful and that. But that's only now, only now, how it was done and that. But erm, my wife doesn't like to know. She says she don't like to know. We went to see erm, not a situation comedy. A quiz game made for television up London. We went and saw it and that. They keep stopping it, and starting again and things like that. On the night I saw one slick thing, you know.

VB: Mhm.

EG: She said I didn't really, that'd spoil it, keep thinking they stop it and that sort of thing, you see. That spoilt the illusion really, you see.

VB: I mean, did you talk much about films with your friends?

EG: Yeah, we used to. Yeah, yeah.

VB: Mhm. [pause 4 seconds] Did you ever, erm, read any of the film magazines? Like 'Picturegoer'?

EG: Oh, yeah, yeah. We used to. [coughs] We used to eh. There used to be a lotta them 'Picturegoers' magazines, didn't they? [coughs] If you was a follower of erm films, you would eh, naturally, buy one of these, wouldn't you? Because erm, it's like if you was interested in motor bikes you'd buy a motorcycle book. And you'd buy a movie book, you see.

VB: Mhm. Did you like the songs from the film as well?

EG: Oh, yeah. Well it was the first time you heard 'em. Erm, they weren't allowed to be on the radio till, till eh, they were the premiere, you know. Of the film. But now if they've got a stage show like

'42nd Street' they put the music out beforehand. Anyway the music is old. Erm, so the people say, "Gaw, that's good. I'd like to go and see that." You see. But in them days they're not allowed to. Like *Top Hat* and *Roberta* and that. They weren't allowed to--

VB: A-ah.

EG: To put it out till the, till the film was actually shown and that, you see. I don't know why. Not too much point in that. But erm, p'raps they thought, well the tunes will be old or something.

VB: Mhm. Did you ever go to films more than once? Erm.

EG: Eh. What you mean? You get one night and you say, "Cor, I like that." No, I never went, I never went the more. Because I think that would spoil the illusion somehow. You'd begin to see things that, you know. I don't know why but... [pause 3 seconds] Eh, never went again.

VB: Uhuh.

EG: I used to tell somebody, you wanna go and see that. That's a very good film and that, you see.

VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] Did you like the more serious films as well?

EG: You what?

VB: Did you like the more serious films?

EG: Like *The 39 Steps*?

VB: A-ah.

EG: Yeah. That was a British film that wasn't too bad. Erm, cause you got Hitchcock done that, didn't he? I think he did.

VB: Mhm. That one with Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll.

EG: That's it. That's right, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

EG: You know a lot about it, don't you?

VB: Yeah. [laughs]

EG: Eh.

VB: Did you like Robert Donat?

EG: Yeah, he's alright. He's the answer to Clark Gable. Nice looking American star. Everybody used to, all these girls used to fawn over him. Erm. [turns pages] Anyway I forget erm, forget his name now.

VB: Not Robert Taylor? Not Robert Taylor? [louder] 'Cause I've heard a lot of women talk about Robert Taylor.

EG: Robert who?

VB: Taylor.

EG: I know his name. It's Robert something, I think.

VB: Mhm.

EG: He was erm, he was sort of an answer to Clark Gable. It was Robert somebody. I forget. Anyway. See a girl in the thirties would go to the cinema for different reasons from a man. I mean a lotta girls here, when you getting out in the country, were in service, you know, and they, they got two and six a week. Half a crown. Which would be equal about. I don't know what would it be? That's thirty pence. That's all they got. And they had a afternoon off. And they used to go, well, afternoon and evening off. And they used to go to the cinema and they used to lap these people up. You know, these Clark Gables and Robert So-and-so.

VB: [laughs]

EG: [laughs] I forget his name. And Robert Donat, and all that. Because they lived in a dream world that p'raps some man would come along one day and rescue 'em from the, from their situation. And their only really ambition in life was to find somebody and get married and have children and that. That was the thing in them days, you see. But eh, to them that was an escape from the service and that, you know. Or even if they worked in a shop or office, they used to crowd to these eh, ones. There was a French chap too. Who was he? He was a, erm, he was in a lotta films which girls liked. What's his name? I can't remember. I know once I was talking in the cinema and a girl said, "Keep quiet!" You know--

VB: [laughs]

EG: She was really furious and this chap was saying, "I was worried about you," and that. I said, 'What you talking about?' He was a Frenchman. I can't think of his name.

VB: Not Maurice Chevalier?

EG: No.

VB: No.

EG: He's a singer. This one was a proper heartthrob from France but they took him over to Hollywood and he made a lot.

VB: Mhm.

EG: I can't remember his name. But anyway. Girls used to sort of lap that sort of stuff up. Whereas a chap would like gangster films more and that. You see. There was a difference in that time. They used to live in a dream world that somebody would come along and take them away from their, [laughs] service or wherever they were.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Eventually they found a man and got married and had children, of course. That was eh, their ambition.

VB: I mean how did you feel when you were at the pictures? How did, how did going to a picture make you feel? Em, how did you feel when you were actually watching it?

EG: Oh, you sort of live the part, don't you? I mean eh, the gangsters and that. I can't explain it really. But you come out feeling sort of refreshed and... People used to say, you know, you'd go to cinema. They never used to like anything which was dreary to watch. If you went in the doctor's surgery, [coughs] eh. If that was showing you went in the doctor's surgery, you went in to see the doctor right away. You didn't sit around and, with people all coughing and moaning and that. You see, that was bad cinema, you see. So you'd have an appointment with the doctor and you'd go right in.

VB: [laughs]

EG: And he'd tell you you was dying or something, you see. [laughs] But eh, some things were bad cinema. It wasn't gotta be dreary or anything like that. Because if you saw people all waiting and

coughing about and all that you'd think to yourself, oh I gotta go to the doctor's tomorrow and that. [laughs] See eh, that would give a bad effect. You only come out the cinema feeling that, you know, p'raps one day you would be lucky and be in the money and all that sort of thing, you know. See, it was a dream world, really, wasn't it? They used to call it the Dream Machine, didn't they? The big studios and that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Yeah, it was an escape, I think. 'Cause no television or anything. Unless you went into a pub there was nothing else to do. Play billiards, I s'pose, or something like that. But, there was hardly anything to do. There was the radio, of course, but you see you really went in there and you sort of escaped from all your worries and enjoyed it, didn't you? And come out feeling fine. [pause 2 seconds]. Uhuh. Some people used to--

VB: [coughs]

EG: Dress. I mean, I know my friend and me, we bought a black shirt and a white tie because one of the gangsters had this, you know. And erm, all this sort of thing, you know. Yeah. It did have an effect on you really, in a way. You sort of copied these sorta things and that. It all made life more bearable. I mean, you got in the cold next day working on buildings, you... [coughs] It give you a little lift, didn't it?

VB: Uhuh. Did your family enjoy the cinema as well? Your parents?

EG: Oh, yeah, yeah. My dad didn't used to go much. Or mum. But eh, sisters and brothers did and that--

VB: Mhm.

EG: When I was little, when they had the Palladium. They didn't have the Regal. They had silent films. And they used to have a serial. This was before 1930 and erm, if I didn't behave, he wouldn't me let go with him--

VB: [laughs]

EG: If I pinched his Brylcreem or something like that.

VB: [laughs]

EG: [laughs] He wouldn't. I used to cry and that but he wouldn't take no notice. See this serial. And they'd be on the edge of a cliff and they'd begin to fall off. And the next week they're about 20 yards away from the edge. [laughs]

VB: [laughs] [pause 5 seconds] **I mean, were there other forms of entertainment available apart from the pictures and dancing, or? Did you enjoy sport or--?**

EG: Well, you know. If you take part in football or anything like that. Cricket. It was them sports, watching. Local team. We used to watch the local team and that. But apart from that there wasn't much to do. People used to just saunter up the street and that. And speak to the girls and that. [coughs] There wasn't really much to do. So at the pictures you looked forward eh, to going, you see. That was a heyday, wasn't it? Erm, in the thirties and forties. And fifties, wasn't it? Yeah. Eh, 'cause television didn't come in till about '50. Did it?

VB: Mhm.

EG: We had one in 1955. And we were the first ones up this road to have television.

VB: Uhuh. **D'you watch films on television now?**

EG: Well, sometimes. I do a lot of reading. I think I'm beginning to get a bit cynical about television now because you begin to criticise everything. When it first come out you lapped everything up, you see. I remember, [laughs] my mate say his sister used to watch the test card.

VB: [laughs]

EG: [laughs] There weren't nothing else on. But erm. No, I think you get a bit cynical and that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: And then there's too much of this jumping into bed and that. I don't, you know, think that's necessary really.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Almost everything they do! The next minute they're in bed and that. As I pointed out, they'd show it just the same in that gangster film and they'd erm...

VB: Mhm.

EG: But I s'pose that's what modern youngsters want. I don't know. As they say, it must give them ideas. I don't know.

VB: **And were you just looking at all your books then? Were you keen on reading as a, when you were in the thirties? Did you enjoy reading then as well?**

EG: Well, just magazines more than anything.

VB: **Yeah.**

EG: I didn't erm, read many books in them days.

VB: **Mhm.**

EG: I got erm, large print books now. All them top are large prints.

VB: **Mhm.**

EG: 'Cause eh, half the time you can't, you can't read the small print. Make your eyes ache, you see.

VB: **Mhm.**

EG: [coughs] They eh, they turf them out from the library and we get them for ten pence each.

VB: **Oh that's excellent. [laughs]**

EG: Mhm. And that's terrific erm. [pause 4 seconds] See that print there.

VB: **Ah! Yes. Well, yes, yes. [laughs] It is very good. Yeah.**

EG: Yeah, that's better. Now these ones here. I can't read much now.

VB: **Mhm.**

EG: But I did read 'em when I could.

VB: **Thanks.**

EG: Still, [that's by the way?]

VB: **Mhm.**

EG: Is that tape still running?

VB: It is, yes. Yeah.

EG: Do you edit it at all?

VB: No. No. Erm--

EG: You don't. You just listen to it.

VB: We just listen and we have a secretary who transcribes them.

EG: Mhm.

VB: And, I mean, I'll listen to it 'em, myself. Eh, so we don't edit them. No.

EG: Oh no. No. They do on the eh, 'Talk' magazine.

VB: Sure.

EG: They take the tape but they only put part of you on it, and they go em [somewhere else?], you see.

VB: Yeah.

EG: And then they send it to these blind people. They've got the regular customers--

VB: Mhm.

EG: You see. But they don't have just one person on the tape.

VB: Sure.

EG: They go somewhere else. Are you staying in Ipswich?

VB: I'm actually. The reason that I said that I couldn't stay for lunch is that I have to go to Lowestoft this afternoon. I'm going there for a few days to talk to people.

EG: What to stay?

VB: Yeah.

EG: You've got some friends here, have you?

VB: No. I'm staying in a bed and breakfast.

EG: Alone?

VB: Yeah.

EG: What have you gotta speak to some people?

VB: Yeah.

EG: About the films, have you?

VB: Yes.

EG: How, they writ in, did they?

VB: Yeah.

EG: This is the advert, which is--

VB: Ah!

EG: [turns pages] There you are.

VB: Ah. I'm interested to see that actually 'cause I haven't seen it. I might just actually take a note of the date that went in and see if I can get a copy of it. I'm very glad you did reply to that 'cause it's eh--

EG: Yeah. Yeah, I thought, that's about my age. And eh, I'll have a go. Erm, so you got to interview some people, in eh, Lowestoft?

VB: Yes.

EG: You go the bus from Ipswich, do you?

VB: I'm going to get the train. Erm--

EG: Train?

VB: Yeah.

EG: Yeah, yeah. Lowestoft's a nice place.

VB: I've never been. I'm looking forward to seeing--

EG: Yes, em. The town is actually traffic free, you know.

VB: A-ah.

EG: You see, you can shop without any traffic. Like Ipswich. Part of Ipswich is, traffic free.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Yeah. I like going to Lowestoft. It's got a nice music shop there.

VB: Mmm.

EG: [coughs] It's all, you know, music for keyboards and that.

VB: Mhm.

EG: An erm, we went round an old erm, what's the name? Trawler there. Cor! They must have had a life on those. All steel and that. And been knocked about and that. On the waves.

VB: Mhm.

EG: Hard life, I bet.

VB: Yeah.

EG: Yeah. I went down there this summer. Erm, on an outing, you know. We have outings. I used to work down the ICI paints and we have several outings and erm, that was one of the outings. And erm, we had lunch in Norwich first. At the airport.

VB: Mhm.

EG: And then we come down to Lowestoft. And we walked round there and in the shops and different things and then made our way home.

VB: Uhuh. It sounds lovely. I'm looking forward to, to seeing it.

EG: Do they erm, they pay you for the eh?

VB: Oh, yes! Yes. [laughs]

EG: They give you expenses, do they?

VB: Eh, and expenses, yeah.

EG: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

EG: Yeah, I was wondering, you know, when, whether there'd be somebody else with you? You know, when you come. But you do it alone, are you?

VB: Yes, yes.

EG: Mhm. Is somebody doing another area or something?

VB: Well. There are three of us in the project. There's the secretary--

EG: Yeah.

VB: Project director--

EG: Mhm.

VB: And myself. But I'm the only one that does the interviews.

EG: Oh, I see. Yeah.

VB: So eh...

EG: And have you been in any other part aw the country?

VB: Yeah. Erm, I've been talking to people in Manchester.

EG: Have you?

VB: And also in north London.

EG: Yeah.

VB: So it's been quite interesting getting different points of view.

EG: Are they similar views like? Or--

VB: Erm, actually quite different. Erm, different stars are cropping up.

EG: Yeah, yeah.

VB: So that's been interesting.

EG: Ah, yeah.

VB: Actually, in Glasgow, people I've talked to have mentioned very much the same sort of stars that you have.

EG: Yeah. I think that was universal really.

VB: Yeah.

EG: I mean, almost the same on that, wasn't they? Mhm. Yeah, I was round Glasgow during the war at eh, Johnstone. That was at eh, Christmastime. They was friendly and that. They was nice people there.

VB: Yeah. I'm very much enjoying being here.

EG: Yeah. Suffolk is nice. Nice place, nice. I mean, the town you got off at the Combs Ford?

VB: Yeah.

EG: I mean, d'you remember me telling you to?

VB: Yeah, yeah.

EG: Erm, and the town is eh...

[End of interview]