

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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\* South Harrow, Middlesex, 19 July 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Gwen and Fred Curnick

\* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Richard Rushton

\* GC=Gwen Curnick/ FC=Fred Curnick/ WA=Walter/ VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: Second of two interviews with Gwen and Fred Curnick; Sound Quality: Good.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

**GC:** That's, eh. She told me that's where she lives, once.

**VB:** 'Cause I was hearing about various other famous people that erm, live or have lived in the area, like Ernie Wise.

**GC:** That's right. Ernie Wise lived up just up here.

**VB:** Yeah.

**GC:** Kenneth Connor lived up here.

**VB:** Oh.

**GC:** Right up till he died. Erm, a chap called Bill Kerr who was an Australian. Eh, he also lived up here. And Janet Baker, the opera singer. I don't know whether she still lives up here--

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** But she certainly did. Erm, yeah, there's been quite a number of famous people--

**VB:** **That's interesting.**

**GC:** Live up here.

**FC:** Mhm. When we were kids, Peggy Mitchell lived up here. Tennis star.

**GC:** A tennis star. Yes, that's right. Yes. Ernie Wise, I mean, he's been gone quite a number of years now. He was a very friendly chap. He always spoke to you and so did Kenneth Connor. Always. Erm, and they both... Ernie Wise wasn't here for all that long but eh, Kenneth Connor lived here, up here for years.

**VB:** **Mhm. It's interesting to find about the area like that.**

**GC:** Yes, yes. I'm sure there's been others but I can't think of them at the moment.

**VB:** **Yeah.**

**FC:** No, I can't. 'Cause I've been away so long, haven't I?

**GC:** Yeah. But there have been others, I'm quite certain up here. Oh, I know...

**FC:** 'Course, if you walk up--

**GC:** Chummy!

**FC:** The road, you know, you can see this quite nice property up there.

**VB:** **Very nice, yeah.**

**FC:** It's not as nice now as it--

**GC:** No.

**FC:** Used to be. But erm, it's their type of--

**VB:** **Yes.**

**FC:** Of road, once you get through the tollgate. Well, even this side of the tollgate now--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** There's some nice property.

**VB:** Yes.

**FC:** 'Course that was... when we first come here that was all fields. Beyond next door but one.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** Until you got [pause 2 seconds] on this side of the road anyway. Until you got well up, well up, where Geary's [?] was, was all open land. Anyway, this is not talking about--

**VB:** Yes. [laughs]

**FC:** The pictures.

**GC:** Johnny Kidd. Johnny Kidd lived up here but you probably won't remember that. Johnny Kidd and the Pirates. Erm, and he got killed in an accident, I remember.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** He lived up here.

**VB:** Certainly are some lovely houses, as you say.

**FC:** Mhm.

**GC:** You went up for your walk over the Hill?

**VB:** I did, yes. It was eh, beautiful. I really enjoyed it.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** You saw the old cinema, did you?

**VB:** Yes, I think so. I think so.

**FC:** Opposite the King's Head.

**VB:** Yes.

**FC:** The fire station and King's Head, then opposite.

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC: You wouldn't know it as a fire station now. Completely different.**

**FC: No.**

**GC: No, you wouldn't know now.**

**VB: I think I saw where you described erm--**

**GC: Yes.**

**VB: But I couldn't be absolutely, [laughs] sure I was looking at the right building, but erm--**

**FC: If it, if it had been downhill instead of uphill I might have come up with you.**

**VB: It's quite a steep walk.**

**FC: Been showing you round. [laughs]**

**VB: Yes, it's quite a, quite a strenuous walk on a hot day.**

**GC: Were you sorry you embarked on it?**

**VB: No, not at all. No. I really enjoyed it. It was lovely.**

**GC: Yes well, go ahead with the questions...**

**VB: Right.**

**GC: 'Cause we don't want to, eh...**

**VB: I'll fire away.**

**GC: Yeah. We don't want to take up your time for nothing.**

**VB: Well, one of the things that erm, I wanted to ask you about was erm, you mentioned stars like Clark Gable and Ronald Colman. I wondered if there were any particular qualities that attracted you in a film star?**

[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: Whether, the way they looked or the way they acted, or--**

**FC:** Well you better answer for the....

**GC:** I had better answer for the ladies!

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** Erm, I think, as far as I was concerned it... [pause 2 seconds] I mean, looks obviously, you went for. Erm, and eh, well I think, you know, the sort of personality of the person as well. And the way they acted. Erm, I don't, it's very difficult to say what, what you really go for. It's the person as a whole.

**VB: Yes.**

**GC:** But, but erm, I'm sure, initially, it was looks because, you know, when I think about it, it was the good-looking ones on the whole that I went for, you know. People like Robert Taylor and eh, Clark Gable and people like that. As opposed to somebody like Spencer Tracy who wasn't quite so good-looking. I mean, he was a marvellous actor. You always enjoyed his films. But you didn't sort of feel he was one of your favourites.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** So, yes, I think, probably when you analyse it, it was looks, initially. And after that, probably, you know, their personality and acting ability.

**VB: That's interesting. I mean, do you think your tastes in actors changed at all? Say from your early teens to late teens, twenties?**

**GC:** Oh. I'm quite, yes. I think it did. I think erm, you know, as you grow up you tend to go for the person rather than the looks. You don't eh, fall for somebody just 'cause they're good-looking, you know. You just sort of, want somebody that eh, that has got a lot of character and acts well and. Erm, obviously it produces a good film. I suppose that's really why people like that stand out in your mind rather than the lesser actors. I mean they had a real oldie on the television this morning. I mean I probably wouldn't have even left it on.

**WA:** *Grand Hotel.*

**GC:** That's right. But erm, you know, because of your interest, I left it on. And there were all manner of, eh, people in it that I can remember. But I wouldn't really have remembered if it hadn't been for seeing the film.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** I mean, Wallace Beery was in it, who I remember well. Erm, John Barrymore. Greta Garbo. Joan Crawford. Erm, and in fact, you know, I mean I hadn't seen it all 'cause I was busy but, erm, it was a, quite a good film considering that it was a 1932 film.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** It hadn't really dated as much as quite a lot of the films have these days. You know, you look at some of them you think, well, why did I think that was good when it was on years ago? But this one really was, you know, quite good.

**VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds]**

**WA:** There was so many stars in it.

**GC:** Oh, there were a lot of stars in it.

**WA:** It had all the stars in it, really.

**GC:** Yeah, yes. There were a lot of stars in it, yeah.

**FC:** I don't really bring anyone [pause 3 seconds] to mind that, you know, I would've gone out of my way. I think I was more interested, I think, in cinema. And course, action; I mean, as a teenager you always went for the cowboys and you know, James Cagney. You saw a bit of that--

**VB: Ahh!**

**FC:** Action. And eh...

**VB: 'Cause that was one thing we didn't really talk about was the, the sort of gangster films. I was wondering if you liked them.**

**FC:** Yes, well, all that sort of thing, you see, would appeal to me. The love side of it--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** Would appeal more to Gwen, no doubt.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** Erm, I used to have to go and see, eh, love stories or love films because I was courting my first wife in the, eh, late thirties--

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** It would've been, wouldn't it?

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** And eh, that was the films she wanted to see. But from choice, erm, I would've most likely – And when you were talking about Wallace Beery, I thought of Wallace Beery and Marie Dressler.

**GC:** That's right, yes.

**GC:** Erm, in *Tugboat Annie*. I can remember seeing that. I can't remember anything about it. But, that appealed to me because it was rough and tumble, you know.

**GC:** Uhuh.

**FC:** I suppose there were [pause 2 seconds] erm, actresses, that I... not necessarily fancied, but preferred.

**GV:** And of course, there again, there were a lot of very lavish musicals during that time. And I think they probably appealed to the ladies more than they appealed to the men.

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** I know I always enjoyed seeing them, you know. They're eh, they were always very well dressed. Lovely dancing and things. And quite often, nice singing. Erm, Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy and people like that. Eh, I think they were probably women's films--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Rather more than men's. And, as Fred said, you know, gangster films and cowboys and Indians didn't really eh, interest me very much at all. I mean, I saw them because when you went to the cinema in those days, erm, you might go to see the big film but, you know, there was always

another film on with it. And eh, you hadn't got very much choice about that. It was, you know, usually cowboys and Indians or a gangster film or something that was made on a very limited budget. So, you saw these things but eh, you obviously, well I, obviously, didn't go for those. I went for the big film.

**FC:** When, you know, I can remember Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. If I could get out of going to see one of their films... I wasn't interested in dancing. I never have been. And if I could get out of going to see one of those films. Erm, I think I would sooner give her the money and told her to go on her own, you know. I wouldn't dare, but--

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** I think that was how I felt. Erm [pause 3 seconds] And, I think it applied the same way with... If I wanted to go and see Jimmy Cagney--

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** You know, and one of his gangster films, eh, that wasn't her cup of tea, either.

**VB:** So were you quite, almost bored watching a film like that? Did you get anything out of it, do you think?

**GC:** No, I don't think I did. I can remember being in Chipping Norton just after war broke out. We went down there for a holiday. And, I think we must've had a wet day or something like that, and we decided to go to the cinema. There was only one little cinema in Chipping Norton. What there is now, I don't know. And that was Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. And I hated the, and, erm, and I can't remember anything at all about it. I really, you know. I had no choice. It was that or do nothing sort of thing. And we went to see it but I didn't like it. I wouldn't have walked from here to the bottom of the road to see it. But it was, as I say, Hobson's choice.

[pause 4 seconds]

**GC:** George Arliss was another very good actor, wasn't he?

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** Yes.



**GC:** And he was a person, of course, where you really went to see the film. You didn't go for the actor. He wasn't the sort of person you fell for, was he? But he was an exceptionally good actor and his films were always very good.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** He was always in very good films. I don't ever remember seeing--

**FC:** He was on the box--

**GC:** A dud film.

**FC:** A few weeks ago.

**GC:** Well, according to this, he's been on the box a number of times.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Yes.

**GC:** His name appears in here, two or three times.

**VB: Actually, I brought along a couple of. I think I mentioned when I was here before that I had some thirties film books--**

**FC:** Oh, yes.

**VB:-- with me. That I thought you might be interested in, in seeing erm. I think this one's from 1935. The other one's from 1938. So I don't know...**

**FC:** I could perhaps tell you some of the eh--

**GC:** Thanks very much.

**FC:** Some of the birds that I, I did fancy at that time.

**VB: Yes. [laughs]**

**GC:** Anna Neagle. Look at this. Yes her, I, I liked her films. Her films were always very good. She eh, she did a lot of [pause 2 seconds] What did they used to call them? Park Lane films, *Spring in Park Lane* and, they all had titles something like that, didn't they?

**WA:** I think so, yeah.

**GC:** She was with Michael Wilding.

**WA:** Yeah.

**GC:** Quite a lot. And erm, her films were excellent. Robert Donat. Now, I really liked Robert Donat. Yes.

**VB: What was it about Robert Donat, do you think, that appealed?**

**GC:** Oh, I don't know. He eh, I don't know, he had a... sort of charisma about him. He really was a very attractive sort of man. He was a good actor as well.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Yeah that was one I, Harold Lloyd. You see...

**GC:** Elizabeth [surname?]

**FC:** I could enjoy [pause 3 seconds] some of his eh, films.

**GC:** Yes. This certainly does bring it all back. Ronald Colman. Deanna Durbin.

**FC:** Yeah. Never seen her but I could do without.

**VB: [laughs]**

**WA:** She's still alive, I think, is she, Deanna Durbin?

**GC:** Yes, I think she is. Yes.

**VB: She had quite a short career, didn't she?**

**GC:** Yes. Yes. She wasn't around for all that long.

**FC:** She was [pause 3 seconds] really a child actress, wasn't she?

**GC:** Rex Harrison. He was quite a heartthrob too. He eh... [pause 4 seconds] I mean, he was around for an awful long while. But erm, he was very good. Vivien Leigh. Vivien Leigh died when she was quite young, didn't she? So she wasn't around for all that long.

**FC:** Pat O'Brien I rather liked. He used...

**GC:** Gary Cooper. Ah yes, he was, he was quite a favourite as well.

**VB:** Was it Pat O'Brien who was always the priest to Jimmy Cagney?

**FC:** Or a copper.

**VB:** Or a copper. [laughs] He must've had an honest face.

**FC:** Carl Brisson. He was very popular. And, he could sing.

**GC:** The fans man of the year, Robert Taylor. I think Robert Taylor was, sort of everybody's heartthrob for a while.

**FC:** Oh, you should have been me in the Army. Because, we had an officer in the Army that was the spit image of him. He was an actor, actually. Erm, and eh, they, the story went that he had doubled for Robert Taylor.

**VB:** Ah.

**FC:** What was his name?

**GC:** Sonja Henie. I remember her well too. And of course she was a skating star. And her films were eh, always very good, very interesting. It was a little bit unusual 'cause you didn't get skating things in those days. You know, skating, ice skating, I think, was really in its infancy. Erm, so you didn't very often get skating films. She was very good. And Gracie Fields, of course. Gracie Fields was extremely popular. I suppose partly because she was English. Erm, but you always went to see Gracie Fields films when they came on. You never missed Gracie Fields. [pause 3 seconds]

**FC:** There's one that I can remember. Ruby Keeler. She was a rare dancer, wasn't she? Done a lot of dancing.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Yes, these books do--

**FC:** Roy Rogers...

**GC:** Bring it back. Because it makes you realise. 'Cause it's hard to remember what was actually on in the 1930s.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** You tend to sort of think, you know, well was that 1930s or was it 1940s? But of course, when you see these books, it's got the years and everything set out in them.

**VB:** Yeah.

**GC:** So that, so that it brings it all back and you know you're talking about the right thing and not talking about the wrong period. I can remember erm, *Victoria the Great*, very well. Going to see that with Anna Neagle in it. That was a marvellous film.

**FC:** I was just looking here. Tom Walls. Ralph Lynn.

**GC:** Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn. Yes, they used to do farces, didn't they?

**FC:** Yeah. They were quite eh, quite popular.

**GC:** Robertson Hare.

**FC:** That's it.

**GC:** And Anton Walbrook. He was another eh, very attractive actor. I think his attractiveness was possibly, he was not English. He had a slightly foreign accent, you know, and I think that helped to, erm, make him attractive. [pause 3 seconds]

**FC:** Fay Wray. *King Kong*. Maureen O'Sullivan. Yeah. It's all names that, you know, that over the years I've... [pause 2 seconds] I've just forgotten them really.

**GC:** Edna Best.

**FC:** Edna Best. In erm

**GC:** Oh, I don't remember. It doesn't tell you what she was in.

**FC:** In *Trader Horn*.

**GC:** Yes, I think she was, yes. And Merle Oberon. I remember Merle Oberon very well.

**FC:** Yeah. I liked Merle Oberon. She was born in India, wasn't she?

**GC:** Oh, was she?

**FC:** Yeah, erm, married Korda.

**GC:** Marlene Dietrich.

**FC:** If I remember right.

**VB:** **She was, she was a star you did like?**

**FC:** Yeah, I always liked Merle Oberon.

**VB:** Yeah.

**FC:** Erm, I think it was looks. Oh, I've just opened the page to her here.

**GC:** And Charles Laughton. Erm, his films were always very good. Eh, you always, you know, tried to make an effort to go and see a Charles Laughton film 'cause they were always very good. And his wife, Elsa Lanchester.

**FC:** Oh, here's mum's heartthrob.

**GC:** Oh, yes. Adolphe Menjou.

**FC:** My mother had a... [pause 2 seconds] I don't know why. She had a s--, soft spot for him.

**VB:** A-ah.

**FC:** I think it was 'cause he was suave, you know.

**VB:** **Was it, what sort of films was he in? 'Cause I...**

**FC:** A-ah.

**GC:** He wasn't in--

**FC:** I don't think he was a big actor, was he? I don't think he would've ever topped the bill or anything like that.

[car horn hoots]

**FC:** But he was always the toff. He had a bit of an accent, didn't he? If I remember right.

**GC:** Yes, he did.

**FC:** Perhaps a French accent.

**GC:** Yes, he did.

**FC:** And eh [pause 3 seconds] he was, you never saw him except in a very genteel manner, did you?

**GC:** No. He, well they were never big parts that he had, were they? They were sort of supporting roles. I've just seen Flora Robson. Flora Robson was an excellent actress. I can remember erm, you know, quite a number of her films, seeing her in quite a lot films. She was around for a long while of course.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** She was, I don't know whether she is still around. But she was certainly around, you know, up to fairly recently.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** And Fred MacMurray. I can remember seeing him, I can remember seeing him at the, erm, what was the Dominion cinema, erm, in the first coloured movie. Eh, I say the first coloured movie. I mean, that's how it was introduced. Whether it really was the first one or not, I don't know.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** But that's how it was introduced. I couldn't tell you what it was called. But erm, I can remember, you know, going. It was quite a thrill to see colour for the first time. Leslie Banks. He was another one.

**FC:** Olivia de Havilland. I rather...

**GC:** Oh, yes! I rather liked her too. Yes.

**FC:** Pretty.

**GC:** Carole Lombard. Yeah, she was--

**FC:** Joe E. Brown.

**GC:** You tend to forget these people unless you've had something. Oh! And Errol Flynn! Yes, of course, he was a--

**WA:** [laughs]

**GC:** A heartthrob. I don't know that I went for him all that much. But he was a real heartthrob.

**FC:** No-one's mentioned Bing!

**VB: No.**

**GC:** Oh, Bing Crosby, no.

**WA:** [laughs]

**GC:** Now he was Joan's, he was Joan's favourite.

**FC:** But I mean, if Bing Crosby was on, you had to go to the, well I had to go the cinema and see Bing Crosby and that's all there was to it.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** Not because I liked Bing Crosby, [laughs] but 'cause my girlfriend did.

**GC:** Yeah, yeah.

**WA:** They made a lot of films, didn't they? With Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour [referring to the 'Road' films].

**GC:** My sister liked Bing Crosby. She eh, she fell for him in quite a big way. Loretta Young. I used to like her too.

**FC:** Mhm. Yes.

**GC:** She was--

**WA:** She had a sister, didn't she? She had a sister...

**GC:** Did she? I don't remember that. Oh, and eh, and Leslie Howard. Yes, he was eh, he was rather dishy. He was very good. He died in a plane crash, during the war, I think.

**WA:** It disappeared, didn't it?

**GC:** Yeah.

**WA:** The plane just van--

**FC:** [inaudible] and Cicely Courtneidge. I never...

**GC:** And Ray Milland.

**FC:** William Powell.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** He done the series, didn't he?

**GC:** Yes, he did, yes. That's was erm, the dog. And that was Myrna Loy.

**VB: Yes.**

**FC:** Yes.

**VB: They were detectives. Sort of smart eh...**

**FC:** I can't remember what the series was. But I can remember him doing a series. [referring to the *Thin Man* series]

**VB: Was she not? I mean, before she made that, was she not in a lot of sort of Eastern films? She was the mysterious erm, beauty.**

**FC:** She... The first time I remember seeing her was in a cowboy.

**VB: Really?**

**FC:** Yeah. Erm... [pause 4 seconds] I can't, I haven't got a clue what it was. But I can remember seeing her in a cowboy and I didn't think a great deal of her looks, you know. [pause 4 seconds] I should think that would be... [pause 3 seconds] Oh, I shouldn't have been very old. Perhaps twelve, 1932--

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Something like that. That was the first time I saw her.

**GC:** Who are you talking at?



**FC:** Eh, Myrna Loy.

**GC:** Myrna Loy... Oh.

**FC:** Conrad Veidt. He always used to play the dirty German, didn't he?

**GC:** There's a picture here of Judy Garland when she was thirteen. Metro-Goldwyn's youngest players. I can't honestly say I can remember seeing her when she was at that age. I remember her as she got older.

**FC:** Jack Buchanan.

**GC:** Gary Cooper. I can remember seeing him [pause 5 seconds]

**FC:** There's Loretta Young.

**GC:** Yeah. And Tyrone Power! He was quite a heartthrob too.

**FC:** Who?

**GC:** Tyrone Power. Very good looking bloke.

**WA:** He died quite young, didn't he?

**GC:** Yes, I think he did. Yes.

**VB:** **Someone was showing me a birthday card they had from the thirties with Tyrone Power and, I can't remember who the woman was, but it was from *Marie Antoinette*. Erm.**

**GC:** A-ah. Bette Davis of course. I remember her when--

**VB:** **Norma Shearer.**

**GC:** She was young.

**VB:** **Was she someone you liked, Bette Davis?**

**GC:** Yes, yes. I liked Bette. Well, I think it would be fair really, as far as she's concerned, to say that I liked her films. Erm, she was a good actress and she was always in very good films. And I think, you know, I went to see her films because you knew they were going to be good. Eh, rather than because, you know, I liked her.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Actually, [pause 5 seconds] eh, the way she, you know, flaunted herself or chucked her shoulders and that about was very much like the person we were talking about just now... [pause 4 seconds] Joan.

**GC:** What Joan [surname redacted]?

**FC:** Not a bit alike in looks.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC: [laughs]**

**FC:** But their attitudes. I mean, she always was very self-confident, wasn't she?

**GC: Mhm.**

**FC:** And she was the same. We didn't get on very well, actually.

**VB: Mhm. [laughs]**

**FC:** I mean, although we were kids together erm, we were beneath her.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** But my second wife. If erm, B. Davis was on, she, she wanted to watch it. She liked, you know, on the box. She liked her. I think I did. I liked her from the point of view that it was always a good story. [pause 2 seconds] Norma Shearer.

**GC:** Oh, yes. I remember Norma Shearer. Joan Bennett too. Oh, I remember her quite well. [coughs] She was one of three sisters. I can remember Constance Bennett. I don't remember Barbara [referring to Barbara Bennett].

**FC:** Thelma Todd. She'd--

**GC:** Carole Lombard.

**FC:** She'd been about a long time because when I was a kid at [Wilton?] Park School which we left when we was eleven, wasn't it?

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** There were cigarette cards of film stars. And I can remember [pause 3 seconds] erm, having a cigarette card of her. Erm, when I was less than, under eleven.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** Thelma Todd.

**GC:** Jean Arthur. I can remember her. She didn't appear to be around for very long, you know.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** She was in...

**WA:** Jean Harlow.

**GC:** Yes. You saw her in one or two films and then she just seemed to fade out. Erm, same with Luise Rainer. She was in *The Good Earth*. She was... which was a very good film. Erm, but she didn't seem to be around for very long. Mary Astor. She was another one. Erm, she was around for quite a long while.

**FC:** Do you remember ZaSu Pitts.

**GC:** Oh, yes. I remember her.

**FC:** She was a comic, wasn't she?

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** She was nearly always a... a skivvy of some sort, wasn't she?

**GC:** Yes, that's right.

**FC:** A maid or something like that. I quite, quite liked her. You got a laugh. I think that was her. It was either funny, you know, when I was a young teenager. It either had to be a funny film or a western, I think. I don't think, erm. You know, love stories didn't come into it. I can remember my first wife crying over a film, you know, and me saying: "What the hell are you crying about? It's only a bit of celluloid like that!"

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** My brother's always been like that.

**VB:** Ah. [laughs]

**GC:** I mean, I can watch a film on the television and have a cry. But, eh, he's not the type of person.

**VB:** I have to say I've shed a tear over a film in my time.

**GC:** Yes. [laughs] So have I.

**VB:** Yes. Sometimes, not even when it's sad. Just 'cause you're enjoying it so much. [laughs]

**GC:** I mean, I can, can get very erm, emotional if I see some spectacular thing, you know. I mean, the, erm, VE Day celebrations.

**FC:** I think as you get older it affects you more.

**GC:** I could have had a good weep at that. Erm, you know, it's just emotion.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Because it's all so... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**GC:** [starts mid-conversation] ...used to be with erm, Bing Crosby.

**WA:** Yeah, yeah.

**GC:** Bob Hope, didn't she? In the R--, in the 'Road' films.

**WA:** The 'Road' films.

**GC:** Yes. *Road to Singapore*... Gene Raymond. I can remember him. But he didn't, he wasn't around for all that long, was he?

**WA:** No.

**GC:** He used to be, he was in a film, at least one film, with Jeanette MacDonald.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Erm, he was married to her, apparently.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Yeah. He was married to her. But I've seen him in films with her.

**FC:** Oh, there was another one. Madeleine Carroll, who I rather liked.

**GC:** Yes. I rather, quite liked her too.

**VB: She was in *The 39 Steps*, wasn't she? With--**

**FC:** In?

**VB: *The 39 Steps*.**

**GC:** *39 Steps*. Yes.

**VB: With Robert Donat, I think.**

**GC:** Yes, she was.

**WA:** And she was French, wasn't she?

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Madeleine Carroll. Yeah, I got a feeling she was. [pause 2 seconds] Fredric March. His films were usually very good. But he wasn't what I would call a heartthrob. But his films were always very good. He was a good actor. Oh, there you are, erm, Myrna Loy and William Powell. *The Thin Man*.

**FC:** That's it.

**GC:** That was a series, wasn't it?

**FC:** Yeah.

**WA:** Yeah.

[pause 7 seconds; looking through book]

**GC:** I don't know whether Greer Garson was around in the thirties, was she? I don't know whether she--

**FC:** No. First time I remember her--

**GC:** Was as early as that. I liked her very much.

**FC:** I should think it was about the end of the war when I--

**GC:** Yeah. I certainly haven't come across anything. Oh, Katharine Hepburn! [clears throat]. Don Ameche, too! Yes. Don Ameche was a heartthrob. He was a very good-looking bloke. Tended to be in, sort of Latin American films, didn't he?

**FC:** Mhm.

**GC:** Erm, Katharine Hepburn. Erm--

**FC:** Leslie Howard here.

**GC:** Yeah, she was a good actress.

**FC:** Leslie Howard. What was the other one? Who was the father and who was the son? There was two of them, wasn't there?

**GC:** Yes. Yeah, he was the father. He was the one that went missing during the war. And George Formby. [laughs]

**WA:** [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** He was another I wouldn't have walked down the bottom of the road for. [laughs]

**GC:** No, that's right. Neither would I. He was, he was a bit corny, really. His films were a bit corny. A bit in the same bracket as Norman Wisdom, you know. That sort of film. Erm, Nova Pilbeam I remember, quite well. Eh, she was--

**FC:** She was another child star.

**GC:** She was very good. Yes.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** But she wasn't around for very long either, was she?

**FC:** No well they used to overdo it, didn't they? I mean, Shirley Temple. She wasn't around. Only when she was a youngster. As soon as she grew up, I, she might have made one or two pictures. But then it was all over.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And she went into politics, didn't she? Shirley Temple.

**FC:** Yeah, but I don't suppose she went into politics in preference to, to cinema.

**GC:** No. Claudette Colbert. She was a good actress. I can remember her quite well.

**WA:** She was French too, wasn't she?

**GC:** Don't really know.

**FC:** Kay, Kay Francis.

**GC:** Oh, yes. I can remember her too.

**WA:** She was...

**FC:** Oh and Charles Ruggles. Do you remember him?

**GC:** Oh, yes. I remember Charles Ruggles.

**FC:** He was a bit of a comic, wasn't he?

**GC:** James Cagney. You see, James Cagney was a person that, you know, I didn't go for an awful lot. He wasn't a good-looking man. That's why I say, that when you analyse it, you fell for the good-looking ones, really. It obviously wasn't just their acting you fell for--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** It was their looks as well.

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** Joel McCrea. I can remember him too.

**FC:** He was another cowboy, wasn't he?

**GC:** Yes. Joel McCrea was... [pause 8 seconds] Goodness. This certainly does bring back memories.

**VB:** 'Cause I was interested when you were saying a minute ago about some actors that would you go to see in film rather than them like, say, Bette Davis. But others were, it was the star that drew you to them.

**GC:** Yes. Yeah.

**VB:** It's interesting.

**GC:** Yes. Yes, I'm quite certain that sometimes it was that, because you knew that person was always in a good film--

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** You went to the film. Then other times, because you'd got a bit of a crush on the eh, actor that was in it. Eh, I suppose from a man's point of view, probably it was the actress.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Ann Todd. I used to like her. And she was in good films as well. I mean, there again, [coughs] I probably wouldn't have said anything about her 'cause I wouldn't have thought she went back that far.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** But obviously she did because she's in here. And Valerie Hobson. Again, she erm, she was in quite a few films. And of course she was English. Eh, but I didn't really remember them standing out very much. I can remember her more as erm, being involved in the... Well, it was her husband of course, that was involved in the scandal which we dealt with in our office. What was his name, her husband? Valerie Hobson.

**VB:** Not Profumo?

**GC:** Yes, that's right.



**VB: Was it? Yes! Yeah.**

**GC:** She was married to Profumo. And at that time I was working in the Civil Service in the legal department, Civil Service. And we did, we did that inquiry.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** I was working for the men who did it. So, I actually typed a lot of the evidence. Erm, so, you know, I can remember Valerie Hobson rather more because she was married to Profumo. Yes, with the--

**WA:** Profumo.

**GC:** Christine Keeler.

**WA:** Yeah. Keeler.

**GC:** Yeah. Yes, it was quite a scandal, of course, at the time.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** It was quite, quite a big thing. Erm. [pause 4 seconds] And of course all very hush-hush--

**VB: I'm sure.**

**GC:** We were sworn, we were sworn to secrecy, anyway. Erm, but, you know, it was stressed even more than ever. We did a lot of very interesting work in those days. We did a Stanley tribunal as well which was erm, eh a budget leak, that was.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And I actually went to court and heard some of the evidence on that occasion.

**VB: Ah. [laughs]**

**GC:** Charles Boyer! Now he was a heartthrob, wasn't he?

**WA:** Yeah, yeah.

**GC:** Once again, I think, he was good-looking. But, of course, he had a slightly foreign accent and I think--

**WA:** He was French as well.

**GC:** Yes. And I think these foreign accents tend to make people attractive, you know.

**WA:** [name?] was a Frenchman.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** And I remember *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* very well! That was a real eh, a major thing, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I don't think we'd ever had anything like it before. And erm, you know, everywhere you went it was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and everything was decorated with pictures of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. And I can remember doing things at school, you know. For school work. And doing drawings of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Erm, it really was, you know, for quite a long while, it was a very eh, major thing. I'm sure it didn't appeal to my brother but eh. It did to everybody else. [FC comes in] I've just come across *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

**FC:** Mhm.

**GC:** I said that was a really major thing, wasn't it?

**FC:** I don't think I ever saw it.

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** Didn't you? Oh, really! No, you see, there again eh, it was one of the things he probably avoided going to see if he possibly could.

**WA:** I never saw it either.

**GC:** Didn't you?

**FC:** I never saw any of them. *Fantasia* and all that. I've never seen them.

**WA:** No.

**FC:** Even when they've been on the box, I've never seen them.

**GC:** *Fantasia* was very good too. Erm, not too sure, that was 1930s.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** It was during the war. Eh, I think eh, probably a little bit later during the war--

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Rather than...

**VB:** Did you enjoy cartoons generally?

**GC:** Oh, yes! Yes. In fact, you always saw a cartoon. You erm, I mean you had a big film, a supporting film. A B film, as they used to call it. And you had erm--

**FC:** The news and a cartoon.

**GC:** The news. And a cartoon.

**FC:** [Sings?; inaudible]

**GC:** And you always. You always had a good laugh at the cartoon. I mean, now if I see a cartoon on the television I think, "I don't know what we used to think was so funny about those."

**FC:** Well, you see so many of them, don't you?

**GC:** That's right. But, you know, you always had a good laugh. And I tell you something else that came up yesterday, actually, when we were... we had a monthly reunion of our retired members. And one of our agents is Scottish. And I told her that you came to see us and you were coming again today. And so, of course, that got them talking and they are all my age group, or even older. So, erm, you know, we were all talking about films in the 1930s and going to the cinema. And she lived in Perth.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** And apparently, when she was a kid, she's slightly younger than me. Erm, but it obviously was when she was quite young. Erm, they could go to the cinema and get in by taking an empty jam jar. Have you heard this?

**VB:** I've heard of this. Yes. [laughs]

**GC:** And if you took one jam jar you sat downstairs. And if you took two jam jars, you sat upstairs.

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** I mean, we'd never heard of that. Well that was a Scottish thing. We had nothing like it down here. But erm, but that's what she said.

**FC:** I suppose it--

**GC:** She insisted.

**FC:** When things were hard, you know, I suppose that was the only way to--

**VB:** **That's right, yes.**

**FC:** To fill your cinema.

**VB:** **Yeah.**

**FC:** Sell the jam jars and--

**VB:** **Yeah. That's right, 'cause I think they were worth about a penny or something so--**

**GC:** Probably, I mean--

**WA:** You used to get a penny on the jars if you took it back.

**GC:** Yeah. She didn't go into details--

**FC:** No.

**GC:** But erm, it was probably just an afternoon, or possibly even a morning thing.

**VB:** **Yeah.**

**GC:** Erm, you know, and you probably couldn't do it in the evening. But eh, but she was most adamant about, yes she went. 'Cause the rest of us, you know, said, well, you know, we never went to the cinema with jam jars.

**VB:** **[laughs]**

**WA:** No.

**GC:** But of course, you could go to the cinema and only pay sixpence.

**VB:** **Mhm.**

**WA:** I only used to pay tuppence.

**GC:** Yeah--

**WA:** For Saturday mornings.

**GC:** I think Saturday morning was cheaper.

**WA:** Saturday morning matinees.

**GC:** We didn't used to go on the Saturday mornings.

**FC:** Yeah. I think we used to pay... I think it was fourpence Saturday, up at the Cosy.

**GC:** Yeah. But erm, so I mean, I suppose a couple of jam jars, you know, was reasonably comparable with that.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Alice Faye. She was very good. But she tended to be in musicals, so.

**FC:** *King Kong*, wasn't she? Alice Faye. *King Kong*.

**GC:** No. That was Anna May Wong, wasn't it? [referring to Fay Wray]

**FC:** Ah. [pause 5 seconds]

**GC:** Oh, well. I don't know. Might tell you, her carry-on. But she tended, she was in musicals quite a bit, wasn't she? Don Ameche and Tyrone Power, *In Old Chicago*. Oh, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. You've come to Shirley Temple now... Yeah, Shirley Temple was very popular. She, eh... [pause 3 seconds] Oh, I suppose it was the novelty of a child star.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Well, she was talented, wasn't she?

**GC:** She was talented.

**FC:** I don't know how they, you know, whether they took clips and then added them, to join them together afterwards but--

**GC:** There was a lot of talk, a lot of talk about her age, wasn't there? They weren't quite sure if she was as young as she was made out to be. Erm, I don't think they ever proved anything. I think it was just talk. Jessie Matthews. In fact, Jessie Matthews used to live, she didn't used to live just round here. But she did used to live in this area.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Right up until, yeah, right up until the time she died. Jessie Matthews lived round here. And eh--

**WA:** Jack Buchanan. Jessie used to--

**GC:** Yes.

**WA:** Dance with him.

**GC:** Yeah. Yeah, she did. Yes, she was quite a good dancer, wasn't she?

**WA:** Yeah, well that was her main--

**FC:** And singer.

**GC:** Yeah.

**VB: Did you like her films? Did you like Jessie Matthews?**

**GC:** Jessie Matthews. Well, she tended to be in musical films. Yes, I quite liked her films. But I doubt whether Fred did. Probably felt--

**FC:** Yeah, I can't. I think, perhaps I liked Jessie Matthews. [pause 3 seconds] But... not really I liked the type of film she was in. But I quite liked Jessie Matthews.

**GC:** Edward Everett Horton.

**FC:** Yeah.

**WA:** Yeah.

**GC:** He was another one. He wasn't--

**WA:** He used to play the butler, didn't he?

**GC:** Yes.

**WA:** The butler.

**GC:** You wouldn't have said he was a big star. He was always in a supporting role.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** He was in lots of supporting roles, wasn't he?

**GC:** Oh, he was in a lot of supporting roles. Eh, there you are, you see. There's one of these big musicals. The Goldwyn Follies. Oh, and here's erm, Charlie McCarthy. I forget what his dummy's name was. Do you remember, the ventriloquist? Charlie McCarthy and... [pause 2 seconds] He was, he was quite popular. Once again it was a novelty.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** You hadn't seen that sort of thing before. Of course, we hadn't got television in those days so you didn't see all these things. I mean, now of course, everybody grows up to be worldly wise, 'cause they see it all on the television. But we didn't. Herbert Marshall. I liked Herbert Marshall. He was eh, he was quite a heartthrob.

**FC:** He was the bloke who only had one leg, wasn't he?

**WA:** Yeah.

**GC:** Yes, I think he did, yes.

**WA:** Yes.

**GC:** I think he'd been injured in the First World War, hadn't he?

**FC:** Yeah, I think so.

**GC:** Nelson Eddy. Gracie Fields. [pause 5 seconds] Your friend, Fred Astaire. Oh, Gracie Allen and George Burns. They weren't terribly popular really, in those days, were they? Eh, Gracie Allen and George Burns. They came into their own after television--

**FC:** On radio, didn't they?

**WA:** Mhm.

**FC:** And radio.

**GC:** Yes. After television came on and they used to be on television quite a lot but. They were in films but you just erm, you know, they weren't people that you went to see, really. They, they weren't usually the stars anyway, were they? They were more supporting roles. [pause 7 seconds; looking through book]. Benny Goodman there. [pause 5 seconds] He didn't act, of course. He was, they say he was the king of swing, he was. Oh, and Kay Francis! I remember her. She was a very attractive woman. Good actress.

**FC:** She was in *Genevieve*, wasn't she?

**GC:** Kay Francis? No, no Kay Francis wasn't in *Genevieve*. You're thinking of the woman that erm, Rex Harrison was married to... [pause 2 seconds] Warner Baxter! I can remember Warner Baxter too. Do you remember Warner Baxter?

**FC:** Erm, yep.

**GC:** [pause 6 seconds] Henry Fonda. And George Brent. He was another, eh, quite a heartthrob. [pause 8 seconds]

**VB:** Do you think there was a difference between the American and the British stars? 'Cause we were talking before about the difference in the films but erm, do you think the stars were different?

[pause 4 seconds]

**FC:** Well, I think if they were any good they finished up in America, anyway. Making American films.

**GC:** Yeah, I think they did. Yeah.

**WA:** Yeah.

**GC:** They, you know. I think we only really had the dregs here. There was a lot more happening out there and if they made a name for themselves in this country, the next move was [pause 2 seconds] to erm, America.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Yes--

**FC:** Erm, the bloke. Can't think of his name now. Who erm, wrote the book 'The Moon's a Balloon'?



**GC:** Oh, David Niven. David Niven.

**VB:** David Niven.

**FC:** He-- he struggled in this country. I read his, well I read a couple of his books. And eh, he struggled in this country and went to America. And eh, I don't suppose we would have ever, perhaps never heard of him.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** You know, if he hadn't have gone to America and got into their pictures.

**GC:** English films, my recollection, you know, having seen what's in this book which refreshes my memory about the 1930s... English films hadn't come into their own at all then, really, had they? They were. You know, they tended to be rather second-rate films compared with American films. Erm, English films seemed to come into their own in the forties. Eh, I don't know whether there was any during the war. But certainly, after the war there were some very good--

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** English films. But they, I'm quite certain that in the 1930s, you didn't really rush to the cinema 'cause there was an English film on. They were usually pretty second rate.

**WA:** Yeah.

**FC:** Con would've said, "Oh. That's an English film. We don't want to see that."

**GC:** No, that's right. Yes.

**FC:** You know. And I think that was the general attitude, wasn't it?

**GC:** Most people's reaction, yeah.

**WA:** Most of the people were dressed... in dress clothes, weren't they? The men used to dress up.

**FC:** Yeah, were they were all--

**WA:** All very snooty, wasn't it? Aristocratic-like.

**GC:** Yeah.

**WA:** Not erm, not natural.

**GC:** No.

**WA:** I mean, eh--

**GC:** They were--

**WA:** Whereas in American films the people were dressed ordinarily. Living sort of normal lives.

**GC:** Yeah.

**WA:** But erm--

**GC:** Yeah, I think certainly then, America had the edge on us.

**FC:** And another thing. You very seldom saw a working-class English picture.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** Did you? You know they all had plenty of money.

**WA:** Yeah.

**FC:** And maids and big houses.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** No one was ever... [pause 2 seconds] I can't remember one. I dare say there were--

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** A few. But, they... [pause 3 seconds] Well, I don't know, it just wasn't... [pause 2 seconds]

**WA:** Natural.

**FC:** Natural, isn't it?

**GC:** Jane Withers. D'you remember Jane Withers? She was a child star too, wasn't she?

**WA:** Yeah.

**FC:** I can't recall the features.

**GC:** That's Jane Withers. [shows picture]

**FC:** Oh, that's right.

[pause 6 seconds]

**GC:** Hartley Power. I can remember him quite well too. He wasn't a big star. Oh, W.C. Fields.

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** He was quite a character. He wasn't a heartthrob by any means. But he was quite a character, W.C. Fields. A comedy actor, really, rather more than anything else... [pause 4 seconds] Oh, yeah. Ronald Colman was definitely a heartthrob.

**WA:** Boris Karloff, wasn't it?

**GC:** Yes. Boris Karloff, yes. [pause 3 seconds] Yes, he made the *Frankenstein* films, didn't he?

**WA:** Oh, yeah.

**GC:** He was ever so much like. You know, I mean, although obviously he was made up to be Frankenstein, erm, I've seen him in real life a number of times. He used to go to a restaurant that I went to occasionally.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** And, you could recognise him immediately. I mean, the make-up eh, didn't really disguise his features--

**WA:** No.

**GC:** All that much. He looked exactly like he did on film.

**FC:** He was even ugly in private life. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** He was. Yes, he was. You're right. Erm, there's an English film here, *Alf's Button Afloat*, with Naughton and Gold and Flanagan and Allen, Nervo and Knox. Which, of course, were the Crazy Gang. And Alastair Sim. And erm, you know, I mean I can remember seeing films with all those in. But they weren't films that you would've said, oh, you know, the Crazy Gang.

**FC:** No, they were just a repetition of really, of what they did on the stage, weren't they?

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** You know. A story built round their act.

**GC:** Dad, dad would have enjoyed going to see their films because a lot of it was slapstick.

**VB: Ah.**

**GC:** And, eh, slapstick was, you know, really his cup of tea, wasn't it? Margareta Scott I can remember very well, too. She was a very good actress and I liked her. Very good.

**FC:** He used to take us to the circus, Bertram Mills Circus. Christmas time. My father. And, invariably, you had a Charlie Chaplin on there, who... I can remember him as a tightrope walker and falling, you know, and climbing up and falling down and all the. And my old man, used to be rolling up! He was worse than the kids!

**VB: [laughs]**

**FC:** He would be rocking backwards and forwards like this.

**GC:** He would. Yes, yes, he would.

**FC:** Of course, I suppose, you see all this would be... I mean it was new to us 'cause we was young.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** But it's quite likely it was new to him. Erm... [pause 2 seconds] Perhaps he couldn't have afforded it beforehand. They used to get in... you'd go to the cinema, I told you last time, you'd be sitting in the cinema and I'd say to the girlfriend, "My old man's in here."

**VB: [laughs]**

**FC:** You didn't, I hadn't got a clue. There's a thousand people in the cinema. I didn't know. I used to say, "My old man's in here." And sure enough, when the lights went on, you had to look round and there he was.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Irene Dunne. Do you remember Irene Dunne?

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** Erm, I can remember, I can remember her films. But eh, I don't remember an awful lot about her.

**WA:** Didn't she marry John Loder?

**GC:** I don't really know.

**FC:** Yeah.

**WA:** I think she did, didn't she?

**FC:** Oh, I don't, oh!

**GC:** And,

**FC:** Sorry, I didn't hear what you said.

**GC:** And another person in here that I hadn't thought about. Eh, Raymond Massey. I can remember him and erm, the drums, Sabu, *The Elephant Boy*.

**FC:** Sabu, yeah. They had a garage down the road here at the same time as him. Just before the war.

**GC:** Oh, yeah.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** They were, they had a, [pause 4 seconds] I don't know whether it was a studio, or just a film set down at Northolt somewhere. And he was working down there. And eh, he wasn't my cup of tea. I think at that time I would be, [pause 4 seconds] perhaps seventeen or eighteen. He was kids' stuff to me, you know.

**VB:** Yeah.

**FC:** But I remember the eh, the chap, I was quite friendly with the chap in the garage. He was so [inaudible]. He says, "You know who that is, don't you?" He knew... [pause 6 seconds] Surprising where... 'Course, I suppose it's understandable. We had the Ealing Studios, didn't we?

**GC:** Oh, yeah. And I think Pinewood might have come after the thirties, didn't it?

**FC:** And eh, Elstree.

**GC:** Yeah, yeah.

**FC:** You had quite a few, erm... perhaps we was quite central--

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** To the different places.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** And so. And in not a bad area.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** So it's quite likely that we, we had a few of the stars living round here because of the position of the studios and the position we were in.

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** I remember Jane Baxter too and eh, and she was very good. But there again, you see, she was English and you tend not to remember the English films so well as you remember the American films. So obviously they weren't really so good in those days.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Laurence Olivier. Erm, he was always very good, of course. Eh, I think probably that the films he was in, which were English. I don't think he ever really went to America, did he, Laurence Olivier?

**FC:** No. I'm sure he did, didn't he?

**GC:** Did he? Well, anyway, he used to make a lot of English films, didn't he? And eh, you would tend to go and see his films--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** 'Cause he was in good films. Sonja Henie again. Cesar Romero.

**FC:** Well you still see him sometimes on the box.

**GC:** Yeah, you do, yes. Robert Montgomery, I remember him. In fact there were two Montgomerys, weren't there? There was a Douglas Montgomery as well.

**FC:** Yeah. Two brothers. He was the popular one though, wasn't he?

**GC:** Robert Montgomery was the most popular one, yes. Douglas Montgomery was not quite so popular.

**WA:** The ship that sunk on the Thames with all the bombs on board is The Robert Montgomery [sic].

**FC:** Sorry?

**WA:** The ship that sunk on the Thames with all the bombs on board, it's still there, was the Robert Montgomery [sic].

**FC:** Oh.

**WA:** Yeah. I went on board the day after it happened. Yeah.

[pause 6 seconds]

**GC:** Sylvia Sidney. I don't remember her very well. I remember [coughs] I can remember the name, but I don't remember her very well. [pause 2 seconds; flicking through pages] Herbert Marshall, I remember well. He, he erm, he was a good actor.

**FC:** Herbert Marshall...

**GC:** Yeah, that was a, that was a...

**FC:** Erm. E-e-eh. *Smilin' Through*.

**GC:** Oh, yes.

**FC:** Wasn't it?

**GC:** Yeah. I think he was in *Smilin' Through*. Norma Shearer.

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** That was real, that was a real weepie.

**FC:** Yeah, I don't remember it, but eh. Actually, the book of 'Smilin' Through' is still in my library. Not my--

**VB: Yeah.**

**FC:** You know, the local library.

**VB: Yeah.**

**FC:** Erm, I've often wondered whether to pick it up and read it.

**GC:** I saw *Smilin' Through* at the theatre during the war. They did it down at the Coliseum which started off by being a cinema. And then they had a repertory there for a long while and I saw *Smilin' Through* there which, you know, refreshed my memory about the story. Erm, I can't remember it all well now because that was a long while ago as well. But I remember it was a real weepie and even the play was a real weepie.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Uhuh. Una Merkel. I can remember her too. She was quite an attractive actress but she wasn't what you would call a big star... [pause 3 seconds] Yes, they certainly bring back memories. Certainly got us talking, didn't it? [laughs]

**VB: I mean, it's amazing, when I first looked at these to see just the sheer number of the stars that—[tape cuts out]**

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

**FC:** [mid-conversation] half of them were, you know, doubled up.

**VB: Yeah.**

**FC:** That's eight. That's thirty-two, erm, films.

**GC:** Yes.



**FC:** A week.

**GC:** Yes.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** You know, it was. They had to be churning some films out to be able to keep everything going like that.

**GC:** Mhm. And of course the cinema was erm, I mean, probably the main lei--, leisure activity--

**FC:** Oh, yeah.

**GC:** Of I should think, what? Eighty, ninety per cent of the population.

**FC:** Oh, everyone used to go.

**GC:** Erm, there weren't the other things. I mean, there wasn't any television anyway but I mean, there wasn't a lot of other things. Erm, you didn't get involved in sport to the extent that you do now.

**FC:** Well, your energy. By the time you'd finished earning a living, your energy was spent, wasn't it?

**GC:** And there wasn't. I don't think, erm, you were really encouraged to do these things like they are now because there wasn't the money.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** You know. I mean, now I still play tennis. But the youngsters of today that take up tennis, I mean they have lessons from the time they're tiny tots and they have all the modern rackets and they have all the, you know, go out and pay £50 for a pair of tennis shoes.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** But, I mean, our mothers and fathers. We weren't hard up. Erm, but they never had that sort of money so you weren't encouraged to do those things. Erm, I don't know, you know, that they had all that much money to send you to the cinema but, erm, it wasn't very dear and, of course, it meant that, you know, they had three or four hours when you weren't pestering the life out of them. Eh, they didn't very often take us but then we were lucky because we had an older cousin who lived with us. Quite a bit older than us. And eh, so they could get her to take us, you see. So, they didn't

have to worry about us. They knew we were alright. Erm, but, then they had three or four hours peace. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** But there certainly weren't the counter attractions that there are now.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** And I mean, pop groups were unheard of. Eh... There was no such...

**FC:** If you went, if you went in the pub, you only had a drink, didn't you? I mean, it wasn't a social evening, unless you were drinking. You didn't get a band on there or--

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** They'd have a dance, perhaps in some of the pubs once a week.

**GC:** Yes, I was going to say there were danc--, there were pianists, sometimes, weren't there?

**FC:** Yes. That's if.

**GC:** Erm, and you sang.

**FC:** If Con's Dad was sober. [laughs]

**GC:** [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** If he had two bob he used to. [laughs] That was his entrance fee. He'd go in and buy himself a drink and then get on the old piano and the beer used to come in the rest of the evening.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** You never saw him.

**GC:** No.

**FC:** He was always in the pub... Come home. If he would, if he'd had the right amount, he'd be in a good temper. If he'd had the wrong amount, he'd be like a bear with a sore head, you know.

Wanted to fight everyone. [laughs]

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** That was my first wife's father.

**GC:** But there was erm, you know. The cinema really was the main attraction, wasn't it? There was very little else that you could do in those days. Erm... [pause 4 seconds] I can't really remember any. There was dancing, of course. I mean, as I told you before, we weren't allowed to go dancing. And there was, of course, no such thing as discos. I mean, they were not heard of.

**FC:** You don't... what... Round here. I should think, within the area of the cinemas, you could almost go dancing every night of the week then, them days, couldn't you? 'Cause you had one at the British Legion on a Wednesday and then you had [Old Farr?].

**GC:** Yeah, that's right.

**FC:** And perhaps he'd be two nights a--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** A week.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** Erm. And by going a little bit out of the town. It's quite likely you could've danced nearly every night of the week.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** But, apart from the cinema, that was it, wasn't it?

**GC:** I think it was.

**FC:** Unless you wanted to go pubbing.

**GC:** Yeah. And as Fred said, you know, you really just went in the pub to have a drink. There was no other eh, attraction to going in the pub. I mean, pubs didn't serve meals or anything like that, did they?

**FC:** No.

**GC:** It was just purely, you went there for a drink.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And they weren't even the sort of places that they are now, were they? I mean, they were--

**FC:** Well, you stood at the bar.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** There might be a few chairs and a table there.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** But, it wasn't as pubs are now.

**GC:** No.

**FC:** You didn't. You got people and they stayed all the evening and, as I say, my father-in-law was one of them. But--

**WA:** There were types of pubs that used to have three types of bar in the lounge.

**GC:** Yeah, that's right.

**WA:** The saloon and the eh, the spit, the spit and sawdust.

**GC:** That's right, yes. [laughs]

**VB: Mhm.**

**WA:** The public room, the Public Bar.

**GC:** The Public Bar, yeah.

**WA:** That was erm, spit and sawdust.

**GC:** Yeah, that's right.

**WA:** And that's where the men used to congregate. If you went with a woman. Erm, some nights the lounge wasn't open. Lounge used to be sort of Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Used to go to the Saloon if you had a woman with you. But the men used to congregate in the same spit and sawdust.

**GC:** Mhm.

**WA:** Used to play dominoes and play cards.

**GC:** Yeah. People did tend, of course, too erm, have a bit more family life, I think, in those days, than they do now. And eh, and you did, you know, occasionally all sit round the table playing cards which you don't very often hear of these days, do you? Erm, I'm sure there was a lot more family life.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Erm...

**FC:** Well, there was in this house, wasn't there?

**GC:** Yes. These days, people don't even sit down to meals at the same time, do they? But eh, then of course, you know, I mean you were expected to be there at mealtime and you all sat down together. And eh...

**FC:** Sunday evening, if we weren't out, we'd all be in the back room there, wouldn't we? There's a decent sized table there, perhaps there'd be ten of us, or even more, sitting round playing cards.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** Yeah. Only silly games, you know. Halfpenny a time, penny a time, or whatever.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** But Gwen and my other sister'd have their boyfriends here. And I'd have my girlfriend and--

**GC:** Yes, we all started when we were rather young. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** But we were encouraged to bring our friends home.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And not to, you know, sort of stand on street corners and what have you. Eh, so, yes, they were nearly always here, weren't they? Until, of course, we all got split up in the war. You know, the boyfriends went in the forces and eventually Fred and my sister went in the forces.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And left me at home on my own. [laughs]

**FC:** But, you know, there was, [pause 2 seconds] they were, they were, anyone was welcome, weren't they?

**GC:** Aw, they were, yeah.

**FC:** You know. We used to sit in the back room there and the back door, up that alley way, the back door was never locked. And anyone could have walked in and walked all over the house. And, we're sitting in the back room there with the door shut, we wouldn't have known. And you, the first you knew anyone was in the house was perhaps a knock on the door, or the door opening, wasn't it?

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** And that's how this house was.

**GC:** I don't think we could ever lock the door overnight. Because if you remember, Uncle Sid used to come and he used to--

**FC:** Oh, well that was after the old man had gone to work.

**GC:** Oh, I see.

**FC:** And he'd [got left undone?].

**GC:** Oh, I see. I had an uncle who drove a coach and if he had a party to pick up over this way, you'd be woken up about seven o'clock in the morning, with, "Come on, is there any service in this place?"

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** And he was banging the knife and fork on the table, wasn't he? And eh, and I can remember him coming up and getting hold of me and putting, me in Joan's bed and getting hold of Joan and putting her in mum's bed. He didn't really get hold of mum, of course. But, you know, the house would be in chaos when he was in here.

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** That's our story. But eh, you know, certainly, there was a lot more family life then. Eh, I think, you know, it was really very much better than it is these days, wasn't it?

**FC:** Yeah. There was four of us boys used to knock about together.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** We were, I suppose, fifteen, sixteen years old. And they just used to use this place. None of the others. I mean, we never to went to [Fowlers?]. They had a billiard room. We'd go down there and have a game of billiards. But, Charlie and Jack, you were never invited to their home.

**GC:** No.

**FC:** But they just used to walk in here.

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** And my grandmother used to make a fair old bit of bread pudding, didn't she? And they used to walk in the back door, walk round to the larder and say, "Where's the bread pudding, gran?"

[laughs]

**GC:** [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** You know that was this house, in those days.

**GC:** Yeah. Uhuh. Mhm, yes. It was a happy house.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Got a lot of happy memories.

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** Perhaps that's why I'm reluctant to leave it. [laughing]

**VB:** **It certainly sounds like you had tremendous times here from what you're saying.**

**FC:** Well, [pause 2 seconds] it was, I mean, Christmas time.

**GC:** Oh, yes.

**FC:** You'd have, you'd have a houseful here. I don't know where we all used to sleep, but we all used to sleep.

**GC:** Mhm. Well, some used to come for the day, didn't they? But quite a lot of people used to sleep.

**FC:** I can remember, they bought me a cycle. I could only have been about five, something like that. And they were all riding it up and down this hall.

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** It were only a, quite a small bike. But it had a, a crossbar, it were. And the men--

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** Are all riding from the front door down to the dining room and back again.

**GC:** I don't remember that. Must've been very small.

**FC:** Yeah, I would be about... [pause 2 seconds] I think I was only about five, me.

**GC:** I do remember playing murder and eh, denting Aunt [Tup's?] hat. [bursts out laughing]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** The old straw hats, you know.

**GC:** We had a maiden aunt. We used to call it her chrysanthemum hat because it had a big sort of, eh, like an ostrich feather and looked like a chrysanthemum on it. And it was one of these with a tall crown. Of course we played murder and all the lights were out and she put her hat and coat on one of the beds upstairs and I think somebody sat on it and dented it.

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** And there's my mother up there, pushing it out, you know. Trying to make good, so that she couldn't see it. I mean, she was a real maiden aunt. I mean, I'm a maiden aunt, really. But I mean, she was a real maiden aunt, wasn't she? Really strait-laced. I don't ever remember seeing her laugh. Erm.

**FC:** I don't think she had a great deal of laugh--

**GC:** No. She was a real strait-laced person. We only ever saw her at Christmas, fortunately. [laughs]

**FC:** But it was open house virtually, wasn't it?



**GC:** It was, yes.

**FC:** As I say--

**GC:** You didn't used to go to the cinema with those boys though, did you?

**FC:** Sorry?

**GC:** You didn't used to go to the cinema with them, did you?

**FC:** What with, with the boys?

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** I don't ever remember four of us going together but, the night the old King died, I was at the Dominion. You know, George the Fifth.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** I was at the Dominion with erm, Charlie [surname redacted]. Because when we come out, they was, you know, selling papers--

**GC:** Oh, yeah.

**FC:** You know, outside the cinema. King dies.

**GC:** I tell you something I can remember too. Coming out of the cinema with this, the girl that used to have the free pass. Erm, we came home on the bus from Harrow. We'd been to the cinema in Harrow. And we came home on the bus and the bus conductor told us that eh, Crystal Palace was burning down. I can remember that quite plainly. And that was about 1937, wasn't it?

**FC:** I couldn't tell you. I was talking about it...

**GC:** I think so, yes. 'Cause we wouldn't believe him. We thought he was pulling our leg.

**VB:** Yeah.

**GC:** 'Cause these conductors did, you know, sort of tend to pull your leg a bit. We thought he was pulling our leg. Erm, but, it was true, of course. It was in the papers the next day. I suppose it was on the radio, I can't remember. I was probably sent to bed by the time I came home. [laughs]

**FC:** I was just thinking. I used to. I must have gone to the cinema quite a bit, 'cause I used to go with George [surname redacted].

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** And eh, I can remember. His father was a bus driver and coming home on the bus. They were open top decks in those days, you know. And eh, I think there was us doing this. [stamps on floor] And the conductor chucked us off when we got up to Roxeth Corner. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** Erm, said we'd had it. It was a penny from the Coliseum. Not the Coliseum. The, the railway station. Erm--

**GC:** To the Timber Carriage [hotel in South Harrow].

**FC:** No, to here.

**GC:** Oh.

**FC:** Those days, for us kids.

**GC:** Yeah, that's right. Half price.

**FC:** And he chucked us off at the Timber Carriage. 'Cause we was making a noise upstairs.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** We had to walk down and George [, his father was a bus driver. And he was "Gonna tell his dad!"

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** [laughs]

[pause 3 seconds]

**GC:** Yeah, we didn't. I don't know whether the Odeon in South Harrow was opened but I don't think it was opened very early, was it? I think it could've been only just before the war because I'm quite certain.

**FC:** Yeah? It was well before the war.

**GC:** Or maybe it was just erm--

**FC:** I would think--

**GC:** The type of films that you had. Because we did nearly always go into Harrow--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** To the cinema. I mean, you went down to this local cinema occasionally. But eh, it was nearly always a bus ride to Harrow when you went to the cinema.

**FC:** I would, I would think that cinema was open. [pause 3 seconds] Well, Chummy took me down there to see, erm... [pause 3 seconds] *King Kong*. And I couldn't get in on my own. Had to have an adult.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** What was the age? For...

**WA:** Twelve, was it?

**FC:** You had to be over a certain age or go with an adult.

**GC:** I don't know. I can't remember.

**FC:** No, I can't remember.

**GC:** But it's got, I would think round about 1935 it'd would've been...

**GC:** Yeah. There were, there were quite a lot of films that came in that category, weren't there? That you couldn't go and see unless you'd got somebody with you.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Well, there still is. But there's more classifications now than there used to be. They used to be just A films or U films, didn't they?

**FC:** Yeah. They used to get the kids standing outside. "Will you take me in, mister?" [laughs]

**GC:** That's right.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Yeah, they did. [pause 3 seconds] I don't think we were ever encouraged to go and see films that we weren't allowed to see anyway. I mean, Chummy used to take us sometimes, didn't she? But eh, you know, you wouldn't have been asking somebody to take you in 'cause you, you know, your mother and father wouldn't approve of that, would they?

**FC:** No. And round here at that time, in all probability they'd have heard about it too.

**GC:** Yeah, they would. Oh, yeah.

**FC:** You know. You didn't do things that you shouldn't do. Because, someone was watching you that knew your mother and father!

**GC:** 'Cause, eh, South Harrow was not that big a place really, was it? And erm, you know, you were frequently meeting people and eh, knew your parents so, you just daren't really do anything that you shouldn't do.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Our parents were very good but they were quite strict with us, weren't they? They didn't stand any nonsense.

**FC:** You done as you were told.

**GC:** Particularly my mother. [laughs]

**FC:** She was narrow-minded, she was.

**GC:** Mum only had to look at you and that was enough. I mean she never had to, very, very rarely had to lay her hands on you. She just looked and [laughs] you started to behave. [laughs] My sister was the only one that used to get into trouble because erm, she would always have the last word and she was the one that used to fall for everything. [laughs]

**FC:** She'd get a bashing.

**GC:** [laughs]

**FC:** I can see her crouched up in the corner now, getting slapped.

**GC:** [laughs]

**FC:** And then when her mother walked away from her she'd go... [makes face]

**GC:** [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** She'd come back and get another one! [laughs]

**GC:** I remember mummy used to turn round and say, "And that's her making faces at me!" [laughs]

**FC:** Oh, dear.

[pause 4 seconds]

**GC:** Yeah. We had my grandmother living with us too. I mean, she didn't used to take us out. She wasn't all that mobile but we had her living with us and eh, that used to complicate things sometimes, didn't it? She put things away and then forget where she put them. I mean, I got great sympathy with her now, [laughing] because I know what it's like!

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** But in those days, of course, it was most irritating because you'd leave something and know exactly where you'd left it and when you came home it wasn't there and nobody knew where it was. [laughs]

**FC:** I eh, I wasn't allowed a penknife.

**GC:** No, that's right.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** No way I could have one. For all my life, all my adult life, I carried a penknife. I've got a penknife in my pocket now. And I use it all the time. If I want something, I just slip me hand in my pocket and bring the penknife out. If I can find it. Erm, but, if I put a penknife down here, [pause 2 seconds] if I'd been using that, put it down [puts it down]--

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** And the old lady saw it. My grandmother, like.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** That'd disappear. I reckon she must have, when she died, I reckon she must've had a drawerful [laughs] up there.

**GC:** [laughs]

**FC:** Never allowed to have a penknife. [pause 2 seconds] And yet, I've always, always carried one. [pause 4 seconds] It's funny.

**GC:** Yeah. Well have you got any more questions?

**VB:** **Erm. Well just one really. I was really wondering from what you were saying, and going to the films so much. Do you think that going to the pictures was a special event for you then? Or was it more of an everyday?**

**FC:** No. It was a weekly event. Wasn't it, really?

**GC:** Yes, it was a weekly event.

**FC:** And I think it was with most people, I think.

**GC:** Yes, it was. But, I mean, it was fairly, it was a bit special because, erm, you know, it was the one place that you went. It's true that we did used to always to out at the weekends. I mean, my father always had a car.

**VB:** **Mhm.**

**GC:** And he used to take us to the seaside all the summer. And even in the middle of the winter, we used to have to go out. Erm, but that rather became a chore, more than a pleasure because you were expected to do it. You couldn't do anything else. Erm, so I mean as far as I was concerned, I think going to the cinema was certainly a treat. But it was, you know, a regular treat, of course. It wasn't a, you know, it was a thing that you did fairly regularly and not just once in a blue moon.

**FC:** Well, right up till the time we left here, erm, that's what thirty-eight years ago? Erm, I used to take Conn to the cinema on a Monday, didn't I?

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** Every Monday. Religiously. My mother used to look after the children and we used to go to the cinema. And then, on a Thursday, yeah, Thursday, she would go to the cinema again. The

programme had changed and she'd go to the cinema again. I didn't go. I used to stay home and eh, and get ready for a weekend's work. 'Cause I was in the retail trade.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** And eh, that was, up until thirty-eight years ago. And really, [pause 2 seconds] when we moved we stopped going to the cinema 'cause we hadn't got a babysitter, you know. Erm, you know, you didn't worry so much. But eh, up until then, as far as I'm concerned, it was a regular--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** Occurrence.

**WA:** I think it was for a lot of people, wasn't it?

**GC:** Oh, it was, yeah.

**WA:** I mean, regularly had to queue, didn't you?

**GC:** Oh, yes. Particularly if it was a good film.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** But I mean, you quite often had to queue. Even for the--

**WA:** Ordinary films.

**GC:** Yes. And, I mean, they had several eh, prices of seats.

**WA:** Yes.

**GC:** And eh, and you quite often, you know, they only had the dearer seats or something, didn't they? They have any of the cheaper seats.

**FC:** And people used to be queuing up for the cheaper seats and the dearer seat was only two bob.

**VB: [laughs]**

**FC:** Or 10p. You know, erm, it seems ridiculous now--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** But they would be queuing up to go in the ninepennies.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** And perhaps there was no queues for one and six and two shillings.

**GC:** No. I mean, I can remember going with a girl and her mother and father. A girl that I was friendly with. And I mean, they only ever went in the ninepennies. I can't ever remember going in any more than the ninepennies. And eh, if you got to the cinema and there were only ninepennies, you know, and there was queues for the others, for that, you know. You didn't, you either didn't go or you got in the queue, you know. You didn't just automatically pay more money, because--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Well, they certainly didn't. I don't think they got it to pay really.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** In fact, I mean, when you look back, you wonder that you managed to get there as often as you did. But eh, and we weren't desperately hard up.

**FC:** But, I mean, it just points out that although, you know, people used to go out. And it was an effort for them to go out. You know, it was a drain on their resources to go out. I mean, one and six was what, e-e-eh, [pause 2 seconds], a fortieth of your week's, week's wages. If [inaudible]...

**GC:** Three, Thr-- what? Yes, I suppose it was.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** I mean a fortieth of your week's wages. Not a fortieth of the man's wages 'cause most of the women didn't work, did they?

**GC:** No, no.

**FC:** Once they got a family.

**GC:** No, well they didn't work, no.

**FC:** So if you was earning fifty bob a week or... [pause 2 seconds] three pound a week them days, everything had got to come out of that.



**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** I mean, that was quite good money, really. 'Cause I mean, after the war. No, well, during the war, erm, when I went into the Civil Service, I was only earning two pounds five shillings a week. And I had to pay my fare up to London out of that. And erm--

**FC:** A man's wages though were, before the war, you could reckon about two pound ten.

**GC:** Yeah. And eh, unfortunately we had to do eh, I don't know, a few hours overtime which brought the money up to about two pounds fifteen.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** If it hadn't been for that, you'd have really been on the breadline. [laughs]

**FC:** You were lucky. You was earning two pounds fifteen. I was earn--, I was getting two bob a day! [laughs]

**GC:** [laughs] Yes, I'm afraid, you know, times have changed an awful lot money-wise. [coughs] And the young people today, we often say this, the young people today just do not know they're alive, do they? I mean, they have so much more in the way of possessions. They go to so many more places and eh, you know, have such a lot more experience than we had when we were young.

**FC:** How much does it cost to get into the cinema now?

**GC:** I got no idea.

**VB: Erm. Well I went to the Granada in Harrow and that's four pounds. That was for a matinee as well.**

**GC:** Was it?

**VB: So I've no idea what it would cost for the evening. Probably more than that.**

**GC:** Oh, Good Lord! Four pounds.

**WA:** Four pounds?

**GC:** Yeah.

**VB: And I've heard that the ones in the centre of London are more, much more expensive.**

**GC:** Yeah, they always were.

**VB:** About six pounds.

**GC:** They always were more expensive.

**FC:** You could pay. I think Conn took me to see... [pause 3 seconds] *Gone with the Wind*.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** At the beginning of the war.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** Empire Leicester Square.

**GC:** That's right, yeah.

**FC:** And it was about. I think she treated me out twice. I was forty-eight when she died and I was sixteen when I met her. And I think she treated me twice. [laughs] And that was one of the times. And I've got an idea that those seats cost twelve and six.

**WA:** Yeah, I think that's right. Yeah, yeah.

**GC:** I can, I can remember going up there too with Nick. And having to queue up to get in. We had to queue up to get in. Erm, but I'm pretty certain that was when he was in the Air Force. So that would've been eh, 1940 when he went in the Air Force, so it wasn't—[tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**GC:** [mid-conversation] didn't do that until I worked up in town. And then I had a season ticket. So you didn't have to pay your fare--

**VB:** Right.

**GC:** So I think I might have gone then but erm, you certainly never, I certainly never went in the thirties when I would've had to have paid my fare and gone up there.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** You just. I mean, nobody ever did, did they? Nobody ever went up to London.

**FC:** No, as I say, she wanted to see that and eh--

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** And I think at that time, it must've been after the war started. I don't think we'd got any wheels, you know, any transport to go out or anything. And we did go up on the train. And she said, by this time, she was on war work. She was a machinist. A sewing machine. And she was earning a few bob. I mean, she'd never earned anything worth having up until then. And eh, she told me she was going to treat me. And we went up there.

**GC:** I should think we probably had to pool our resources 'cause we never had any money. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**FC:** The next time she treated me, we went to see [pause 4 seconds] 'Charlie Boy'. And that was after the war. Up Covent Garden way somewhere. The theatre up there. That was the two, the twice. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** I mean, I never went to the eh, theatre up in London until I worked up in London. I think we went then. [coughs] But you certainly erm, well you didn't really go up to London. We went up to the Zoo, I think. And we went to Madame Tussaud's. Erm, as treats, you know. And we were taken to the pantomime. In fact, we had a, my mother had a friend who used to take my sister and I to the pantomime every year and we used to be taken up to London then. Erm, but I mean, going up to London was a very rare treat.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** And you didn't go to the cinema up there. I mean, erm, you could go to the cinema locally so if you went up to London, it was for something special rather more than going to the cinema. But there again, you did, as you got older and went a little bit more, you did go up to London occasionally because they had the films on much earlier than they did at home. And also they used to have very spectacular stage shows on at the Empire in Leicester Square. And we used to, I used to go up there with John. Fairly regularly, we used to go up there.

**FC:** The Hippodrome, was it? On the corner.

**GC:** Yeah, that was the Hippodrome.

**FC:** Yeah. They used to erm, that was--

**GC:** That was a theatre.

**FC:** Yeah. But they had some good shows on, didn't they?

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** 'Course it was. You know, London in them days, I think there was far more than there is now 'cause you had the Prince of Wales, didn't you?

**WA:** Yeah.

**FC:** All.

**GC:** Quite a lot of theatres up there now, of course. But as far as I'm concerned, anyway, they've priced themselves out of the market.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** They're very expensive.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** As far as I'm concerned, the cinemas have.

**GC:** Have you got, erm, have you got theatres in Glasgow, presumably?

**VB: Oh, yes, yes.**

**GC:** And are they as substantial as the London ones?

**VB: I was shocked actually. Because I'd thought I might go and see a show or something but it's, I think I'd have to save [laughs] for a few weeks before I did that.**

**GC:** You can, of course, go this booth in Leicester Square.

**VB: Ah.**

**GC:** And get, erm, half price tickets sometimes, but. I don't know. I know somebody that used to do it years ago. Erm, whether, you know, you can still get them--

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** I imagine you can. But probably for the less popular shows. I remember they used to do it fairly regularly and see quite a lot of shows.

**VB: I expect they're catering to the tourists rather than [laughs] people who live in London.**

**GC:** Oh they are. Yes, they are. And of course, and of course now they erm, they're on the coach trips from, eh, you know, other towns and that into London to see the shows. And sometimes it's a weekend and you go and see a couple of shows. Eh, so, it's really rather different. I mean, they obviously buy blocks of seats for this sort of thing. Which means that, even supposing you do want to sport the money and go, it's not very easy to get the seats for the shows that you want to see.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** And then you're held to ransom because quite a lot of them, you can only book through booking agencies. And you have to pay about four pounds on top of the price of your ticket.

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** No, I'm afraid they've priced themselves out of the market but--

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** Which is a pity really. 'Cause I used to like going to the theatre. And I suppose, of course, you see so much on television that, eh, you haven't got quite the same urge. And, of course, for anyone that has to pay their fare up to London as well, it's prohibitive.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** I mean, fortunately, I don't. I get a free pass but eh. You know, Wally, where he lives, he doesn't get a free pass.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** So, if we do go up to London, which we do about once a year, [laughs] it costs you three pounds eighty, doesn't it?

**FC:** Is that what it is now?

**GC:** Three pounds eighty return. I mean, that was the last time that we went. I don't know whether it's gone up.

**VB:** I'm going in this afternoon. It is still three eighty.

**GC:** Yeah.

**VB:** Which is quite a lot really.

**GC:** It's a lot of money.

**VB:** Yeah.

**FC:** I used to think it was disgusting when we used to go out to [inaudible?], Joan and I.

**GC:** Ah.

**FC:** What? Twenty-five years ago, twenty-four years ago? And it used to cost us about one [pound] sixty from Northolt Station. I think it was one sixty return for the two of us.

**GC:** [laughs]

**FC:** And I used to think it was terrible then!

**GC:** Yeah.

**VB:** Yeah.

**FC:** We, we used to go up to Hammersmith from here. For sixpence.

**GC:** Have you been up to London since you--

**VB:** Erm. I went in a couple of weekends ago. I had a friend who was passing through London. So, I went up to see him. But, ah, not very much, no.

**GC:** I find it a bit of an overrated pastime. I went up there, not last Friday, the Friday before. Got up, Piccadilly. Went into Lilywhites. Bought myself a new tennis racket. In the sale. [laughs] Erm, tried to find Canada House but without success. But I found British Columbia House. Went in there and

picked up a few brochures. [sound of train in background]. Sort of looked round at all the people. And thought, "I've had enough of this." So I got on the train, [laughs] and came home again.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** I thought it was dreadful up there.

**VB: It's tremendously busy, isn't it? At this time of year.**

**GC:** Oh, yes. Absolutely packed and so hot and everybody was milling around. I mean I worked up there for donkey's years. I didn't work, eh. I worked in Westminster which of course, we had plenty of tourists about always.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** But you didn't have quite the milling crowds that you had in Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street. Erm, and you didn't think anything of it. But erm, now it seems to be absolutely teeming with people.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**GC:** I went up there at Christmas for some reason. Oh, I think it was when I went to that Lifestyle exhibition. And I thought, you know, well I'm up in town. I'll walk up Regent Street. And you really couldn't walk up Regent Street on one side of the road. One side wasn't too bad. And the other side of the road, you just couldn't get along the pavements.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** And at some of the shops, the toy shops in particular, it was just impossible. And people were trying to get in and people were trying to get out and they were, you know, just meeting and you were getting nowhere. And of course, they were crowding out onto the pavement so if you wanted to walk past, you couldn't get past!

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Once again, I think I got up to Oxford Circus and thought, "Ooh, I've had enough of this." And I came home. It's a very overrated pastime now. The shops are not like they used to be anyway. I mean, erm, Ox-, walking down Oxford Street used to be a real pleasure. I used to love sort of going in and out of the shops. But, eh, just a lot of, eh, tatty looking shops now. It's not like it used to be at

all. I don't know whether Scotland has deteriorated to the same extent. I mean, I can remember Princes Street quite well when I worked up there. And eh, that was lovely...

**VB: They're quite strict with Princes Street 'cause they've kept out a lot of the, erm, as you say, sort of tattier shops.**

**GC: That's right, yeah.**

**VB: Glasgow's much more, you know, what you're saying. But Princes Street, they've kept quite a firm hold of.**

**GC: Yeah.**

**VB: It's very nice.**

**GC: That's good 'cause--**

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC: You know, it was really quite a showplace--**

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC: Wasn't it? And eh, I wouldn't like to think that that had gone badly down. A rather unique place in a way 'cause it's all, as far as the shops are concerned, it's all one sided.**

**VB: That's right, yeah.**

**GC: I have been there since I worked there but, eh, not very much. [coughs] Anything else?**

**VB: No, well I think we've covered a lot more than [laughs] I was going to ask you about.**

**FC: We haven't spoken about films, have we? And cinemas?**

**VB: Well.**

**GC: Yeah. Well that's why I was concerned about, you know, getting off the topic.**

**VB: No, not at all. I mean, it's interesting to me to hear a bit more about, erm, the other things you were doing. Leisure and--**

**GC: Yeah.**



**VB: Getting a picture of everything.**

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** Incidentally, when, I suppose I would've been something like about ten or eleven. My father was twenty years older than my mother and... 'Cause he had a brother who had grown up sons when I was ten or eleven. They were, in what, their twenties, perhaps.

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** And eh, they gave me a Cinematograph.

**VB: A-ah.**

**FC:** It was a, it had been in a hall. The old--

**VB: Yes.**

**FC:** Hand-cranked Cinematograph. [inaudible].

**GC:** Well, carry on.

**FC:** And a tin trunk full of films.

**VB: Ah.**

**FC:** And eh, we used to oh, they used to have to sit in the dark or we turned the, I turned the handle and showed the film. But one of them was a film was *Rah! Rah! Rah!* It was an American film. There was quite a few newsreels.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** And one was--

**GC:** *The Great Train Robbery.*

**FC:** Eh?

**GC:** *The Great Train Robbery.*

**FC:** Oh, yeah. I had that, didn't I?

**GC:** Oh, yeah. You had that. We used to see that time after time--

**FC:** But one of them--

**GC:** After time.

**FC:** Was a coloured picture... [pause 3 seconds] My, I'm round about twelve year old. I'm talking about sixty-odd year ago. Versay, is it? Versay?

**GC:** Versailles.

**FC:** Versailles, in France.

**GC:** In France.

**FC:** The gardens.

**GC:** Mhm. I don't remember that.

**FC:** In colour. Oh, I just mentioned it because--

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** You know, I mean, well, sixty-odd years ago--

**VB: It must've been quite something.**

**FC:** You didn't get coloured... I gave it to my first wife's brother. The whole lot. And what happened to it, I don't know.

**GC:** What I was laughing at because, in those days, as far as I can remember, it only had one spool, so he used to be turning the handle, erm, to show people the films. And my sister and I used to be sitting underneath the table winding them up. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** That's what I was laughing at.

**VB: Ah.**

**FC:** Well, I thought I'd mention it--

**VB: Ah.**

**FC:** Because that definitely was a coloured film. Whether it'd been hand tinted or what, I don't know.

**GC:** I think, I mean, I can remember this coloured film and it was sort of advertised as the first colour film. And you went to the cinema to see it because it was quite a sensation. But having said that, I'm quite certain that there were colour films, of a sort--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Before then. But I think, erm, that possibly it was a different technique. As Fred said--

**VB: Yes.**

**GC:** I think they may have been tinted because it's the same as photographs.

**FC:** Yes.

**GC:** Erm, they used to tint photographs before we actually had colour photography. And I think it was probably the same with the films.

**VB: Yeah.**

**GC:** This film that I can remember seeing was the first one that had actually been filmed in colour, eh, and not tinted afterwards.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** It would be interesting in a way to see it. It was a Fred MacMurray film. I can't remember the name of it [referring to *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*]. Erm, but it would be interesting now to see how the colour compared because some of the colour on older films, erm, is very, sort of bright and glaring compared with the colour that you get now, wasn't it? It wasn't such a good technique that they had in those days for filming.

**FC:** I don't remember a great deal about, about it. I do remember that. And, as you say, I think I had the funeral of Victoria, on a newsreel. Victoria's funeral.

**GC:** I can, I can, I can remember *The Great Train Robbery*.

**FC:** That, you know, if you'd have been able to have kept until now, I dare say, all of it would be worth quite a lot of money.

**VB:** I'm sure, yes.

**FC:** But course, the film used to deteriorate so it's quite likely you couldn't have kept it anyway.

**VB:** No.

**FC:** But it was quite a big--

**VB:** A wonderful gift to give you. I mean--

**FC:** Yeah, well they'd grown out of it, obviously, you see, and passed it on to me. But eh... [pause 4 seconds] Newsreels. They were quite interesting. They, some of those were in, eh, you got the talkie strip down the side of the film.

**VB:** Mhm.

**FC:** So, some of them weren't so old. [pause 3 seconds] How come? [pause 2 seconds] When did talkies come out?

**VB:** About '26. 1926 or something.

**FC:** Oh, that's alright then.

**VB:** Yeah.

**FC:** Erm, [pause 3 seconds] I forget what I was going to say now.

**GC:** Well, there again, you see, it was sort of, family entertainment because we used to be sitting together as a family, watching these things. Of course, we'd probably seen them loads of times. Erm, but somebody different would come, you know. Another aunt and uncle or something and out would come the Cinematograph. 'Cause it was quite a novelty--

**VB:** I bet.

**GC:** Even for then, wasn't it?

**VB:** Yeah.

**GC:** To have a sort of home--

**FC:** Yeah.

**GC:** Cinematograph. Erm, we had. When I went to Welldon Park School. When did I leave Welldon Park School? In 1935. And before I, I left there, I don't know whether I had it when Fred was there. But we had a Cinematograph [probably referring to a film projector] at school which was quite a new thing, really. And they used to show us films on that. One afternoon a week, I think it was on a Wednesday afternoon, we used to get films. They tended to be educational films. We didn't have anything that was showing at the cinema. Erm, but I can remember quite plainly you'd get a lot of films about the care of your teeth and you know. They'd maybe make them amusing but eh, you know, it was how to look after your teeth. And it was all that sort of. It was, you got a number of short films--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Rather than a long one. Mr Goodhead used to operate it. Did they have it when you were there?

**FC:** No.

**GC:** Well, they had it, certainly had it--

**FC:** We had never even had that anyway, down at [inaudible] Lane, when I got down there.

**GC:** No, it was quite unusual for a school to have that in those days. But erm, but we certainly had it down there and we used to quite regularly see films. I don't really know anything about it. Whether they were able to hire films, or, how they came by then. I don't know even how they came by the Cinematograph but, eh, it was quite good equipment. I mean, as children you used to look forward to it--

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** Because eh, well anything rather than have lessons, you know.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** But eh, there again, I mean when you were at school you did, I think you probably had a bit more sports than they have these days at school.

**VB: Mhm.**

**GC:** But eh, it was mostly confined to school and you weren't really encouraged to do very much outside of school, were you? You know, you eh, I mean you'd have, you'd have a cricket bat and maybe have a game when we went out on Sunday. But, you know, you weren't encouraged to erm, take it up seriously or anything like that. Eh, as I said, I think people haven't got the money. I mean, if you wanted to play tennis it costs money. You've got to have a tennis racket. It costs money to hire the tennis court. And you just weren't really encouraged to do it.

**FC:** Well they... [pause 3 seconds] No one could start as young. You had to be earning--

**GC:** Mhm.

**FC:** To play tennis. You couldn't go to your mother and father and expect them to pay. Eh, out of their fifty bob a week. So, really, you were in the earning stages when you were doing these things.

**GC:** Yes.

**FC:** If you joined the cricket club or, or played football or tennis or whatever. Erm, it had to come out of your pocket, didn't it?

**GC:** Yeah, and I think, erm, and I think really, as I said before, the reason that you were packed off to the cinema, erm, was because you were out the way for a few hours, you know.

**VB:** Mhm.

**GC:** Your parents would scrape up the money to send you there 'cause they could get on with things that they had to do and you were out the way. You weren't pestering them. [laughs]

**VB:** Yeah.

**GC:** And I think that was the case in quite a lot of families, wasn't it, really? That eh--

**FC:** Well...

**GC:** Kids were out the way.

**WA:** Yeah.

**FC:** Used to send them Sunday school, Sunday afternoon, didn't they?

**GC:** Yes. And the, and the Saturday morning films. I mean, nearly, most kids used to go to Saturday morning films, didn't they? We. I don't know why we--

**FC:** To the Mickey Mouse Club.

**GC:** I don't know why we missed out but we didn't seem to go very much but erm, most kids did go to Saturday morning films and there again I think it was really so that mothers and fathers could get on with doing things at home.

**VB:** I suppose they knew you were safe and--

**GC:** That's right.

**VB:** They didn't have to worry about you.

**GC:** Yes, they were. And you were safe of course. I mean there wasn't all the worries that there is now. Erm, you know, you didn't, you usually only sent kids to a local cinema. But eh, it was quite safe, you didn't have to worry about them, you know. You knew, I mean, you'd taught them how to cross the road and as far as, you know, anyone abducting them, it was rather unheard of, you know. It was just not, eh, not a thing that you--

**FC:** You never even thought about it, did you?

**GC:** I can't even remember really being told not to speak to strangers. Because it was just, you know, you didn't. It wasn't necessary, really.

**FC:** There wasn't many bloody strangers round here.

**VB:** [laughs]

**GC:** You knew most people, didn't you?

**FC:** Walk down the road with my mother to do a bit of shopping and you'd come back about three hours afterwards.

**GC:** Yeah.

**FC:** You'd met three or four people she knew and "Yap, yap, yap, yap!" [laughs]

**GC:** She was a great talker, my mother. Great talker.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Right up un--, well almost up until the time she died, wasn't she? She did quieten down a bit 'cause she couldn't hear so well and for that reason I think she quietened down a bit. But she was, most of her life, a great talker. [pause 3 seconds] A great character, really. [pause 2 seconds] Well, if you--

**FC:** Yes, it's about time, isn't it?

**VB: Yes.**

**FC:** Get that kettle on.

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Yeah, I was going to say, can we erm, give you a cup of coffee?

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

**GC:** Erm. You had coffee last time. I presume that, eh, you'd like coffee again.

**VB: That would be lovely, yes.**

**FC:** There's the happy family. Look.

**VB: Aw-w. Oh, that's a beauty.**

**GC:** I'd been going to ask you once or twice. That's obviously, eh, you and erm, Joan, isn't it?

**VB: Aw.**

**GC:** Yeah, because of the age gap.

**FC:** Mhm.

**VB: Uhuh. And this is your parents?**

**GC:** That's right. That's my father and my mother--

**VB: Ah.**

**GC:** And I should think--



**VB: Where was that taken?**

**GC:** Oh, I should think I was probably on the way then. I don't know. I mean I wasn't--

**FC:** I can have a guess!

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** [laughs]

[pause 5 seconds]

**FC:** A-a-ah. I'm wondering whether that's at--

**GC:** I was--

**FC:** Was when we went to Yarmouth.

**GC:** Oh. Could be. I know that--

**FC:** I'm going by my age.

**GC:** I know when I was expected, eh, that they went to Margate.

**FC:** Yeah, well it could be Margate.

**GC:** Because mum was worried that I might arrive while she was there. And the landlady kept saying, "Don't you worry, my dear. I'll look after you."

**VB: [laughs]**

**GC:** Fortunately, I didn't.

**FC:** Well, you would, it doesn't look as though the old lady was pregnant there, anyway.

**GC:** No, it doesn't actually.

**FC:** So eh--

**GC:** No, I quite agree with you. Look, what do you think of this good-looking man? Here.

**VB: O-oh. [laughs] That's a lovely one. It really is.**

**FC:** When, eh, when we got married, erm, it was our, both our second marriages. She lived here, just down the road here actually. And eh, when she was sixty, erm, my children are witnesses.

**VB: Ah.**

**FC:** They don't acknowledge birthdays and Christmas and all that. So, eh, we decided we'd have a party, big party and have everyone, 'cause some of my family hadn't met some of her family and all that thing. So we laid a big party on. Quite close to where we, eh, we live now. And eh, we said we'd have that now because we didn't expect to reach a 25th wedding anniversary. 'Cause she, in this, we hadn't been married.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** She was fifty-three when we got married, so it was seven years after we got married. So we had this big party. I think there was a hundred or more people, you know.

**VB: A-ah.**

**FC:** And eh, we didn't make the twenty-five anyway. We made just over twenty-three. So, she would be sixty and I would be about fifty-eight then.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Fifty-seven, something like that.

**VB: It's a lovely photograph.**

**FC:** Gwen took that.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** Oh, and we had it all laid on. No troubles. Everything laid on. We had a, a chap, a friend of my daughter's was going to take photos. And, eh, it was a club room where we were and there was a bar there and put the money over the counter for the bar, you know. Stacks of grub.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** We prepared all our own food and that. The chap come to take the photos and he borrowed a camera. And when we finished the evening, the only photos we had was the few that Gwen had taken.

**VB: Oh.**

**FC:** He'd taken photos, photos and photos and hadn't got any results at all.

**VB: Oh, dear.**

**FC:** Oh, my wife was. She could, she could lose her temper. And, eh, she was livid.

**VB: A-ah.**

**FC:** And that's about the only photo we've got.

**VB: Mhm.**

[pause 4 seconds]

**VB: It's a lovely one anyway.**

**FC:** Well, it was a... It's just as well we did it because--

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** She had friends, you know. And I had friends. And relatives.

**VB: Mhm.**

**FC:** They come from all over. And we had a good evening. But eh, if we hadn't have had it, we wouldn't have got it. So. We said we'd have our 25th in advance, you know. And we made twent--, just over twenty-three. It's funny 'cause I married twice, and each marriage lasted twenty-three years and a few days. There was a matter of four or five days between the length of each marriage.

[pause 4 seconds] Uncanny--

**VB: It really is.**

**FC:** I married on the twenty- [pause 3 seconds] twenty-third of April. Erm, the first time. And my wife died on the third of September. And I was married on the eighteenth of April [pause 3 seconds] the second time and she died on the twenty-sixth of August. Twenty-three years after.

**VB: Yeah.**

[End of interview]